

The Barefoot Guide 4

Exploring the Real Work of Social Change



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The Barefoot Guide 4

Exploring the Real Work of Social Change

by

The Fourth Barefoot Guide

Writer's Collective

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Title: The Barefoot Guide 4: Exploring the Real Work of Social Change

ISBN 978-0-620-64903-2

First Impression: March 2015

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Freely downloadable from: www.barefootguide.org



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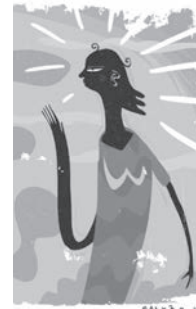
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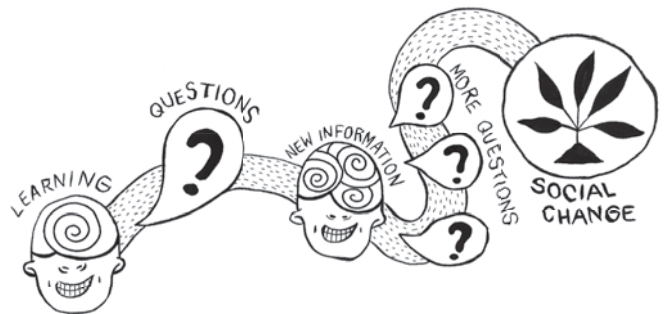
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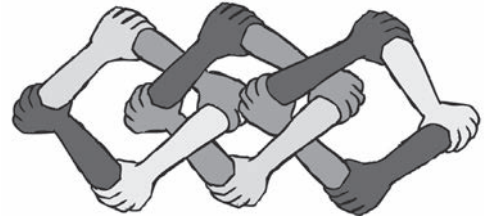
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In ways we cannot know

This heart-open project to bare our soles is first a spiral-spider movement inwards
To that mysterious ambiguous saucy source of constant change
When we tap that treacley tree-core
We can challenge some of what has gone before
Provided that we remember to use singing tones too
For we wish to spread the wonderfully dangerous belief
That there is a peachy potency for change in every soul
We wish to support this sap's flow into our connecting communities
Just as it flows in birdsong and bubbling laughter
And leafing through the many forms this tree may shape
The many performances this being we are birthing may inspire
We will cook a patchwork platter
We will warm up a new rhythm, a new dance in syllable and sound and colour
Branching from our theory-trunk into a forest feast of story
Our roots and twigs will tingle with the knowledge that the waves of breakdown desperation
Hold future fulfilment in their foamy crashing
And if we intuitively trust the ripple-vibrations of our vibrant sharing
Our works will wash their way into the world
In ways we cannot know

Simric Yarrow

Barefoot Poet – Barefoot Guide 4 Writeshop

Johannesburg, November 2013

INTRODUCING OUR STORY...

TWO worlds ONE planet

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

– Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*



Like many cities in the world, Cape Town is two cities. A City of Hope and a City of Despair.

In its suburbs, in the shadow of Table Mountain, life is good. Take a stroll down a leafy lane on a sunny afternoon and you are likely to see laughing, healthy and bright-eyed children coming out of beautiful schools, on their way to sport, extra-mural music lessons or just to spend time playing, as children should. Their parents have well-paid work, go on regular vacations, and have time to enjoy life with family and friends. They eat well and drink clean water every day. The best of times for them. Hopeful times.

In the townships of Cape Town, just a few kilometres away, life is bleak. You cannot take a stroll on your own in many places for fear of being mugged. Playing in the streets is a dangerous past-time as stray bullets from gang warfare regularly kill children and bystanders. The people there live in dusty dormitory settlements or shacks where they face the daily anguish of frequently sick children who seldom eat well, whose schools are barely functional and have little hope that life will improve. The dreams of a good life beyond apartheid have long faded and now they can only hope for another meal, a safe journey home or some kind of temporary job to pay off their growing debts. The worst of times for them. A time of despair.



We have never been freer but we have also never been so divided and unequal.

Hope and despair. Separated only by the M5 highway, the townships and the suburbs are as divided as they ever were. There are some black residents now in the suburbs, government officials, businesspeople and professionals, but no whites have moved to the townships and few have ever visited there. Who would they visit? People in the townships, however, know how those in the suburbs live. Many of them work there, invisible people who patiently go about their tasks of tending the houses and gardens of the rich and caring for their children. Others work in their factories and can well see how their bosses dress and what cars they drive. In the suburbs people look hopefully into the future. In the townships people look resentfully into the suburbs.

Cape Town is a city in the most unequal society on earth. But in many ways it is a mirror for what the whole world is fast becoming. Two worlds on one planet.

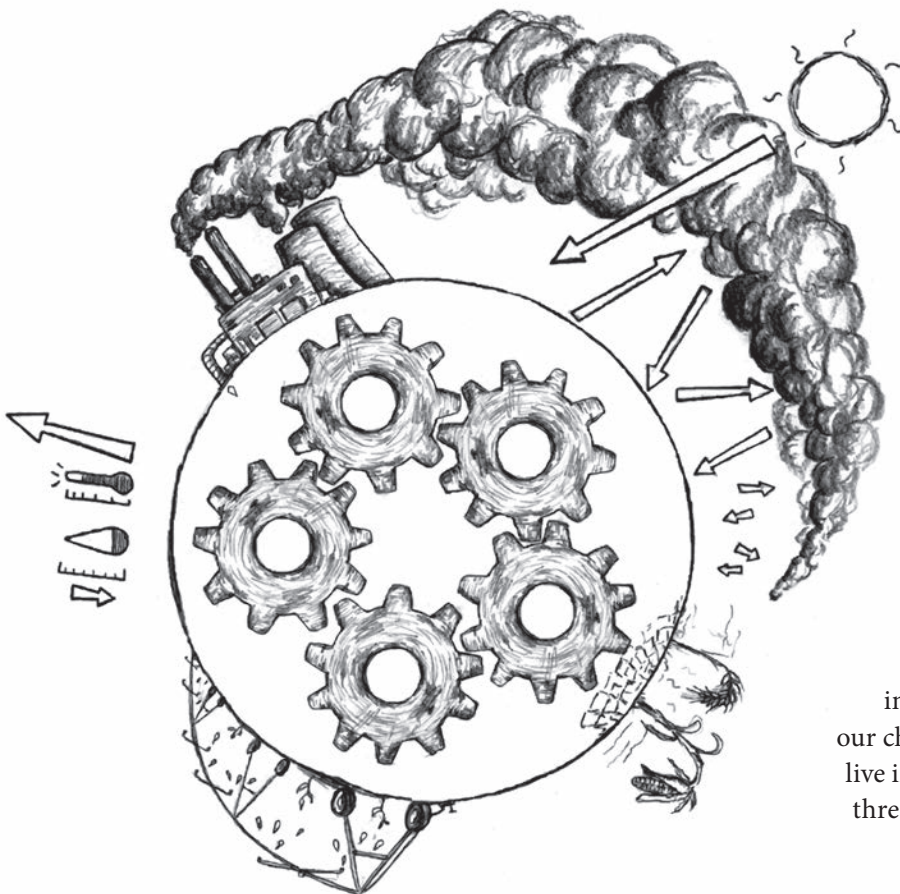
But our planet is divided and paradoxical in many other ways. Huge corporations stand astride the globe, ingeniously organised to invent and deliver dazzling new products to paying customers living in almost any suburb on earth. This while unemployment soars and nations and communities on all continents stagger from one round of debt to another.

More people are now living in free democracies than ever before, but there are more slaves than at any other time in history and whole territories have fallen under the fundamentalist rule of one of the most brutal ideologies of modern times.

And above us all, the richest 1% has amassed 50% of the planet's wealth into their possession.

We have never been freer but we have also never been so divided and unequal.

We have developed astonishing technologies, like coal-fired and nuclear power stations, chemical fertilisers, huge dams and irrigation systems, genetically modified seeds and life-saving antibiotics, all of which have enabled us to become independent of the vagaries of nature which we can now manipulate to our advantage and profit. We have "civilised" nature. To do this we must pump more and more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere each year. Yet we know that nature is coming back to bite us, reminding us that all life is interdependent and interconnected. And now the future, of all our children and grand-children, whether they live in the townships or the suburbs, is gravely threatened, as the world gradually heats up to make life unbearable.



Our plant and seed diversity, the very foundation of life on earth, is being stripped from under us by biotech seed companies that have put patents on DNA forcing farmers to rent the seeds that were gifts from our ancestors. New diseases have become rampant, created by resistance to the medicines created by pharmaceutical corporations, forcing us to pay billions to them for the next round of treatments for new diseases caused by their modern medicines.

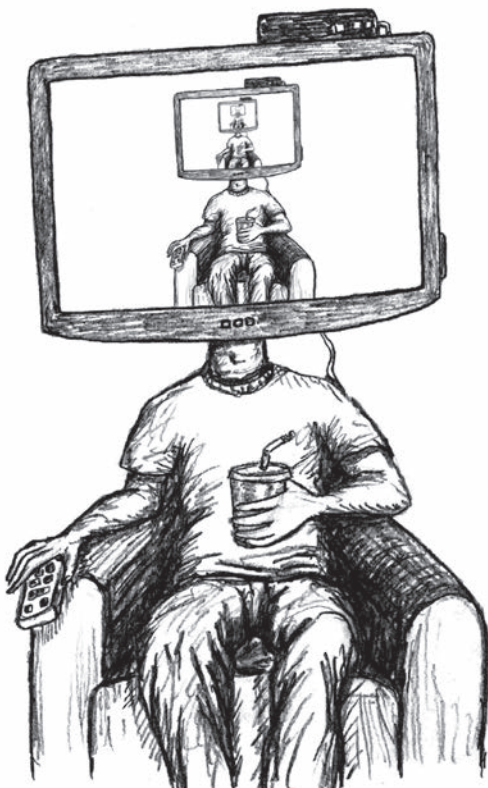
Yet ecological consciousness has never been so high, and almost everyone agrees that we have no time to lose to save our planet from the calamity of climate change and the loss of life-giving diversity.

Consciousness however is not action, especially when major corporations have all the money to keep things just as they are. Climate-change denial is on the rise, not because the facts can be disputed but because to face the facts is the biggest threat imaginable to corporate profits.



So my mind keeps coming back to the question: what is wrong with us? What is really preventing us from putting out the fire that is threatening to burn down our collective house? I think the answer is far more simple than many have led us to believe: we have not done the things that are necessary to lower emissions because those things fundamentally conflict with deregulated capitalism, the reigning ideology for the entire period we have been struggling to find a way out of this crisis. We are stuck because the actions that would give us the best chance of averting catastrophe – and would benefit the vast majority – are extremely threatening to an elite minority that has a stranglehold over our economy, our political process, and most of our major media outlets.”

– Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*

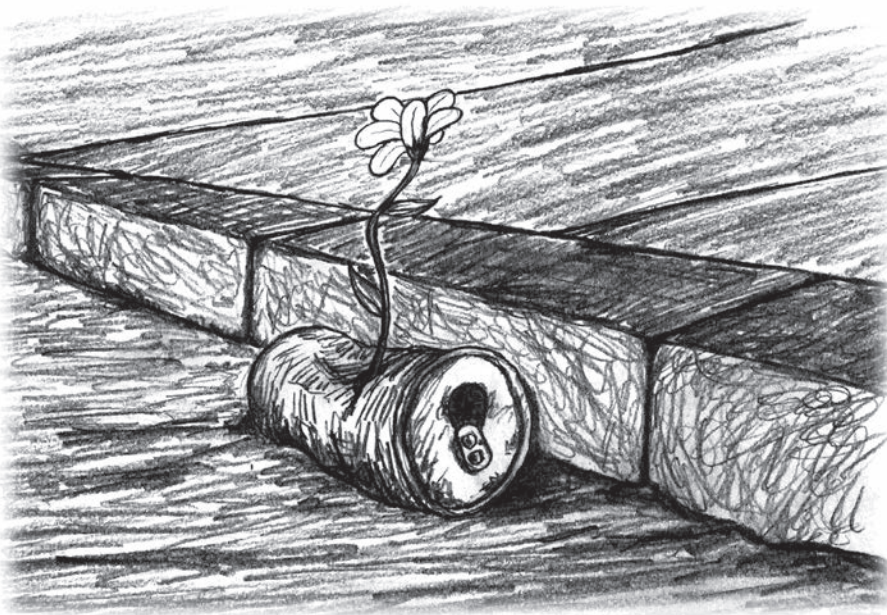


We have much to distract us from unhappy thoughts. Culturally, we are all becoming the same kind of shiny and new on the outside, imitations of the imitations on the televisions we are glued to. Like our ecological diversity, our cultural diversity is being decimated, as languages and indigenous people disappear, robbed of their lands and cultures and pushed to the margins of cities. Cities of despair.

All the while our souls are withering inside. We have never been so much alike, yet we have never been so polarised, so separate from the best of what we can be.

It is as if we have become mad. The world seems to be unravelling.

And yet. And yet. People continue to live, to be generous and loving, creative and courageous and even hopeful, each surviving culture still containing a deep pool of the humanity that connects us all.



This is our world, beautiful and, though terribly ill, still bursting with life and potential. We are not done yet.

But where do we begin? What is the real work?

For many this might seem to be an arrogant question, or terribly naïve. But if the political and economic systems we have constructed to help us make decisions and see to our needs have become useless and corrupt, then where will the stimulus for change come from if not ourselves, from you and I?

'The world is too dangerous to live in – not because of the people who do evil but because of the people who sit and let it happen'.

– Albert Einstein

All the while our souls are withering inside. We have never been so much alike, yet we have never been so polarised, so separate from the best of what we can be.

Millions of people are already hard at work trying to change things. Every day they dedicate themselves to making life and the planet a better place.

There have been massive protest movements: Occupy, Ghezi Park, Brazil, Arab Spring and the unprecedented service delivery protests in the townships of Cape Town and other South African cities – more than ten thousand a year. Yet most protests have delivered little or nothing, except a hardening of attitudes on both sides. Despite the dramatic headlines, these are just the visible tip of the ice-berg. Protest has a place but only sometimes leads to lasting or beneficial change. And those of us who fight the system often strengthen it, as more taxes are poured into the police, military and intelligence services. We need wiser approaches. Yes, we must oppose the system that hurts us, but change will not dawn until we create something new.

Already people are moving beyond protest to remaking the world in more co-creative ways. Social movements, like Via Campesina and Shack Dwellers International working in rural and urban areas on all continents, and supported by small NGOs and academics, are inventing spaces in which to engage governments in new kinds of co-creative partnerships. These farmer associations and housing federations are drawing in governments to participate in the initiative of citizens, reversing the leadership of social change in historic new ways.

And yes, there are people from the suburbs visiting the townships, offering their professional skills to support local initiatives. They now have someone to visit, someone they know.

Many social change initiatives are isolated and piecemeal, making some difference where they are but having little impact on the deeper causes. Indeed, our attempts to deal with poverty, exclusion or oppression may bring relief but sometimes they also provide an unwitting release valve for the system, or a safety net, even delaying change. Do we fix the system or replace it?

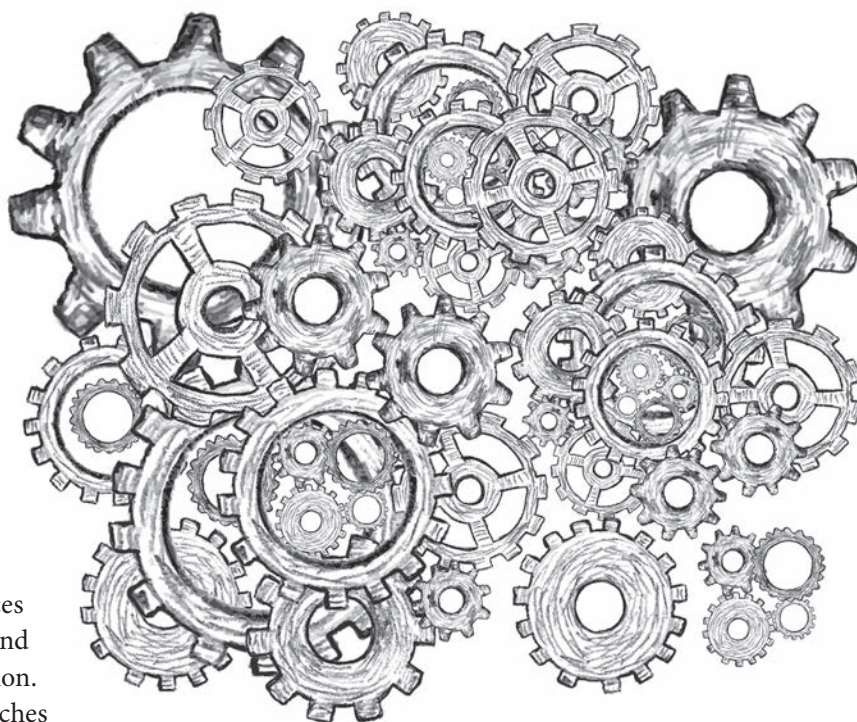
The cycles are complex, the wheels having wheels in wheels. Can we see where things truly turn and where we can do some turning that takes us to a new place? Can we think a bit more about the questions we need to ask?

This Barefoot Guide is not a book of answers, but one of questions, experiences and learnings. “What is the real work of social change?” Inside there are stories of change, of determined and courageous people taking creative initiatives, presented here not as some vain or prideful “best practice model”, but as something to be learned from, to deepen our questions, to be more thoughtful in our practice.

Lasting change must happen at multiple levels. Good policies cannot be implemented in disorganised communities and communities cannot change their lives if they are being thwarted by bad policy. And so we have gathered stories and analyses from change approaches at individual, community, societal and global levels, each level as important as the next and to the next. Change goes in all directions. The future of local community increasingly depends on changes at a global level and likewise global change must be rooted and sustained in authentic community mobilisation and transformation.

This book is a small feast of experiences and ideas, serious and playful, obvious and mysterious. Our own small contribution. You are invited to sample whatever catches your eye, whatever speaks to your circumstances and need.

The cycles are complex, the wheels having wheels in wheels. Can we see where things truly turn and where we can do some turning that takes us to a new place?



There are writings by many people and in many ways. Most of it is the fruit of a week-long “Writeshop” facilitated in Johannesburg in November 2013 for over 30 people, from 16 different countries on 5 continents. The Writeshop began with people sharing questions, experiences, stories and their personal change journeys. Out of these developed case studies and other pieces which we engaged with in groups, from being individual writers to co-writers.



Most participants had never really written a significant piece before and so the Writeshop was an opportunity to share some creative writing skills and frameworks, including free-writing, deep listening and questioning, action-learning and surfacing the “inside” or hidden stories. First drafts were developed. After the Writeshop people continued to work on their pieces, as part of writing groups, connected by email and Skype.

Other people who could not be at the Writeshop submitted pieces for consideration and some have found their way in.

We have a variety of illustrators this time, breaking a few rules of consistent look and layout, but hopefully displaying more of the rich diversity we have access to and from which we draw our creative impulses to meet the diversity out there.

Eventually all the pieces were handed over to the Editorial Team who, with the illustrators and layout people, have brought it to you as finished piece, although in many ways a book is only “finished” when it has been read and hopefully used, as each reader participates in reworking what they read into their own practice.



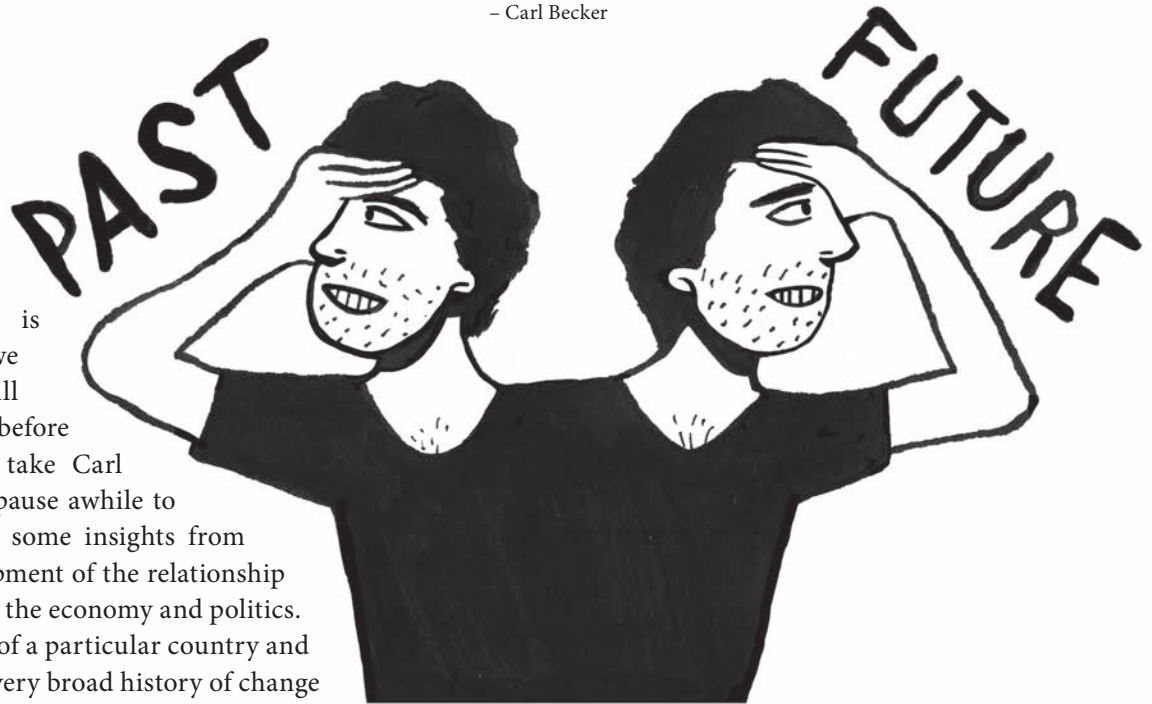
We invite you, dear readers and fellow practitioners, to write to us and share your stories, approaches and resources through our website and other social media. Most importantly we hope to meet and work with you in many many ways in our collective task as active citizens to reshape the world and the earth into a more humane place for the many generations to come.

CHAPTER ONE

Histories of social CHANGE – from way back into the future...

“The value of history is, indeed, not scientific but moral: by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies...it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future .”

– Carl Becker



The big question is always “Where are we going and how will we get there?” But before we rush there let’s take Carl Becker’s advice and pause awhile to look back and draw some insights from the historical development of the relationship between civil society, the economy and politics. We have a case story of a particular country and after that we paint a very broad history of change through the ages.

Woven into these histories is the question of “What kind of social change really matters?” and some consideration of the nature of change itself.

To begin. The history of Finland is presented here through the life story of the grandmother of one of our writer’s. It is a fascinating case study in how it is possible for different sectors of society to find each other and succeed in developing an alternative path. It represents such a clear and inspiring historical example of how civil society and active citizens in Finland, as in the other countries of Scandinavia, were able to engage with political and economic societies in co-creative ways, leading to the development of one of the most comprehensive systems of social care, education and welfare within a thriving economy.

“We should always be aware that what now lies in the past once lay in the future.”

– F.W. Maitland

Social changes in my grandmother's time

By Laura Lager, Finland

My grandmother Hilja was born in 1900, 17 years before Finland declared itself to be an independent state and 50 years before Finland started developing a welfare state. Grandmother lived almost a century until she died in 1993.

My grandmother was born to a small farming family. Her parents were peasant farmers, living simply, growing most of what they needed to feed themselves and sending a small surplus to market. But by the time she was only 12 both of her parents had died, leaving three orphans. And so the three children were sent to be raised by different step families. The farm and belongings of the farmhouse were sold to pay for their upbringing.

Getting an education

My grandmother's childhood was challenging and hard, but she was lucky to be raised by a wise woman who appreciated education and wanted her to be successful in life. Hilja used all the possible learning opportunities. As a young adult she attended a Folk High School where she did social and spiritual studies.

Folk High Schools were founded in Nordic countries to offer people from all social classes non-formal and general adult education. The Danish founder of the Folk School system, Nikolai Grundtvig, highlighted student-centred learning and the building of cultural and historical identity. It was soon after the civil war in 1918 after Finland became independent from Russia, that the state legislated a 50% support for folk high schools.

In many ways Folk High Schools, together with other civil society organisations, laid the foundation for the society that we became.

After a year in Folk High School, Hilja continued studying childcare and gained a profession. Her teacher was a visionary and pioneering professor in childcare. My grandmother had no difficulty finding a job at a nursery for small children of factory worker women.



The Civil War

My grandmother was 17 years old when the civil war broke out. There had been long-time tensions between population groups and from the radicalization of the workers' movement. I never heard my grandmother speak about those times when neighbours and community members fought against each other. As the nation polarized, so did civil society organisations. It was only several decades later that these wounds were healed and the division into two political camps ended. Leftist organisations were forbidden during the rightwing radicalism in the 30's, and after losing the war to the Soviet Union many rightwing organisations were forbidden.

Welfare

In comparison to my grandmother, I was born in the years of great transition and the development of the welfare state. When I was a child, I often heard a saying “it’s like winning in a lottery to be born in Finland”. People who said that had witnessed the building of a welfare society which gave equal access to all citizens of a whole range of services, like education, healthcare, pension plans, sickness insurance, unemployment insurance, workmen’s compensation, family aid for struggling families, free and supported child-care, services for the disabled and services for substance abusers.

I can also join associations and express myself freely, even when I’m not satisfied with the decision-makers and public institutions. Taxpayers’ money is used also to support organisations whose role it is criticize and keep an eye on politicians and civil servants. These important foundations for my educational and societal possibilities were already built during the time when most of the people were economically poor.

When looking back at my grandmother’s youth and adulthood, I see that these possibilities have some background that was much more than just a random lottery. One of my questions is why Finland, which did not colonise any other nations, was able to develop economically and socially and avoid large-scale corruption?

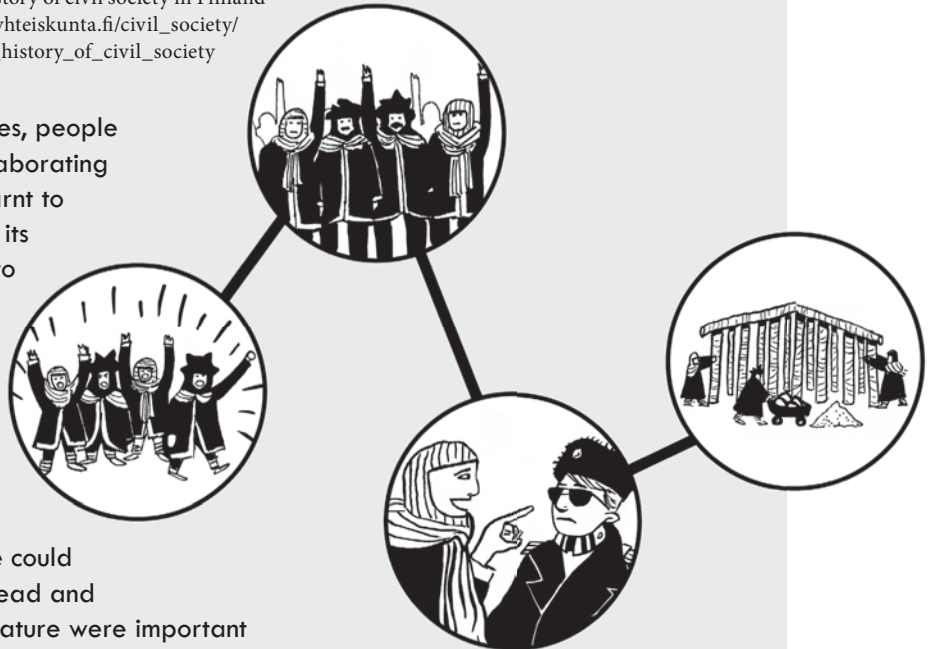
I can say that independence and the welfare state were built on the basis of strong civic action and civil society.

“People’s activities in organizations, political parties and trade unions influenced the intellectual, spiritual and economic development of the entire country. With the help of the Folk High Schools and their non-formal adult education, people acquired knowledge and skills and grew into active citizens.”

– Aaro Harju: The history of civil society in Finland
http://www.kansalaisyhteiskunta.fi/civil_society/the_history_of_civil_society

By participating in civic activities, people learnt democratic ways of collaborating and making decisions. They learnt to hold institutions responsible for its actions. People got motivated to act for common goals through associations. Voluntarism gave both meaning to life and developed the society.

Churches and religious organisations also had a big role in developing the educational foundation. People could not marry before learning to read and write. Local language and literature were important and encouraged by reading societies. Enterprises needed capable workers and social stability. The Women’s Movement was active and for example in the first parliament of 1907-08 there were 19 women out of 200 representatives, a lot for the time. Today 40% are women. Sports, educational, political, labour, youth and women’s movements emerged in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s.



Control of power

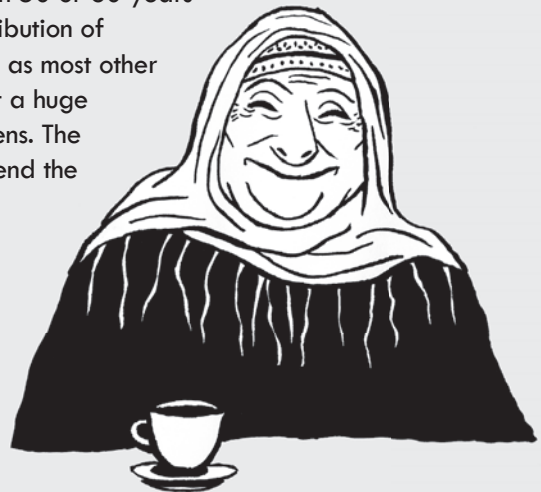
Why has Finland been one of the least corrupt countries in the world? We were a poor country at the time of independence, but state institutions, or bureaucracies, were already well-developed during the Russian regime. Bureaucracy sounds negative, but strong institutional structure is also a basis for democracy, where institutions control the use of power of other institutions and people in positions of power. Formal and non-formal education was developed already before independence and the need for education was well appreciated. Civil society development was strong, with people participating broadly in civic action and civil society organisations, holding government accountable.

Dissonances

I don't believe that some generations can be wiser than generations before. Finland developed enormously during my grandmother's lifetime, but not without cost and suffering. Some minority groups, like the Sami and Rom people suffered inhumane treatment, their rights seriously violated.

Nowadays, although the welfare state is still intact, the mainstream ideology lets economic power rule over political power. Finland seems richer than 50 or 60 years ago when the welfare society grew rapidly, but the distribution of wealth is more and more unequal, though still not as bad as most other countries. Finland is one of the least corrupt countries, but a huge amount of tax money of the rich now ends up in tax havens. The struggle of civil society will always be to continue to defend the gains we have made.

My grandmother never became rich money-wise, but she was surrounded by loving relatives and friends. She raised three children and got to see a number of grandchildren. She was humble, but strong, she never demanded things for herself, but didn't get repressed, she was decisive and worked hard, she trusted others and was open-minded. She had a strong social consciousness, built in the Folk High School and her life experiences and she helped to build the welfare state, as an active citizen.



Bureaucracy sounds negative, but strong institutional structure is also a basis for democracy, where institutions control the use of power of other institutions and people in positions of power.

Some ideas to consider...

What struck us when we heard this story was the emphasis on citizen-centred popular education in Finland, where people learned to collaborate and to make decisions together, where cultural and historic identity were as important as learning practical skills. Scandinavia as a whole benefitted from the Folk High School approach which brought together all sections of society and embedded the importance of citizen engagement in social, economic and political life. We agree with Laura that this story is not a fluke or happy accident. Many forces converged to create the opportunity for change which the Finnish people embraced, although the story, as Laura reveals, is not without its dark side. Across the globe, including Finland, the rights of indigenous people have been trampled for the sake of progress, profit and development. It took decades for the Finnish people to heal the divides between people with different political beliefs.

The Folk High School system continues to operate in Scandinavian countries. This informal citizen-centred educational system strengthened civil society across the spectrum and influenced the way countries like Finland approached their economic and political lives, rather than the other way around. We seem to want to create social change economically and politically without having invested in people, building a new culture and strengthening the web which holds it all together. We seem to want to have the most important part of strengthening and changing civil society to happen by magic and through economic and political means.

These days the emphasis is not on a deep notion of “popular education” but on technical “capacity building” which feels like such a mechanical notion, rather like installing new software on a computer! But in Finland there were many pieces in the puzzle, including the role of churches, the part-funding by the state and the critical role of the Women’s Movement. And we have been reminded that achievements have to be protected or renewed, as these rights can become eroded, especially by those who find them unprofitable.

What kind of social change matters?

Social change is our common striving to become more humane and civil. At one level this striving is quite simple. We all want to eat, to sleep, to be healthy, to be safe, to have families and friends and to do useful work. But to be fully human we need more than these, things that are less tangible but no less real. We can sleep and eat equally well under a democracy or a dictatorship, but can we be equally human?

In our striving to be more human, what really matters to us? We explore a few ways of looking at this question, some windows to look through at our lives and circumstances and see what this suggests about what to do.

The first window is a brief history of the world.



We explore a few ways of looking at this question, some windows to look through at our lives and circumstances and see what this suggests about what to do.

A. The Changing Shape of Society: Political, Economic and Civil Society over the Ages

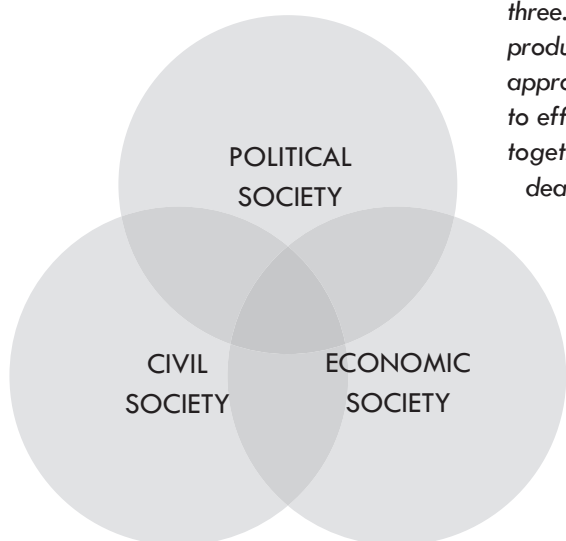
As human beings we have, within each of us, different lives: a mental life, an emotional life and an intentional, energetic, physical life. We are thinking, feeling and willing beings. These three interact to give shape to our behaviour and responses to the world around us. At a grander scale society has similar lives or societies: Political society, civil society and economic society.

We have spoken about this in Barefoot Guide 1:

Nicanor Perlas, a Filipino activist, writes about the three fold nature of society. He sees society as being made up of the three interacting spheres, namely, civil society, government and business. He refers to this as the three fold nature of social life. He makes a case for the importance of the creative tension between these three subsystems for the healthy development of society. The creative forces in society come alive where the three come together in their attempts to shape each other. Society gets stuck when any one of the three becomes too dominant to the point where they are no longer fulfilling their unique purpose.

Perlas starts by describing the important functions of each of the three. He sees economic society e.g. business as dealing with “the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services for the appropriate satisfaction of human needs”. Its role is “to harness nature to efficiently meet human needs” through organising society to work together. Political society, largely government, is the “subsystem that deals with equality in all aspects of human relations”.

Perlas views civil society as the “culturalsphere” of society and describes it as “that subsystem of society concerned with the development of full human capacities and the generation of knowledge, meaning, art, ethics, and a sense of the sacred. Culture is the realm that gives identity and meaning, that represents the deeper voice of community. This is the realm that develops the full human potential of individuals and organisations and enables them to be competent participants in the economy, political life, culture, and society at large.” Civil society, as the people and organisations, thus plays a unique and deeply humanising role in the development of society.



Let us briefly examine how social change, over the ages, has been governed by the relationship between the three:

A Brief History of the World

Hunter-gatherer and early agrarian societies of early history: the unity of the three societies

In the clans of hunter-gatherer and early agrarian societies political, economic and civil life were unified – people worked and organised themselves where they lived. In other words, governance, work and cultural expression were done by the same people in the same place. Families and clans who did the work also controlled the land and tools, and made their own decisions, all governed within a community culture.



The age of feudalism and slavery: political society comes to dominate

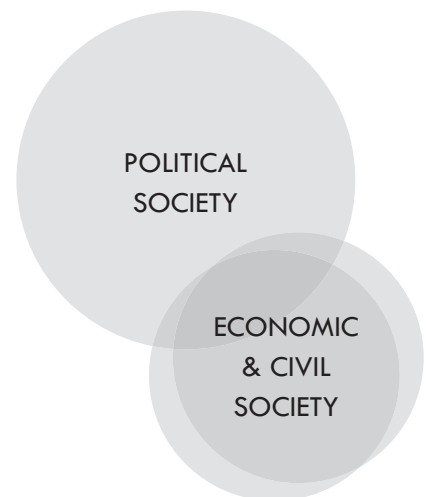
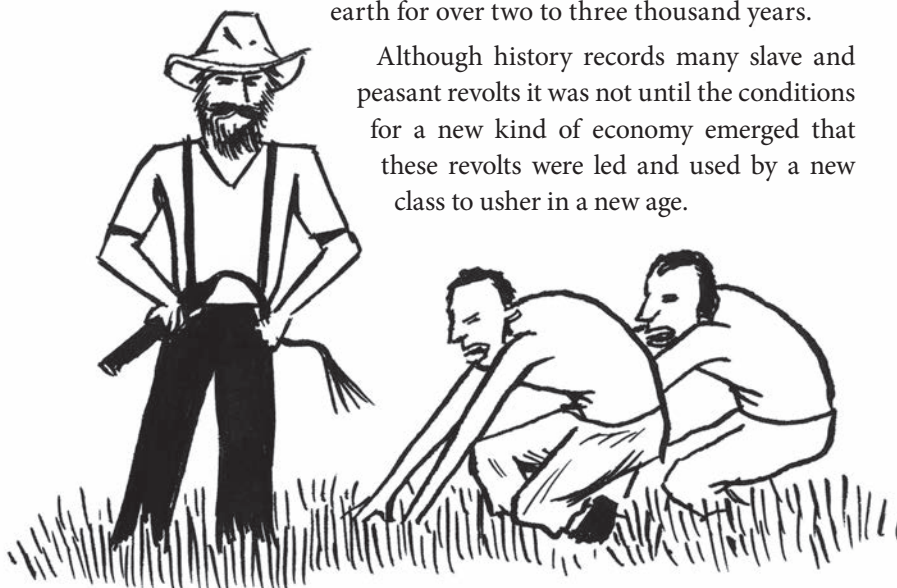
From a few thousand years ago these hunter gatherers started settling, farming wild grains and domesticating animals. On all continents, over time, human creativity, learning, sharing and organisation enabled agricultural productivity and military technology to grow and develop. Surpluses from agriculture and warfare or raiding supported and enabled a **political class** (chiefs, lords, kings and emperors) to emerge which developed various forms of feudal serfdom and slavery through which they perpetuated their power.

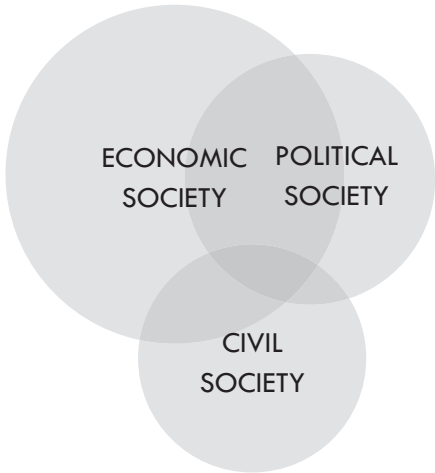
Civil society expressions of culture and religion came to support and justify their political rule.

Economic society, the world of work, continued to be located where people lived in community – so people also usually lived where they worked, still connected to the land.

Huge feudal and slave-based empires grew in South America, Europe, West and North Africa, the Middle East and Asia, dominating life on earth for over two to three thousand years.

Although history records many slave and peasant revolts it was not until the conditions for a new kind of economy emerged that these revolts were led and used by a new class to usher in a new age.





The age of capitalism: Economic society comes to dominate

In Europe some 500 years ago the political monarchies or royalty started to lose power to a bourgeois **economic class** of traders and capitalists who emerged to challenge the oppressive and economically stifling power of the feudal states. They needed some freedom to enable them to make profits. Riding on the backs of popular discontent, they and their followers campaigned and fought for political reforms that “freed” up labour and land to be more easily exploited, enabling a vastly more productive economic system that laid the basis for the modern age of industrialisation.

By the 1800s, many of these bourgeois movements mobilised the starving and angry masses to carry them to power, only to further exploit them under new capitalist economies, as both agricultural and industrial workers.

Although the common folk became more politically free, they endured huge hardships as they were also “freed” from their connection to the land, losing access and ownership to become labourers who could be hired and fired at will. This also led to mass migrations to the cities where they became workers, spurring the growth of industrialisation.



At the same time the European economic and political elites developed the African Slave Trade and Colonialism which, apart from the enormous devastation and misery these caused, provided vast resources to fuel Western economies to enable them to take off and become the dominating force of history in the past few centuries.

Thus the whole world became transformed as economics and the profit motive came to dominate.

Of course people in the colonies did not sit back, but fought doggedly for their freedom and independence which they eventually gained. However, whilst they became free from political domination they continued to be dominated economically by the same system. The leaders of almost all victorious anti-colonial movements, many with visions of social emancipation and equality, became nationalist political and economic elites, often developing their countries in the image of their former colonial masters. Those who tried to steer their countries in another path were either undermined or assassinated.

Today economic society through multinational banks and corporations continues to dominate and shape political and civil society, globally bending political and civil society to its needs. A shallow form of political democracy exists through which some of the excesses of capitalism are sometimes tamed.

So, while there is some form of political democracy, this has not led to any form of economic democracy as inequality continues to grow. At present the richest 1% of people own half the world's wealth, more than at any time in the history of the planet.

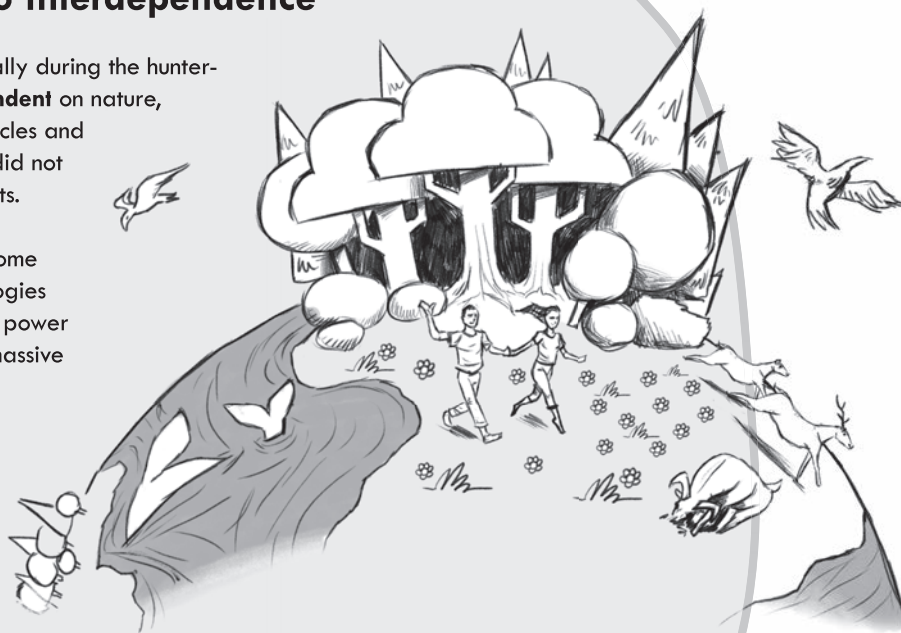
This has enabled those with money to shape culture, media and opinion and therefore votes towards supporting their interests. Successful politicians increasingly owe their positions to corporate sponsorship while global culture (music, film, sport etc.) has become big business that not only makes massive profits but also defines what matters most to billions of people – elevating music, film and sports stars to demi-gods. The culture of civil society has become commercialised.

The historical relationship between humanity and the earth: from dependence to independence... and now to interdependence

For much of human history, especially during the hunter-gatherer age we have been **dependent** on nature, shaping our lives according to its cycles and rhythms, whatever it provided and did not provide, at the mercy of the elements.

As technology and organisation developed we have gradually become more **independent** through technologies like irrigation, fertilisers, antibiotics, power stations etc. This laid the basis for massive productivity and industry, but in this separation we have damaged and over-used earth's resources and triggered a potentially cataclysmic change in earth's climate.

Part of the real work of social change is to recognise the **interdependency** of all living forms, including human beings, and to transform our technology, organisation and consumption to live in a sustainable balance with nature, one that is mutually supportive.



Coming of Age: is Civil Society beginning to emerge as a force?

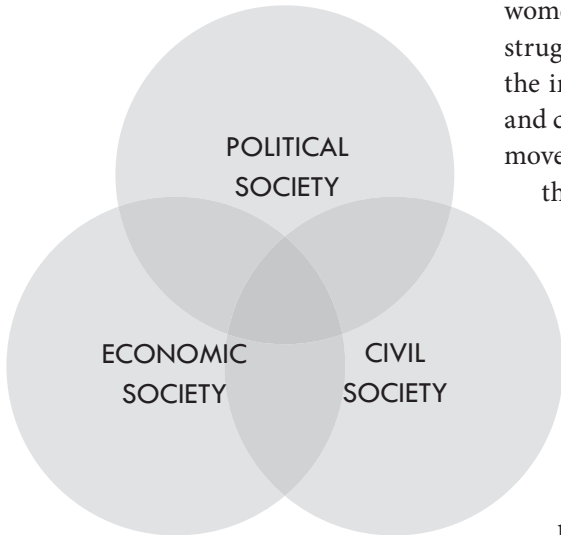
The story of the rise of modern capitalism did not happen in front of a passive population. Driven by the strivings of ordinary people to be free, equal and to live and work in solidarity, civil society has continued to emerge as a historical force. Witness the anti-slavery, trade union, women's and civil rights movements and the many anti-colonial struggles. Civil society struggles like the banning of child labour and the introduction of the 8-hour working day, were led by trade unions and citizen's movements worldwide. More recently huge environmental movements have emerged to challenge the destructive and planet threatening nature of purely profit-driven economies. These movements and struggles have shaped and continue to shape the nature of society.

Make no mistake, free health-care, schooling, human working conditions, support for culture, civil rights and many other humane laws and services, which some of us take for granted, were seldom gifts from the ruling elites but rather victories of civil society organisations and movements led by and mobilising ordinary citizens, against fierce opposition from politicians and businesspeople.

Of course, within the elites and the institutions they control, there are people who share the strivings of ordinary people and who play an important role in helping to shape society. But history shows that the elites themselves need to be shaped by civil society, to be civilised.

What will the future bring? Civil society continues to advocate for societal change because we can see that through the ages humans can change, societies can change and politics and economics adapt to new visions and values.

What might this new world and its values look like? Let's look through another window:



B. The Max-Neef Model of Human-Scale Development – The Wheel of Human Needs

Manfred Max-Neef is a Chilean economist who has worked for many years with the issues of social and economic development. For him conventional models of development have led to increasing poverty, massive debt and ecological disaster for many. Max-Neef and his colleagues have developed a classification of diverse human needs and a process by which communities can identify their “wealths” and “poverties” according to how these needs are satisfied. He distinguishes between “needs” and “satisfiers”. Human needs are seen as few, finite and classifiable (as distinct from the conventional notion that “wants” are infinite and insatiable). Not only this, they are constant through all human cultures and across historical time periods. What changes over time and between cultures is the way these needs are satisfied. It is important that human needs are understood as a system - i.e. they are interrelated and interactive. This is not a hierarchy of needs (apart from the basic need for subsistence or survival) as postulated by Western psychologists such as Maslow, but rather a system where different and diverse approaches must be taken to satisfy them.



The Max-Neef Model of Human-Scale Development - And the Wheel of Human Needs

Needs are also defined according to the existential categories of being, having, doing and interacting, and from these dimensions, a 36 cell matrix is developed which can be filled with examples of satisfiers for those needs.

NEEDS ↕ and SATISFIERS ➔	BEING (qualities)	HAVING (things)	DOING (actions)	INTERACTING (settings)
Subsistence – we need to physically stay alive	physical and mental health	food, shelter, work	feed, clothe, rest, work	living environment, social setting
Protection – we need to be safe	care, adaptability, autonomy	social security, health systems, work	co-operate, plan, take care of, help	social environment, dwellings
Affection – we need love, of various kinds	respect, sense of humour, generosity, sensuality	friendships, family, relationships with nature	share, take care of, make love, express emotions	privacy, intimate spaces of togetherness
Understanding – we need to understand and be understood	critical capacity, curiosity, intuition	literature, teachers, policies, educational	analyse, study, meditate, investigate,	schools, families, universities, communities,
Participation – we need to be actively part of community	receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour	responsibilities, duties, work, rights	cooperate, dissent, express	associations, parties, churches, neighbourhoods
Leisure – we need to relax, breathe out	imagination, tranquillity, spontaneity	games, parties, peace of mind	day-dream, remember, relax, have fun	landscapes, intimate spaces, places to be alone
Creativity – we need to be artistic and inventive	imagination, boldness, inventiveness, curiosity	abilities, skills, work, techniques	invent, build, design, work, compose, interpret	spaces for expression, workshops, audiences
Identity – we need to know who we are	sense of belonging, self- esteem, consistency	language, religions, work, customs, values, norms	get to know oneself, grow, commit oneself	places one belongs to, everyday settings
Freedom – we need to be free to be ourselves, not oppressed by anyone	autonomy, passion, self- esteem, open- mindedness	equal rights	dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness	anywhere

Satisfying needs

Satisfiers also have different characteristics: pseudo satisfiers, inhibiting satisfiers, singular satisfiers, or synergistic satisfiers. Max-Neef shows that certain satisfiers, promoted as satisfying a particular need, in fact inhibit or destroy the possibility of satisfying other needs: e.g., the arms race, while ostensibly satisfying the need for protection, in fact then destroys subsistence, participation, affection and freedom; formal democracy, which is supposed to meet the need for participation often disempowers and alienates; commercial television, while used to satisfy the need for recreation, interferes with understanding, creativity and identity - the examples are everywhere.

Synergistic satisfiers, on the other hand, not only satisfy one particular need, but also lead to satisfaction in other areas: some examples are breast-feeding; self-managed production; popular education; democratic community organisations; preventative medicine; meditation; educational games.

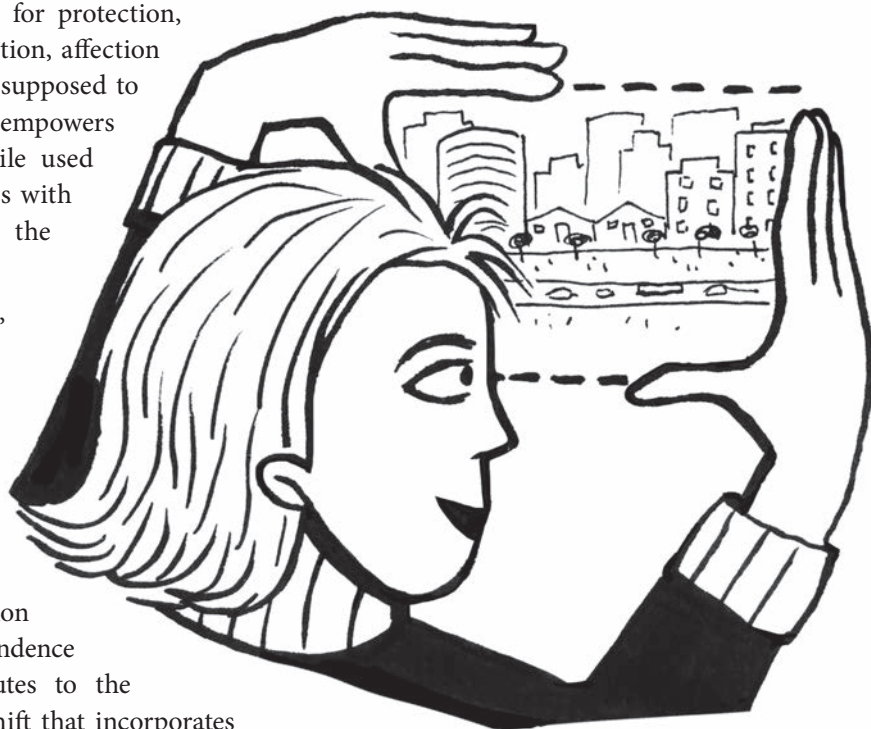
This model forms the basis of an explanation of many of the problems arising from a dependence on mechanistic economics, and contributes to the understanding necessary for a paradigm shift that incorporates systemic principles. Max-Neef and his colleagues have found that this methodology “allows for the achievement of in-depth insight into the key problems that impede the actualisation of fundamental human needs in the society, community or institution being studied” (Max-Neef et al, 1987:40)

This model provides a useful approach that meets the requirements of small group, community-based processes that have the effect of allowing deep reflection about one’s individual and community situation, leading to critical awareness and, possibly, action at the local economic level.

Can you find which of your needs are satisfied and how? For those of us working in social change can we see where the work we are now doing lies and are there other things here that we have not considered, that might be worth engaging?

What matters most? Exploring the relationship between Needs and Rights?

Understanding needs, their complexity and how they are connected, is critical for understanding how to deal with change. When women gather to fetch water from the river they are doing much more than that. Although it may take much time and involve drudgery, it can also be a time to chat, to deal with problems and discuss community affairs, to express affection, to participate, to be in community, to find their voice and power, away from their menfolk for a while – to satisfy several of the needs Max-Neef describes. When governments or NGOs propose to



Change must go deeper than laws and policies.

bring wells or pumps to relieve them of the long walk to the river, they may be unwittingly undermining many of these needs.

The way needs are satisfied is complex, and changing one dimension positively may disrupt another negatively. Single issue change approaches have severe limitations.

Understanding needs does not necessarily point to the right action for change.

Needs-based approaches can be too focused on the neediness of the poor as victims rather than as empowered actors. Rights-based approaches to change were developed to focus on “rights” rather than “needs”. Rights-based practice, now quite dominant in the world of NGOs, tries to bring democracy and the constitutional state to the community, arguing that all needs can be turned into rights, giving them more political punch, helping “rights-bearers” (e.g. children or communities) to find and assert their voice, and showing “duty-bearers” (e.g. parents or government)

where to take clear responsibility for respecting the same rights. The logic is strong but there is little consensus yet about whether it has been effective.

Part of the problem is letting “rights-based approaches” become shallow ideologies or quick-fix behaviour changes decreed by new rules or laws. Change must go deeper than laws and policies. And of course a right must be based on a real felt need; otherwise there will be no will to struggle for it.

Within families and communities, in their complex and intimate relationships, converting needs to rights can be destructive. We need love and affection, but cannot translate this to “I have a right to your love and affection!” In many circumstances obviously abusive and unequal behaviours between men and women or between parents and children can be dealt with through strengthening rights and responsibilities. The same may be said for the relationship between communities and local governments.

But we now know that this is not enough, because if only behaviours are changed through being declared unacceptable, it is common for other forms of abuse to emerge. Abusers and victims themselves often *need transformative change* or healing to help them to change how they feel about themselves and about others, not only how they must behave.

For us, both “needs” and “rights” are critical to our conversations for understanding the work of social change.



C. Freedom, equality and mutuality – fundamental strivings for sustainable change

There are countless approaches to bringing about change that will satisfy the needs and rights of people. But what conditions *sustain* the satisfaction of needs and rights? We would like to focus on three values or strivings of being human that are necessary for sustained human change. Although these three can also be seen as needs and rights, they are more fundamental to our identity, living at the heart of what it is to be human and the will to be alive:

We strive for freedom: of movement, expression, of association, of worship, to be ourselves. In freedom we stand open to give of ourselves and to receive the gifts of others. It is the condition of our creativity and of growth. If we are not free we are diminished and we suffer.

We strive for equality: with fairness, respect and equal treatment regardless of birth or circumstance. Male or female, black or white, urban or rural. We may be diverse, with more or less experience, responsibility or capability, living different lives, but at the heart of it all as humans standing before life, we are all equal, all worthwhile.

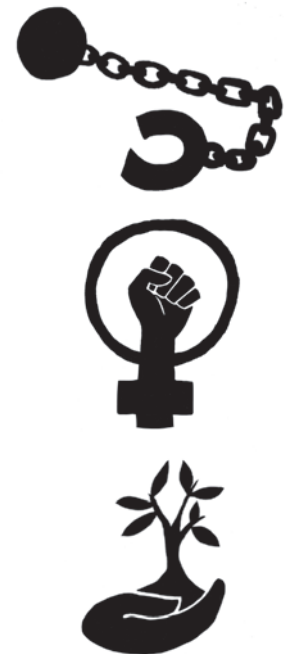
We strive for mutuality: we are social beings, needing to cooperate and associate, but also wanting to live and work with others and to do so in mutual harmony with the environment of which we are a part.

It is not by chance that one of the most significant revolutions of the ages, the French Revolution, which broke the back of the feudal order in Europe and paved the way for massive social change throughout the Western hemisphere, had as its rallying cry: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* - Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood (which we update to mutuality being more gender and environmentally sensitive!).

These are not separate strivings – they support and balance each other. Unfettered freedom can be chaotic and exploitative unless it is balanced by equality and mutuality. Uniform equality can be deadening unless it is enlivened by the diversity or variety of individual freedom. Mutuality recognises that free and equal human beings still depend on each other and on the environment and need to co-exist and cooperate.

These three conditions provide for a sustainable humanity, at peace with itself in its equality, creative in its freedom and able to work together in the consciousness that we share the same future.

In all major movements in the history of human social change, one or more of these three qualities or strivings have been present. Peasant and slave uprisings, the anti-slavery and anti-colonial movements were mostly about freedom. Later on the Civil Rights movements and Feminism emphasised equality. The struggles of trade unions have been on many fronts – freedom to organise and to have a say. Lately, with environmental decay and crisis, mutuality with the natural world has been advocated and worked for.



“ These three conditions provide for a sustainable humanity, at peace with itself in its equality, creative in its freedom and able to work together in the consciousness that we share the same future.

Change will come, that is inevitable. The question is whether it will be through catastrophic crisis and breakdown or through a more conscious and deliberate rethinking and reworking about how we want to live together.

Active citizenry – the missing ingredient

Politicians and businesspeople are key to the development of society. But when it comes to the significant questions of our age, like dealing with rampant inequality and climate change, politicians and businesspeople cannot be trusted, on their own, to take sufficient action, even in their own long-term interest. They are often too caught up in narrow, self-interested economic and political systems that are governed by short-term profits and 2 to 5 year election cycles. We need them to be incorruptible and far-sighted. Who will help them to become so?

A historic role for citizens, working together, to change the power equation and to help us rebalance life on this planet, is emerging. Change will come, that is inevitable. The question is whether it will be through catastrophic crisis and breakdown or through a more conscious and deliberate rethinking and reworking about how we want to live together.

We don't know how this will happen but it is becoming clear that citizen action through the development of deep democracy, governed by principles of freedom, equality and mutuality, is the only hopeful and sustainable way forward.



Countries like Finland strengthened their civil society through the Folk High School system. How can we support and strengthen civil society to be an active engaged citizenry in countries where radical change is needed?

Ordinary people throughout the world, working with government and business, are already starting to make changes at the local level. How can these separate initiatives and energies be both strengthened and come together in a way that brings change to the planet as a whole?



“Resistance is essential, but it’s not enough. As we fight the injustice around us, we also have to imagine – and create – the world we want. We have to build real alternatives in the here and now – alternatives that are not only living proof that things can be done differently, but that actively challenge, and eventually supplant, the power of the status quo”.

Naomi Klein, *“This Changes Everything”*

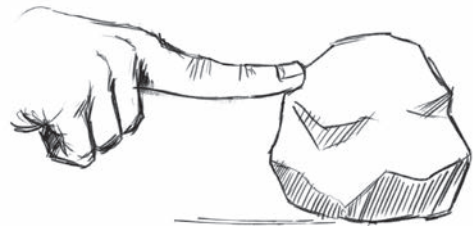
Working with Questions:

What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

“Cause and Effect”

“Cause and effect” analysis tries to explain how things change. It is a useful tool for understanding how inanimate objects move or how technical systems work. In these cases externally applied force has predictable and measurable effects or impacts. If I push this object here it predictably moves there. This is the science of physics and many people like to apply it to social change because it feels tidy, visible and accountable, or at least it has the illusion of being so. This is the great appeal of Logframes and similar methodologies.

Inanimate objects and systems have to be externally driven or energised because they contain no innate life of their own. But people and social systems are animate, alive and therefore internally driven beings, and do not react predictably to external force. Thus how they change cannot be explained by logical “cause and effect”. People cannot be pushed to change as if they were pieces on a chess board. Indeed to apply an external pressure for change is more likely to provoke resistance or further passivity. As Peter Senge observes: “People don’t resist change. They resist being changed.”



“Flux and Constraint”

The concept of “flux and constraint” is more accurate and helpful. We observe that living beings, organisations and social systems are always in a continuous flux, alive with potential change, from within. But this does not mean they are always changing. There are a series of constraints, internal and external, which hold us back, and that when lowered will enable the flux, releasing potential movement, driven from within. The dam wall breaks, and so change happens.

What are these constraints? Sometimes they are external conditions, lack of resources, a difficult law, oppression. Sometimes it comes from inner blockages, like fear, self-doubt or hatred.

If women in a community are stuck, seemingly passive, and unable to break out of dependence and subservience to their husbands or fathers, it is not because they are internally passive as a natural state, but because their will and capacity to change is held back by external customs or by internalised fear or lack of confidence. If they can be supported to remove or lower these constraints they may be able to change themselves and their power relationship to the world.

“As Peter Senge observes: “People don’t resist change. They resist being changed.”

Working with Questions:

What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

Three Kinds of Change

In working with communities, organizations, or networks, before we ask, “How do we change things?”, we like to ask, “How are things already changing and how is change being constrained?” In this way we are able to acknowledge and work with the innate forces for and against change.

In our work we have identified three dominant kinds of change that people, communities, and societies tend to go through.

Emergent change

This describes the day-to-day unfolding of life, of adaptive and uneven processes of unconscious and conscious learning from experience and the changes in attitudes and actions that result from that. This applies to individuals, families, communities, organizations, and societies adjusting to shifting realities, of trying to improve and enhance what they know and do, of building on what is there, step-by-step, uncertainly, but still learning and adapting. However successfully or unsuccessfully.

This is a natural form of the Action learning Cycle described in Chapter 5 of the Barefoot Guide 1 – Working with Organisations and Social Change.

Emergent change exists most strongly in unpredictable and fluid conditions. These may be a result of external uncertainties like an unstable economy or a fragile political dispensation, or from internal uncertainty where things are fragmented or still in formation.

In peri-urban areas around Cape Town, like many cities of the South, rural migrants arrive every day seeking work, health services and schools for their children. They gather and group on spare pieces of land, illegally occupying them. Some are connected through rural ties and some make new connections, for protection and support. They are emerging communities, still fragile and fractured and vulnerable to rivalries and exploitation. With time and experience leadership and a sense of place, trust and identity begins to form. Patriarchal and tribal rifts are still prevalent.

The Federation of the Urban Poor, built over time from organized shack dwellers, allied to the Shack Dwellers International, and supported by some NGOs, often begin work in such emergent communities through supporting women to form “daily savings groups” through which they elect trusted collectors (emergent leaders) to collect a small amount of change each day from each member. This provides a seedling foundation of local organization and leadership on which larger programs of change can be built in the future.



Working with Questions:

What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

Transformative change

At some stage in the development of people and organisations it is typical, and natural, for crisis to develop. This may be the product of a natural process of inner development: a young teenager starting to question her parents and torn between wanting to make up her own mind about things, yet still wanting to be a child; or an organization reaching the limits of its pioneering phase with its family-like structuring, roles and relationships, stuck and unable to grow without adopting a more systematic way of working, letting go of its informality and becoming more conscious and planned about the way it works. Crisis happens when it's hard to let go of things that we are familiar with but which no longer work for us. Crises may also happen when the world changes around us and we do not change with it.

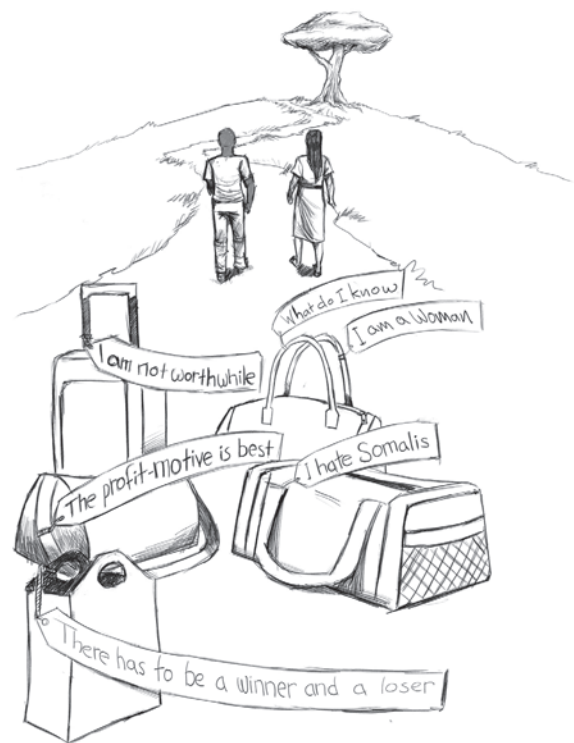
Crisis sets the stage for *transformative change*. Unlike emergent change, which is about learning our way into the future, transformative change is more about *unlearning*, of people letting go of those leading ideas, values, or beliefs that underpin the crisis, that no longer suit the situation or relationships that are developing.

This is known as the U-Process of change as described in Chapter 5 of the *Barefoot Guide 1 – Working with Organisations and Social Change*.

South Africa is riven by conflict and protest. Every day in scores of townships residents block the roads and march on their local councils, sometimes violently, to protest the lack of service delivery (water, housing, electricity). They feel cheated and expect the government to deliver. But the government cannot deliver on its own – its attempts at top-down delivery on the back of a bureaucratic infrastructure inherited from the Apartheid regime is failing amidst corruption and lack of capacity.

How easy is it to challenge the top down nature of the system and the assumptions that a passive citizenry must have its services delivered by an active government. Even the language of “rights”, which separates “rights holders” from “duty bearers” encourages the conception that local government and community have separate interests, and feeds their mutual alienation. Is it not increasingly clear that the endless cycles of protest and failed delivery will not end until communities and government let go of these notions and of the way they see each other? They may then be open to discovering more co-creative ways of communities bringing their resourcefulness and initiatives to meet the collective resources and larger systems of support held by the government.

At some stage in the development of people and organisations it is typical, and natural, for crisis to develop.



Working with Questions:

What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

What can we do to help either side to begin to see past this fruitless cycle? What new attitudes and values become important to the different parties, to meet the future, to transform themselves?

Projectable or Vision-led Change

Human beings can solve problems and imagine or vision different possibilities or solutions for the future. We can project possible visions or outcomes and formulate conscious plans to bring about change.

Where conditions of change, especially the relationships of a system, are reasonably coherent, stable, and predictable, and where unpredictable risks do not threaten desired results, then projectable change initiatives and well-planned projects become possible.

The fact is that many people in the Development Aid Industry, especially those who control and are responsible for finances and resource allocations, tend to like Projectable Change approaches because they give the illusion of control and accountability, even when the conditions for projects simply do not yet exist. Indeed few situations of marginalization, impoverishment, or oppression are projectable, by definition. Other work, often emergent or transformative, needs to be done before projects make sense.

The key is not to rush into any particular approach, but rather to observe what kinds of change are already at play and to see if there are ways to work within and out of these.

How can we build a sensibility to more accurately read the nature of change conditions and formulate approaches to change that can work with these?

Other work, often emergent or transformative, needs to be done before projects make sense.



Working with Questions:

What is Social Change and Resistance to Change?

Resistance to change

Working with resistance to change is at the heart of transformation. In our heads we may know we have to change but deeper down we are held captive, frozen in the current state and unable to let go.

Consider these three primary causes of resistance:



Fear of losing power, privilege, identity. Fear of being hurt, or worse. Fear of the unknown that will disrupt what we have become used to, even if these are just coping strategies for what has not worked;



Doubt and self-doubt that they or I cannot be better or do what is required, that we and our ideas are inadequate, that we do not have the capability;



Hatred or self-hatred. The bases of many forms of racism. Where there has been conflict, abuse or trauma we can be consumed by bitterness, resentment and revenge or paradoxically blame or even hate ourselves for what we have done or not done or even what has been done to us. We are not worthwhile.

All of these block the will or flux of change. There are no easy methods for working with these deep resistances. The real work here is to look for ways to surface and share them, to bring them to light, to give them perspective, to enable them to be expressed. Through naming and verbalising comes the possibility of release, of freeing ourselves. Helping people to share their stories is a well tried approach, often cathartic for tellers and listeners. Simply asking ourselves and sharing what we fear, doubt and hate, and supporting honest answers and conversations is sometimes all that is required.

On the other side of fear, doubt and hatred we can find courage, faith and love. Good ideas for change are useless without courage to make them happen and so central to our work is to en-courage each other to face our fears. Certainty is the opposite of doubt but hardly possible in the face of unpredictable realities. And so faith that human beings can rise above difficulties, helps us to deal with doubt.

And then love, one of the least spoken words in the books and workshops on social change, but without which little is sustainable or even worthwhile. Perhaps the mysterious and transcendent nature of love is too difficult for many to express explicitly or the scientist in us remains cautious of something that refuses to be measured and quantified. Imagine a report to a donor that states "we notice that people love each other 50% more than last year." But there can be few lasting transformations that are not centred on the transformation of the heart.

How do we work with doubt and faith, fear and courage and hatred and love more consciously in our practice?

... there can be few lasting transformations that are not centred on the transformation of the heart.

It starts

One step forward
One door opened
One voice heard

Two people speak
for the first time
Each of them sees
the other's humanity

Three join hands
Four agree not to fight
Five ask questions
Six listen hard

Seven sing eight dance
Nine create a space
and invite ten in

Many reflect many connect
Many share many care
Many persevere
Everyone changes

Tracey Martin

CHAPTER TWO

Start counting FROM ONE: Individuals and social change



When we talk about social change, we talk about movements and organisations, about building a critical mass. We talk about going national and going global. But movements and organisations are made up of individuals. An individual who speaks out or who acts, often at great risk to themselves, makes a difference. An individual can be an instigator, a follower, a dissenter, a supporter, a facilitator. All these are active roles that are needed to bring about social change. What moves an individual to act? What awakens them to the need for change? Psychologists and philosophers have argued over this for centuries – is it selfishness? Guilt? Fear? Courage? Compassion? Knowledge? Are we just caught up in historical forces over which we have little or no control?

Motivations are necessarily complex and often mysterious even to the individuals themselves.

But reflection – a conscious attempt to understand ourselves better – is often part of the process. In order to understand and change others and the society we live in we start with understanding and changing ourselves.

This chapter includes reflective stories, stories of self-exploration, where the storytellers start with self-reflection and move on to look at their own practice and their place in the world. This self-reflection enables them to understand others better. It also includes stories that are acute observations of individuals who have taken steps to change the world and consider what might have moved them to do so.

Each story is unique and by presenting a variety of stories and reflections, we hope to stimulate readers to reflect on themselves and those around them. What motivates you to change? How can you support others to change?

Me, Myself, I: Identity and Social Change

Our understanding of the world around us and its injustices often starts with our own experiences. The realisation that other people are judging us and making assumptions about us, because of the way we look or where we come from, can profoundly shift the way we see the world. It can lead to anger and frustration, even a feeling of powerlessness. But it can also lead us to think about how we judge others and understand how identity is made and how stereotypes can be challenged. It can lead us on the journey towards a world where people are able to forge their own identities and where we can meet each other on our own terms.

My personal journey

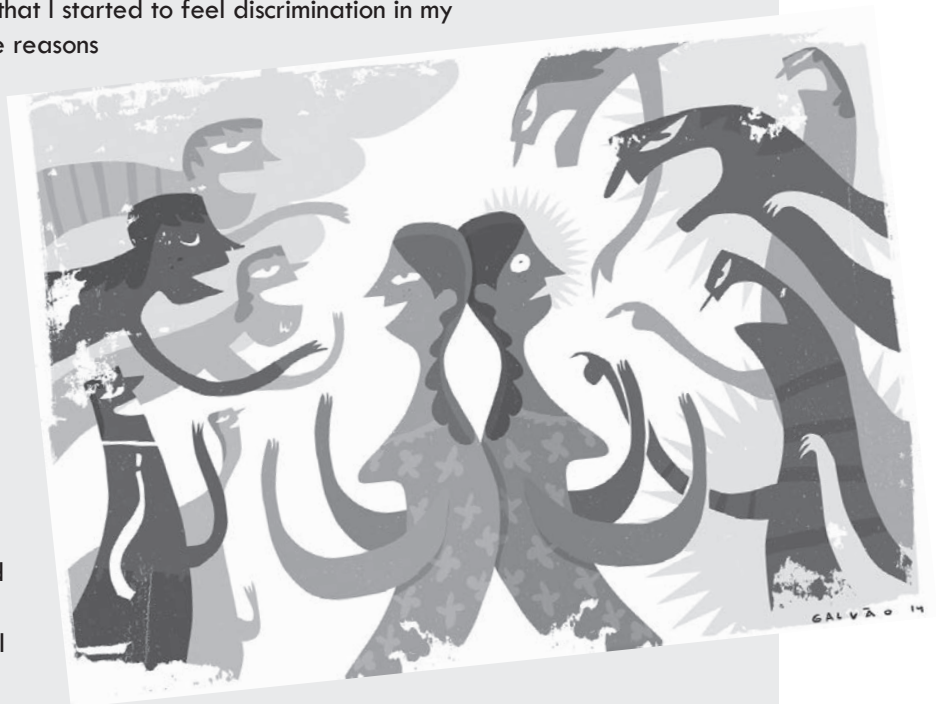
Elis Motta

I was born in a middle-class Brazilian family. My parents and grandparents were able to provide shelter, plenty to eat and access to good education and excellent health services. Even in times of “struggle,” none of these things was ever threatened. This made us a “minority” in terms of population numbers, but mainstream in terms of the power and privilege we automatically earned without having to make any effort to achieve them.

Our socio-economic status is only one of the aspects that form our identity. In my case, not only did my family belong to the middle-class, but also, in Brazil, we are a white family. These two characteristics made my position of privilege even stronger. For over 20 years of my life I truly believed that I did not suffer oppression or discrimination of any type – certainly not if I compared myself to the vast majority of the Brazilian population.

Of course, I was aware of the oppression and inequality so present in my country. Brazil has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world and also suffers from historical racial inequalities. Because of this, for many years I considered whatever discrimination I might experience for being a woman, for example, as something minor in that context. Being aware of my class and race privileges made me feel that I was immune to any gender discrimination.

It was only as an adult that I started to feel discrimination in my own skin. There were three reasons for this change. My own understanding of what it means to be a woman changed, and I became more aware of the dynamics and effects of sexism and oppression related to gender. I moved to a totally different social and cultural context where my identity as a white person was no longer recognized by the people and official institutions around me. And being a heterosexual no longer reflected my sexual orientation.



These changes happened over a period of 2 years and caused a significant shift in my perspective of privilege and oppression. I no longer understood the fact that, for safety reasons, I could not walk by myself at night as my brother could, as being just part of life or just 'that's how the world is'. I'm not saying such safety precautions should be ignored. What I am saying is that they are simply not fair and we should not just accept it as 'this is how it has always been, this is how it will always be'. Also, after moving to the United States, for the first time in my life people around me had a different perception of my racial identity. Now instead of being white, I was considered Latina and was quickly shifted from the mainstream to the margin. Finally, as I started dating women, for the first time in my life I had the following thought: 'Is it safe for me to hold my partner's hand in public?' This in itself was an explosion of awareness of all the privilege I had experienced throughout my life, simply for being in heterosexual relationships.



But even with these three significant changes, the privileges which come with being a middle-class person have made it a lot easier for me to deal with the discrimination I faced for being a woman, being perceived as Latina and for being queer. Our different identities are not independent of each other. They are all interlocked and the dynamics between them make us who we are. The combination of all our identities (even the ones that change over time) also has a huge influence on how we are affected by power and privilege dynamics.

It would certainly be a lot more difficult for me to fight oppression if I were a poor-queer-Latina-woman rather than a middle-class-queer-Latina-woman (as defined by the US logic) or a middle-class-queer-white-woman (as defined by the Brazilian logic). Every time an underprivileged identity is combined with another underprivileged identity, they make each other stronger. So the process of interlocking privileges (or lack of privilege) works more like a snowball than like a mathematical equation.

Understanding how the different aspects of our identities combine and how they influence each other is no simple task. One of the ways to start is by reflecting on who we are, how many identities we have in ourselves, and what identities other people see in us (which we may or may not agree with, but that influence our interactions with others and with the world).

One thing that has helped me to better understand myself was to see identities as fluid. Some identities can change over time, or depending on the context we are in. For instance, I was considered white by the people around me until I moved to a place where the people around me thought differently. Identities are also fluid in the sense that they don't have to be 'either-or', even when we really think they do: people don't have to be classified only as 'woman' OR 'man' (and for that matter, people shouldn't even have to be classified at all). There are several other non-binary gender identities out there. And if by any chance we don't find one that fits us, why not create our own? After all, it is OUR identity, it is how WE see ourselves, how WE interact with the world and how WE want to be recognized by others.

Once we have managed to get a good grasp of our own identities, we can continue the journey and try to understand what privileges or forms of discrimination are related to these identities. This includes understanding the power dynamics around us, and how our identities relate and impact the identities of others. Reflecting about ourselves allows us to also look around and ask ourselves: what OTHER identities are there? How do THEY experience power and privilege? And what does my identity have to do with that?



Some identities can change over time, or depending on the context we are in.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are the different identities that I carry and how do they interact with each other?
- How do my different identities affect the way people treat me?
- What aspects of my life were determined or influenced by them?
- When have I not noticed I was being privileged because of my identity, and how can I try to become more aware of that?

In the late 1980s, law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw conducted a study about Black women in the USA who had suffered discrimination at work for being Black women, and demonstrated how the antidiscriminatory laws did not understand and deal with the notion that someone might be discriminated against based on the intersection of their identities. Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality', which is now used widely in feminist theory and research. She offers two metaphors that illustrate this concept quite clearly.

The traffic intersection metaphor

Crenshaw says:

“Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (...)”

“Providing legal relief only when Black women show that their claims are based on race or on sex is analogous to calling an ambulance for the victim only after the driver responsible for the injuries is identified. But it is not always easy to reconstruct an accident: Sometimes the skid marks and the injuries simply indicate that they occurred simultaneously, frustrating efforts to determine which driver caused the harm. In these cases the tendency seems to be that no driver is held responsible, no treatment is administered, and the involved parties simply get back to their cars and zoom away.”

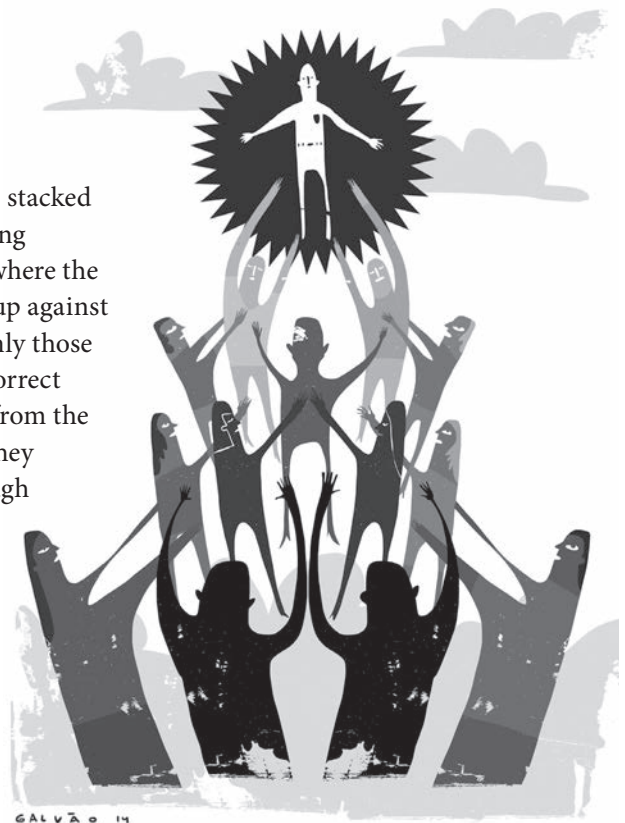
The traffic intersection can have as many roads crossing it as there are identities. And it's easy to see that the more roads there are, the more chances you have of having an accident.



The basement metaphor

The second metaphor offered by Crenshaw is the following:

“Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of sex, class, sexual preference [sic], age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked – feet standing on shoulders – with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by a full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are not disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that ‘but for’ the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally only available to those who – due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below – are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch.”



Practical implications

Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality has greatly impacted and influenced feminism and the academic world. Plenty of other studies and theories around the topic came after her, further developing and deepening the idea that we are not 'only women' or 'only black' or 'only queer'... Rather, the dynamics of all of these identities, when they are combined into one single individual, are a lot more complex than we thought, and deserve careful attention.

So how is this theoretical concept relevant to our practice and how does it relate to social change? Well, the same way that theoreticians should be taking into account the different aspects that make and influence one's identity, so should practitioners. Take the example of an organization that works to end domestic violence. Most probably they focus a good part of their work on women (as women are clearly the ones who most often experience domestic violence). Now, does domestic violence mean the same for heterosexual women, black women, upper-class women, disabled women, white

women, young women, poor women, queer women...? What about poor black women? Or poor queer women? Or young disabled women? Do all these different groups experience the problem the same way? Is there a strategy to fight the problem that would address how all of them experience it? Is domestic violence only related to gender – or is it also affected by other aspects of social identity?

When we, as practitioners, work for the rights of women, or young people, or economically disadvantaged groups – to name a few – we should always be reminded that while we are here working with, for example, youth, there is another practitioner or organization around the corner working with LGBTQI rights – and, most importantly, there are a lot of young queer people who are affected and might benefit from the work both of you do. So how do we look at these people as being more than just 'young' or 'queer'? And how do we incorporate that into our work? And finally: how do we work together to make it easier for the people at the bottom of the basement to come up – out of the basement?



Voices: the building blocks of social change

"If we don't speak up, then no one will know we are here"

– Rose Mapendo – *Pushing the Elephant*

Social change can start with one word or one sentence. A voice that has never been heard before speaks out and people start to listen. It might be our own voice or our role may be to enable others to find their voices, as in the story of Maria and in this story shared by Clothilda:

*... if she spoke out,
it would help to
bring out the other
women who
were suffering
in silence...*

Under the mango tree

Clothilda Babirekere, Uganda Media Women's Association

It is a hot and sunny afternoon as the villagers slowly start to gather around the mango tree. Some sit, others stand, and eventually they are all settled. I watch these proceedings from the roadside. I notice that Nasiwa has not yet arrived, but she finally emerges through the crowd of villagers. Her presence makes me move closer.

She stumps the ground with heavy strong footsteps, her big body swaying left and right and her head held high. Suddenly there is total silence, only the sound of birds chirping from the nearby trees can be heard as she takes her seat next to the village chief.

Nasiwa Margaret is a woman leader in Mulagi Sub County, Kyankwanzi district, Uganda.

The meeting starts, and soon it is time for Nasiwa to speak. She fumbles with her long dress and stands up. With great hesitation she walks to the centre of the crowd where she seems to contemplate her next move. Finally, in a quiet shy voice in contrast to her usually strong authoritative character, she testifies before the large village crowd. As she starts to speak, her eyes show her inner feelings; a mixture of sadness and happiness. "My husband beats and kicks me. He scratches my thighs and back," she says. A tear rolls down her cheek

I have known Nasiwa for a few months now. We met the last time the Domestic Violence Prevention Team was in her village. We talked about the violence that was going in so many homes around the country and Nasiwa knew it was happening in her home too. She told me about the violence she faced. She kept on confiding in me until, I believe, she got the determination she needed to speak out. She knew that if she spoke out, it would help to bring out the other women who were suffering in silence and they would be able to get the assistance and counseling they needed.





This is the moment she has always dreamt of, but never had the courage to carry through. For decades she has accepted domestic abuse in fear of her parents' and society's reaction to the revelation. Most of all, she feared losing the respect and dignity the community had for her. But now Nasiwa has broken the silence about her suffering.

Within seconds of her testimony, her neighbours, relatives and friends disown her. They abuse and ridicule her for disgracing them. Her husband wonders in disbelief as she narrates to the village meeting what he regards as

bedroom affairs. The local leaders too rebuke and accuse her of poisoning a peaceful community by speaking the unspoken.

She remains determined to continue speaking out rather than die quietly. She volunteers to sensitize community members on domestic violence. She wants to become a role model for her community. Because she was a leader, her confession carries weight. Soon, women come one by one and start confiding in her about their abusive experiences. They reason that, if a leader could come out and admit to being abused, then they have nothing to fear. Eventually, men too put aside their male pride and confided in her. As the number of voices increases, there is a need for a space where people can be listened to, guided, and counseled, a place where people feel safe and comfortable enough to open their hearts. The local council leader agrees to construct a shelter to be used as a village court where people go and report abuse. A Sub County which has not been functional for a long time is replaced by a Sub County Domestic Violence Court, manned by Nasiwa's followers. A domestic violence perpetrator, who has reformed is appointed to head this court. Other opponents including religious, cultural, and opinions leaders become collaborators and use their platforms to speak about domestic violence.

Nasiwa and her supporters organize plays that not only entertain the people, but also sensitize and educate them about domestic violence. They create a 'kalombolombo' meaning 'practice', which involves throwing a stone on the roof of a household in which domestic violence was taking place. This act informs the abuser inside that what they are doing is known to the outside community and that they should stop or further action will be taken against them.

Attitudes are changing and neighbouring villages are also starting to take action. The mango tree, a local village meeting place, became a place where the village transformation began.

The story tells us what can happen when one person has the courage to speak out. Some people are moved to do this alone but many are able to speak because they have been supported and encouraged by others.

Finding your voice

Nomvula Dlamini is an experienced practitioner who has worked with herself and many others to help them find their voices. Here she reflects on what she has learnt that helps her to do this work.

Out of the diversity of “voices” we find the richness of conversations, and out of our rich conversations spring the relationships, ideas and impulses for change. We are social beings and it is through our many voices in many conversations that we are most social. How authentic voices are brought, received, engaged with and supported makes a world of difference to the quality of conversation, to human engagement and to the contribution we each can make to processes of change.

Finding my voice is more than just finding out what it is that I have to say. Finding “my voice” is itself a conversation, with myself, an inner dialogue of the many voices that I have within me. I am a diversity of voices populated by all the people and influences in my life, each with opinions, each a part of who I am (even if I don’t like it), competing to be heard, recognized and acted upon. I have to choose which voice gets “airtime” and which voice is obeyed!

I believe that the more voices I allow to be expressed, in conversations with myself, and from which I can form my own opinion, the more authentic and powerful the voice I actually bring to the world.

Most of the time the voice or voices that I express come from an unconscious or intuitive choosing. This is OK most of the time. But if I have had an unresolved relationship with a dominating father then his voice may come out first, what he would have said, and this may easily be something I regret saying. Or I may express the opposite of what he would have said as I struggle to rebel against his influence. But if I am able to bring more voices to my inner conversation, then my wisdom is enhanced by the many and the voice I choose to bring is the result of a more conscious and weighed decision, one that has a better chance of connecting to my values, what I believe to be important. This is my authentic voice.



GALVÃO 14

Practically, what does this mean for social change practitioners? So often in the social processes we support or facilitate, we lead people straight into conversation with each other. The result is that those who are most resolved about their opinions or can quickly sort through their “voices”, tend to dominate. Yet I have found that if I allow small, silent spaces for individuals to collect their thoughts, to give space to their own inner conversation, perhaps to write some things down or to chat to a neighbour, testing their voices, before the group starts to engage, then they are able to bring a more formed and confident opinion or contribution. This improves their participation and empowers them. If social change is about effective participation then these small moments of personal “inner conversations” are a foundation stone. Try this and see if there is a difference.

Finding our voice: we need to remind ourselves that it is not only about being heard; finding voice is about connecting to and thinking with others to inform new conversations.

It is therefore important that space is created for all the different voices to find expression. The conditions have to be right for all voices to be brought into direct

dialogue in order to alter the power dynamics.

The power of finding voice happens when people can speak out of their own experience and this enhances their ability to learn from such experience.

Practically, it is useful to offer people in groups opportunity for a ‘round’ of sharing on a topic, before opening for more ‘free’ engagement and response. This is not simply about being sensitive to quieter

people. It’s an exercise in group intelligence for

individuals to have to hear all that is existing in the group and encourages dialogue with the whole, rather than simple debate with one or other point. Such a practice really does help us find ‘our’ voice. And enables something new, and truly shared, to come to life in the group. Try this and see if there is a difference.

Bringing voice is a process that allows for voice to find expression in a space. In everyday life it is a diversity of voices that have to come through into a space for direct dialogue in a way that creates a ‘new’ story and, where possible, effect positive change. Working with diverse voices that are brought into a space demands an ability to listen to, live with and hold different narratives in a way that allows for a new, jointly created narrative to emerge.



In order to enable meaningful conversation, it is important to hold and work with the tension that manifests where diverse voices struggle to find expression, seemingly against each other. How each voice is brought depends on the place from which it is coming. When the voice comes from an experience of anger, it may be brought in a way that directs that anger in any direction, affecting and even distorting voices coming the other way. When coming from an unconfident place, the insecurity and uncertainty may easily diminish valuable messages. Yet these same angry or insecure voices can bring healthy energy or relieving honesty, if brought and received well.

Practically, it is useful, even in groups that are mostly self-managed to have a facilitator. This person is especially alert for the climate of contributions and able to hold and frame 'hot' and 'edgy' contributions. Fight and flight responses to these voices are quite normal. Having a facilitator role – even one that is mostly quiet – helps groups to receive the benefit of these voices and not silence or avoid them. Try this and see if there is a difference.

Receiving voice is an important dimension. How different voices are received depends on various things. Sometimes voice can be experienced as disturbing, aggressive, insulting and infuriating, but actually this may say more about the listener than the speaker. Receiving voice demands an open heart, a suspension of judgement. Indeed when our hearts are fully open we can notice and observe things that transcend the words. We can hear deeper messages that the owner of the voice may be utterly unaware of.

Receiving different voices can be a conscious act; it demands of us to be awake, sensitive and respectful. It is when our hearts are open that we can experience the humanity of others and tap hidden worlds of meaning. Try this and see if there is a difference.



Engaging voice and how this is done can become a driver for change. When voice is engaged with positively it can provide the impetus for transforming the power dynamics that are held in relationships. Engaging voices in conversation demands active listening for the real message that is carried, responding in a way that validates, augments, expands and even challenges what is heard – these are not mutually exclusive. From experience we are aware that engaging with voice does not always have to be a gentle process - authentic conversation often requires robust and critical engagement, but without lessening human positivity. Critical, robust conversation creates movement and brings people to a place of fresh understanding, perspective and appreciation of one another. In order to engage this voice in a meaningful way there has to be understanding, tolerance and acceptance of the other. More importantly, it demands respect for difference and otherness.

Practically, it can help to jot down notes while listening to and contributing to conversations. The temptation to react can be tempered by jotting down some thoughts ... and formulating a response that really does engage – not simply react to – the voice of others. Try this and see if there is a difference.

Ghost voice: in any social setting there can be dominant voices, silent voices and even the ghost voice. A ghost voice is hidden, swallowed or whispered in corners, asking the difficult questions and expressing the shadow stuff that no-one wants to admit, the issues that make the organisation uneasy and uncomfortable, especially those with power.

The power of the silent ghost voice is often underestimated. Silent voices are often associated with powerlessness but, this is often untrue. Silent voices can sometimes be the most powerful – they can shape the whole direction of conversation.

However, the ghost voice when sufficiently ignored can also become frustrated and be expressed in exaggerated and seemingly destructive ways, experienced as ‘noise’ by those who cannot hear what is behind it. If the voice is ridiculed it can set in motion a destructive cycle with unforeseen consequences.

‘ Silent voices can sometimes be the most powerful – they can shape the whole direction of conversation.



Social change practice which focuses on the marginalized and excluded must have focus on the ghost voice and the enormous challenges of transforming this voice into one of leadership. Often the ghost voice emerges as distraction, or as the joker; perhaps the complainer. The one who shrugs. Sometimes the ghost is even more silent than that. As facilitators and as conscious participants, how do we see what is hidden? How do we hear what is not said? Our awareness needs to extend beyond what occupies our immediate attention and reach to what is hidden. It affects how we observe and how we listen, stretching into the 'negative' spaces, into what we see in the corner of our eye, into the silence that we actively listen for. Try this and see if there is a difference.

Writing voice: we need to distinguish between speaking voice and writing voice. It is very challenging to me that someone with an amazingly articulate and passionate speaking voice cannot put those same words onto paper – what gets written down is often correct but lifeless, stripped of its authentic voice. How can we support people to write how they speak?

I have, in the past, ridiculed people who go to elocution lessons, and I am still not sure what they do there. But as I think of voice and the need to bring mine more authentically I wonder if we don't all need such lessons, if they can make us more conscious of our own and each other's voices, how we communicate what we really want to say and how we listen deeply for what is trying to be said. Our voices truly are gifts to nurture.

As social change practitioners, the voices of the marginalized that we seek to encourage and amplify are the most vital resource. How often we see government officials wilt when addressed and undressed by the powerful and authentic voices of community leaders who speak for the many voices that they represent. These voices are already there, hiding. How can we support their emergence and strengthening?

This chapter has looked at how individuals can initiate and support social change. The stories are quite different from each other, but each offer insights into what motivates individuals to change and how they can inspire and support others. An individual perspective can mean taking a deep look into ourselves and also learning from other individuals and their trajectories. Individuals are just the starting point for social change and they exist in their relationships with each other and with the world. We can't possibly isolate individuals from communities, groups, societies and the entire world, but we must not forget that each individual's story is important and that there are many reasons why individuals become involved in social change. We can add a layer of complexity to our analysis of social change by zooming in on individuals and seeking to understand how they relate to the bigger picture.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- What are some practical things to help you find your own voice?
 - What about to help bring up other people's voices?
 - What can you change in your practice to help empower the ghost voices?
-

Working with Questions:

How do we See and Work with Power?

Power is held in relationships. Sometimes it is an inner struggle between different parts of ourselves, as part of a process to claim our inner power. Sometimes it is expressed in a struggle we have with others or the power we hold cooperatively with others. Sometimes it is about the power the State wields in relation to its citizens. In all cases power is a relationship process. Without relationship power means little, it has no force, for bad or for good. *If we want to shift power, we have to shift relationships.*

If in our view of ourselves we have fear, self-doubt or self-hatred we become inhibited, entrapped, or unfree. A stuck, abusive relationship with a partner can be a significant hindrance to development of a person, as can political oppression. These kinds of “unfreedoms” mutually reinforce each other and add up to a recipe for entrenched marginalization (and superiority of the other) – the core target of development interventions. An unemployed woman stuck in an abusive marriage under a political and economic system that takes little notice of her issues or voice is oppressed in multiple ways.

But the word or notion of “power” in many cultures is difficult to work with. Blatantly abusive power may appear to be the most difficult to confront but it is also the most visible and easy to name and to unite people against. In some cultures power is often veiled and hidden behind seemingly collective processes, where those with real power subtly use their influence, experience, and ability, to steer decisions in directions they like. To even suggest that there are power differentials and that they constrain development is regarded as disrespectful.

Power does strange things to the best of us. Those of us who do confront power directly often find that the harder we push, and the more we struggle, the stronger becomes the resistance to change, the more we bolster the forces we had sought to weaken. Even non-violent struggles, that bring a moral force to change, have to walk a fine line to avoid becoming threatening in a way that provokes an unwanted backlash.

In Barefoot Guide 1, Chapter 3, we distinguished between “power over” which describes the wielding of hierarchical power, “power within”, which describes the inner empowerment of individuals and “power with” which describes the process of collective power, of people working or struggling together. Like the language of “Rights”, the use of the language of “Power” can easily lead to polarisation and defensiveness because it often hits the truth clearly but too hard and quickly. But can we develop the language of power in a way that enlightens rather than threatens.



“ *But can we develop the language of power in a way that enlightens rather than threatens.* ”

Working with Questions:

How do we See and Work with Power?

The story of Ekta Parishad and how they engage government, as told in Chapter 5 of this book illustrates this well:

“During our non-violent action, our effort is to reach out to the heart of the ‘other’ party by making them uncomfortable but never going to the point of threatening them. For this purpose, we keep up our rhetoric at a level that conveys the urgency and importance of our agenda but never at a level which creates an environment of animosity.” – (Ravi Badri, Chapter 5, page 96)

The corrupt and powerful, who are addicted to power and money, and fearful and dismissive of others, have to be confronted with the truth of their destructive and self-destructive obsessions and fears, and either persuaded or toppled. Sometimes the powerful undermine themselves through blind stupidity. How can they be engaged in ways that do not burn down the whole country, as we see happening in Syria?

When the powerful are unseated by force, how often is their place taken by people who adopt the same behaviours, using the old regime’s repressive laws and institutions to secure their new regime? Or worse, rival pretenders to the throne rush into the political vacuum and new wars begin. It did not take long for much of the hopeful and unstoppable “Arab Spring” to degenerate into nightmare scenarios of this nature.

Clearly there are distinctions to be made. Some good people lose themselves in their new power and can be persuaded away from dysfunctional uses and be helped to change and share. But more often the powerful will only change when confronted by a crisis, a transformative challenge where the *perceived* costs to themselves of holding onto power are greater than the *perceived risks* of letting go. The fall of the Berlin Wall and Apartheid both happened when a point of sanity, beyond the unsustainable insanity, was reached and the regimes were able to see the writing on the wall.

Sometimes the head follows a change of heart. Sometimes the heart follows a change of the head. In both cases the will to change has still to be transformed. Fear, doubt, hatred.

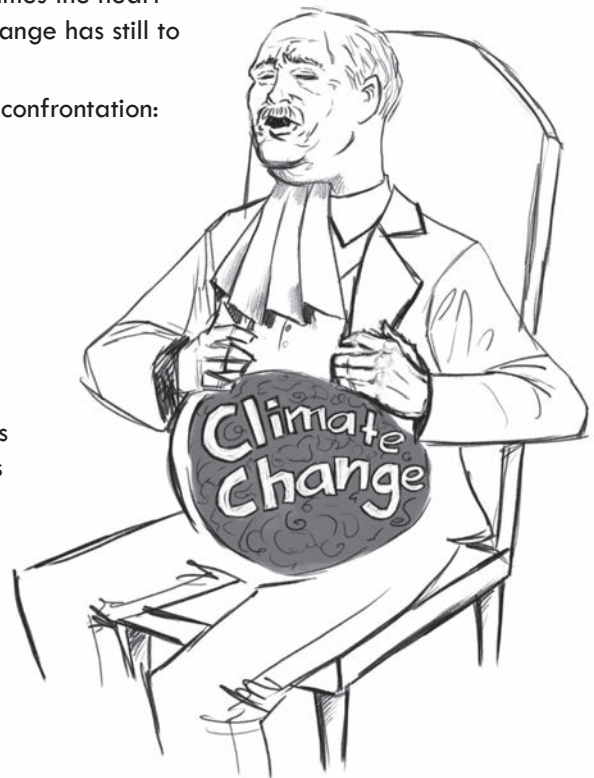
Some would focus on building alternatives rather than confrontation:

“You never change anything by fighting existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

– R. Buckminster Fuller

But this choice does not always exist and can be naïve in many situations. Modern-day slaves cannot be expected to wait for alternatives to their bondage to develop. But as a part of a sustainable approach, developing alternatives can be critical. Facing climate change will require the development of alternatives but these will only flourish as viable investments when the causes of global warming are tackled and made more politically, morally, and financially costly than the powerful can stomach.

See the *Barefoot Guide 1*, Chapter 3, for more on working with power in change (The Barefoot Collective, 2008).



Want the change

Want the change. Be inspired by the flame
where everything shines as it disappears.
The artist, when sketching, loves nothing so much
as the curve of the body as it turns away.
What locks itself in sameness has congealed.
Is it safer to be gray and numb?
What turns hard becomes rigid
and is easily shattered.
Pour yourself out like a fountain.
Flow into the knowledge that what you are seeking
finishes often at the start, and, with ending, begins.
Every happiness is the child of a separation
it did not think it could survive. And Daphne, becoming
a laurel,
dares you to become the wind.

Rainer Maria Rilke

English version by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy

CHAPTER THREE

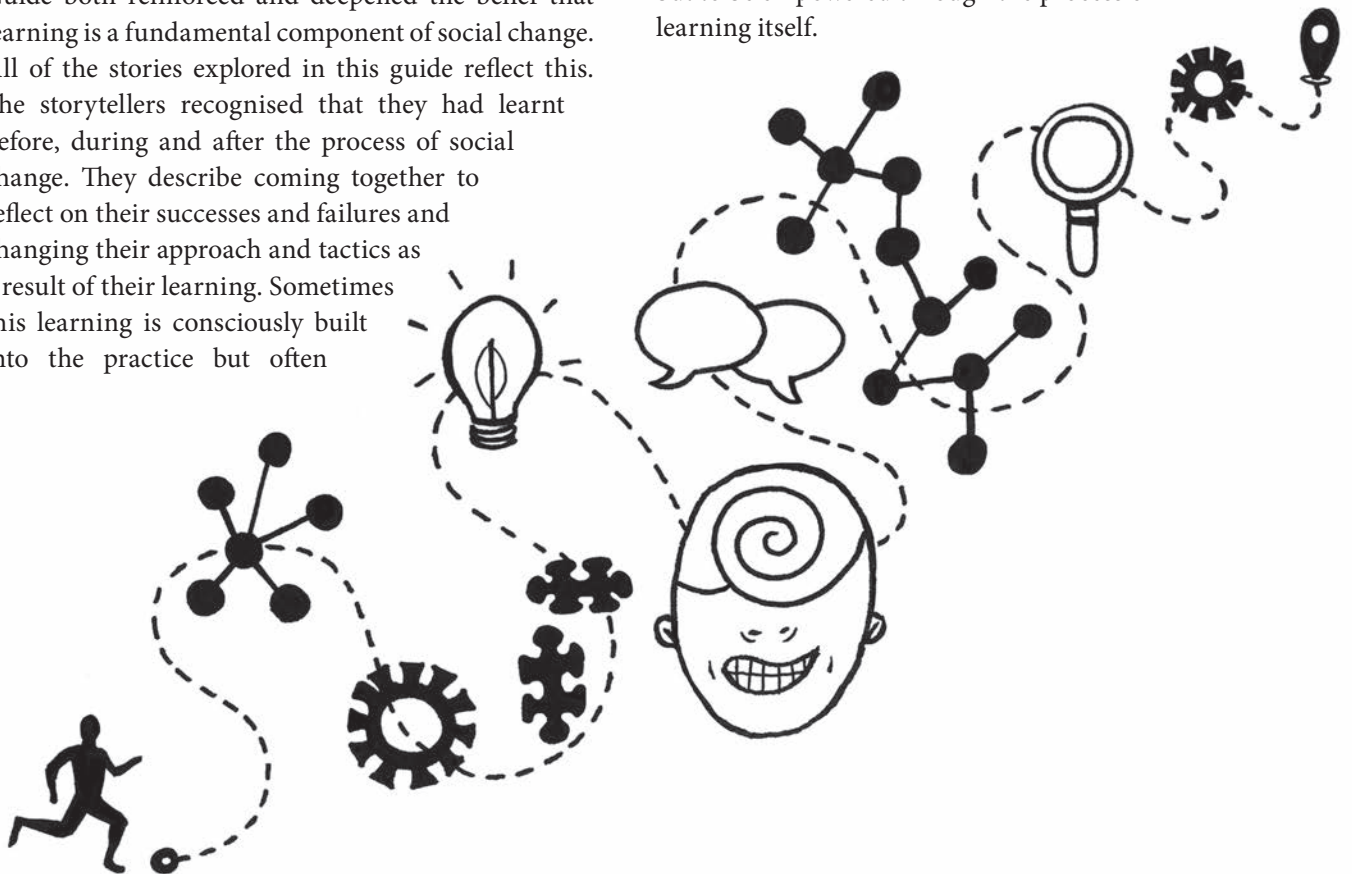
Creating space and time for LEARNING to enable social change

Enabling ourselves to learn

From the very first Barefoot Guide – *The Barefoot Guide to Organisations and Social Change* – writers have recognised the importance of learning in initiating, supporting and embedding change in organisations. This recognition led to the second Barefoot Guide – *The Barefoot Guide to Learning in Organisations and Social Change* – which focused specifically on learning – both as essential to organisations and to the process of social change. The process of developing this Barefoot Guide both reinforced and deepened the belief that learning is a fundamental component of social change. All of the stories explored in this guide reflect this. The storytellers recognised that they had learnt before, during and after the process of social change. They describe coming together to reflect on their successes and failures and changing their approach and tactics as a result of their learning. Sometimes this learning is consciously built into the practice but often

this learning is ad hoc and emerges from the change process. It is a matter of trial and error.

Perhaps this is why people find it so difficult to explain to others exactly how they learnt and describe in detail the learning process. It is rare to find people or an organisation that, from the very beginning, reflected on why learning is important and how they could consciously use their own learning to bring about social change. This chapter focuses on a story that describes in detail how a group of people started from a belief in their own ability to learn and used this to develop a process to enable others not only to learn but to be empowered through the process of learning itself.



Everyone can think, speak and act – Part 1

Julie Smith, PACSA

In 2013 PACSA, a faith-based social justice and development NGO, was approached by Monash-Oxfam (Australia) to develop and test a model of public policy engagement to increase awareness of, and accessibility to, policy with communities across the uMgungundlovu District, KwaZulu-Natal South Africa. We were to use the National Health Insurance (NHI) as an instrument for the basis of work. The NHI is a new government policy to ensure that all citizens have access to free and good quality public health care.

We were excited about the project as it provided us the space to shape a contextually appropriate type of action research model using the fundamental principle of our organisation which is that everyone can think, speak and act. If we imagine a world where everyone has space to speak, everyone is listened to and treated with dignity, where people make their own decisions around their lives and development, and a world where there is justice and equity – then we need to model these principles everyday in our daily work.

Three organisations: Abanqobi Men's HIV Support Group, uMphithi Men's Network, and Springs of Hope HIV Support Network agreed to be part of the project. All three were rooted in the communities they worked in, and were in a position to optimise the use of information and dialogue on the NHI for future public policy engagement and advocacy.



The three partners elected 3 members each to be part of the project team. None of us had worked together before and did not know one another very well.

As the PACSA staff member, I was to manage the project and to 'process facilitate' or 'accompany' the team. I had no experience in public health care. I knew nothing about public health policy. The 9 team members had substantial experience of the public health care system, but not a lot around policy. At our first meeting,

we shared our worries. I confessed that I was the least experienced to provide guidance around the content of the context and policy.

We spoke about what this might mean and agreed that we were all able to think and so would find a way to navigate through the process together. We then did what every self respecting group does when not sure how to proceed – we gave ourselves a grand sounding name "the NHI Research Team." Xolani Nsele, who happened to be sitting at the head of our table, was elected as our 'chairman'. Xolani was the 'opener' and 'closer' of our meetings. We had a name and some semblance of order. Before we closed our meeting we agreed on one absolutely critical principle. This principle was that we should always have fun. This was something we needed to check on every time we met.

At our next meeting we analysed the competencies we would need to successfully deliver the project outputs. As a team we were confident in being able to develop a new model around consultation which was contextually appropriate and one which created real spaces for people to think and speak. Because nine of us had substantial experience of the public health care system, we knew that we would be able to ask the correct questions to open up the space for participants to reflect deeply on the challenges they saw with the current system, what was causing them, what remedies could be sought and what an improved public health care system might look like.

We identified one major gap in our competencies. We needed to develop our own knowledge around the content of the NHI to structure the consultation correctly and to deliver a training component on the NHI so that participants were provided with the tools to engage and critique the NHI.

As a team we worried about how to address this knowledge gap. When the project started a consultant was sent to give us a quick snapshot of the NHI. We were given a booklet which summarised the NHI policy. The brief training and literature was not sufficient in delivering complete information nor was it enough to enable us to formulate substantial questions to really engage with the policy. We spoke about this at length. We discussed how we could bring in another expert on the NHI to train us and share more complete literature, or perhaps even do the training part of the consultation for us. This option was contested. Could we really trust this person to do a better job than the previous expert? What if the new expert was not really an expert? Even if the new expert was proficient, how would we feel about bringing in an outsider to run the training sessions in the consultations? How would we feel about not doing the training ourselves?

The discussions then moved to what we thought about thinking and learning and who or what makes an expert. Our previous conversations around what is real consultation and how we were experiencing democracy assisted us. We were not empty vessels. Consultation was not simply about receiving information. It was actually about critiquing it and questioning it, not just around “clarity seeking questions” but real questions about process and content and context, and ‘would this thing actually work?’. We asked ourselves: Can we not think? Are we unable to learn? We have experience. We can make meaning, we can theorise and reflect. Is it impossible for us to learn about the NHI? We can read and we can think about what we are reading. We can also question what we are interpreting.



... we thought about thinking and learning and who or what makes an expert.

After these discussions we focussed on what we had. We had one another. We had spaces to reflect and question jointly as a team. We did not have literature but we could find it on the internet or directly through the Department of Health— we could pull off the policies around the NHI and public health care, we could look at what other people had written about it and read through the different critiques. We decided that we had all the tools to learn. We had the resources, the capacity to learn, the commitment to learn and the support to learn. We also had the experiences to position the policy correctly and we had the ability to question. Learning, we decided, meant bringing all of ourselves to the process: our humanity, our experiences, our worries, our intellect, emotions and intentions. We decided to learn about the NHI ourselves.

Our decision has been a revelation. It emerged out of the philosophy that everyone can think, speak and act. What we did is to structure this thinking in practice. One does not need to know the subject to teach it. One simply needs to facilitate the space, provide support and ask questions to enable learning to occur. We structured ourselves to meet weekly to reflect and learn together and to commit to reading and critiquing the available NHI literature in the context of 'our democratic experience' as a type of study group.

Something amazing happened in the process. We really became that team with the grand sounding name. We all recognised that we were equal to one another and that we had significant contributions to make. We owned the process together. We took on the 'burden' of learning together and being accountable to the team for our learning.



Something amazing happened in the process. We really became that team with the grand sounding name.

Every week we committed ourselves to reading policy or other NHI or health-related documents and returning the following week to have a discussion – not about what we had read (information) but about what questions we had about the things we had read; about what it meant to us and how it related to our experiences.

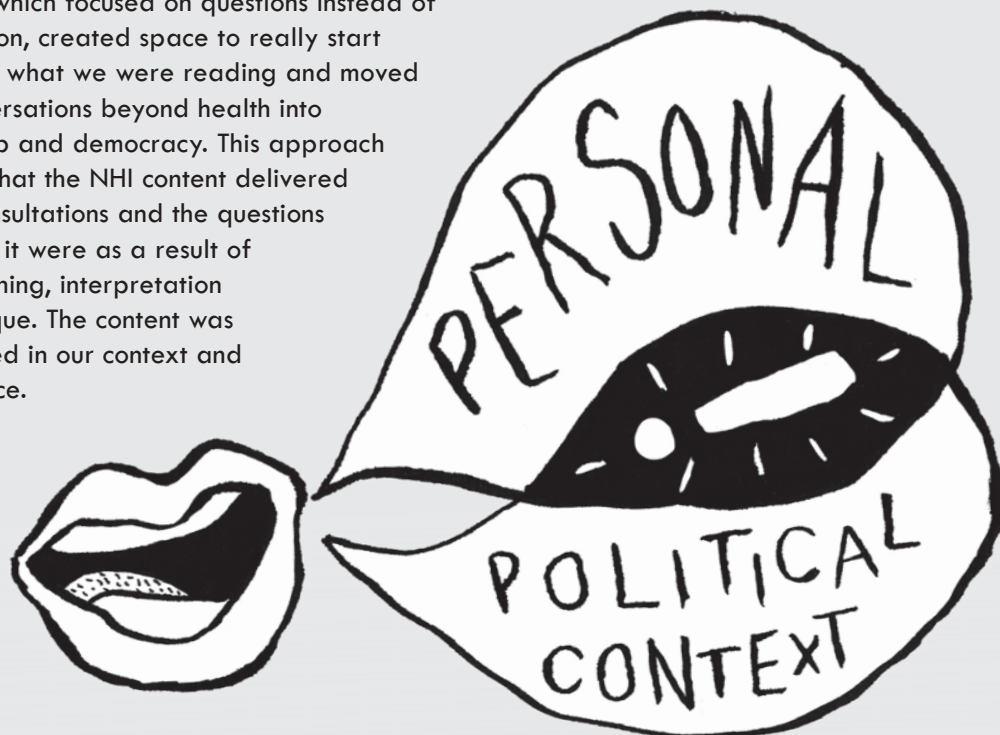
Our meetings were spaces of great excitement where we shared ideas, thoughts and 'awakenings' about what we were seeing. We challenged one another and compelled one another to go deeper, to find meaning and to share it.

Our meetings were not deliberately structured but typically started with a quick discussion of the main items we wanted to cover. These items would be added to the standing items of ‘how is everyone doing?’ (the personal) and then ‘what’s been happening?!’ (the health and governance context). These two items connected us personally with one another and further opened the scope for discussions within our context, but more importantly they embedded the readings (which came later on our agenda) *within a framework of the personal and the political context.*

For example, when we asked ‘what’s been happening?!’ Sphamandla Makhathini spoke about how he noticed that three private hospitals in our city were undergoing what seemed to be substantial renovations and construction. When we moved onto questions around readings, we could pick up on what he had seen and what it meant that private hospitals were investing in building new hospital wings before the roll-out of the NHI. This link provided the space to ask critical questions of the NHI e.g. Is the NHI seen by private companies as a way to boost their profits because the NHI will now ‘deliver’ them more customers

The way we started our regular meetings thus opened up the space to deepen our analysis, critically reflect and keep the discussions grounded in both the person and the context in which we lived – which injected a relevance and a meaningfulness for every one of our team. Moreover the unstructured dialoguing provided the room to retain the informality of the space which optimised the richness of thinking whilst providing the security to share thoughts and ideas. The meeting spaces therefore were places of high energy – questions, comments and critique were quickly fired and retorted against or agreed. It assisted us that we had agreed that there could be no assumptions; the speaker was always challenged to back up what s/he had said. The why and how questions mostly followed the speaker’s input from the floor. Perhaps the last point to share is the question of time. Our meetings were not short. We played generously and long with time – we met for 4-5 hours at a time. This time was precious and provided space for us to be more human – to be able to be, to share, to laugh and to think.

The result of this joint learning was that everyone of the team was able to articulate questions on the NHI and public health care. The process, which focused on questions instead of information, created space to really start critiquing what we were reading and moved our conversations beyond health into citizenship and democracy. This approach ensured that the NHI content delivered in the consultations and the questions asked on it were as a result of joint learning, interpretation and critique. The content was embedded in our context and experience.



Learning is a continuous process. It requires a safe space where all are confident that their views will be heard and engaged with. It requires a belief in our own ability to learn. Learning leads people to ask questions – of themselves, of others and of the society they live in. Questions lead to new information. This information can lead to more questions and to a better understanding of why things are as they are. This can lead to a recognition of the need for change. Learning isn't just part of the social change process, it is the beginning of the recognition of the need for social change.

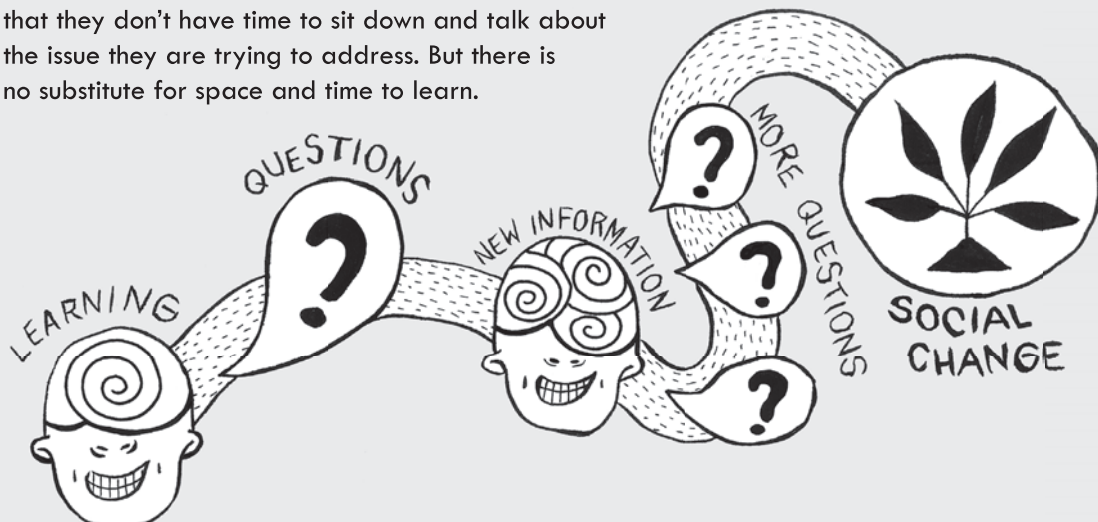
Many of us want to bring about change. We tend to focus on doing this by giving people information and spurring them on to action. We are in a hurry for change to happen. But we cannot do people's learning for them. And we also need to remain open to learning from others, whoever they are. Encouraging people to believe that they can learn and understand even complex issues and then creating a space for everyone to discuss the information available creates the opportunity for social change. What happens next will come out of their learning and their felt need for change.

How many of us take the time to engage with people who think differently about the issue ...

The story also reminds us that we need to start with ourselves. These days you can support social change with one click on a computer. You can sign a petition or write a letter to someone in authority within minutes of becoming aware of an issue. How many of us have the time and energy to read through the documents. How many of us have a group of people we can meet with to discuss the issue in detail and to really understand it. How many of us take the time to engage with people

who think differently about the issue, to challenge our own assumptions about what we have read?

Julie and her fellow learners are unapologetic about the time it took them to understand deeply the information they had. They worked with official documents, academic papers and their own experiences. They embraced differences of opinion as an opportunity to explore more deeply. They did not start working with others until they were confident that they understood the subject matter themselves. It is a great credit to Monash-Oxfam (Australia) that they allowed PACSA and its partners the time to do this. Funders often want to see results as soon as possible and expect all the preparation to have been done before the project starts. NGOs are usually so busy getting the project proposal written on time that they don't have time to sit down and talk about the issue they are trying to address. But there is no substitute for space and time to learn.



A TOOL: HEAD-HEART-FOOT

During the Barefoot Guide 4 writeshop, we listened with head, heart and feet, working with three different types of human intelligence – intellectual, sensitive and intentional.

We worked in groups of four (A, B, C, D), A tells its story while B (head), C (heart) and D (foot) listen. Each person tells A what they heard and understood thanks to the type of intelligence they used. A's story is deepened by B's, C's and D's listening. Then B tells their story ...

See *The Barefoot Guide to Organisations and Social Change*, pp. 30 - 32



Learning Together

In order to prepare to support social change, social change practitioners need to work on their own learning. We can only do this if we are able to listen deeply and to ask meaningful questions both of the information we are receiving and of ourselves. **When quality listening and questioning is achieved, critical reflection and authentic dialogue become possible.** Regarding the quality of listening, it is both the orientation out of which we are listening as well as the depth of listening that is important.

Learning and change are linked. To change you need to understand, to understand you need to learn. Learning is about asking questions, of ourselves and our organisations and of others.

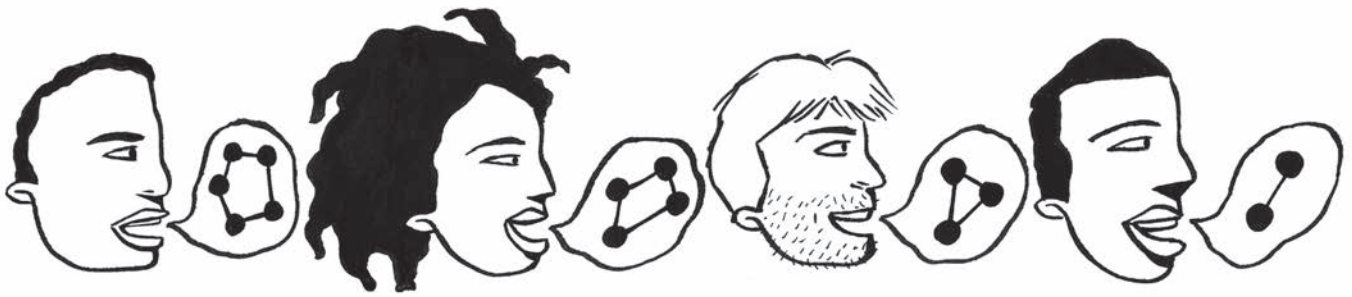
We must challenge ourselves to listen to the whole person, to move beyond only listening to the ideas and rational thoughts – we have to acknowledge that every human being is a thinking, feeling and willing being and the way in which we listen to them has to incorporate all these aspects. When engaging in a social environment, what most people are really asking is to be listened to and for their humanity to be recognised, respected and appreciated. **Our work is about creating spaces that allow people to be listened to and heard.**

Many social change practitioners are not part of the community or society they are working to change. We want to help and we believe passionately that social change is needed to improve people's lives, but we must be humble and recognise our own need to learn and keep on learning. When decisions are made far away from the people who will be affected, decision makers rely on others to listen for them. There are often gaps in the learning process and, too often, learning is lost and inappropriate decisions made.

Before a meeting or workshop, ask yourself these questions:

- What are we going to talk about? What are the different ways we can use to understand it?
- How do we create the necessary space for listening? How can we make sure we listen with our head, heart and feet?
- How can we establish an equal listening relationship between different actors? Who is learning from whom?

To change you need to understand, to understand you need to learn.



If we have taken the time and given ourselves space to learn before we intervene, we will be in a better position to support others in their own learning process. If we give others time and space to learn, then not only will everyone engaged in the social change process be able to learn and to use their learning, but they will also feel ownership of the process.

Enabling others to learn

If we give others time and space to learn, then not only will everyone engaged in the social change process be able to learn and to use their learning, but they will also feel ownership of the process.

When you have worked hard to understand something, perhaps over many years, you may feel entitled to call yourself an expert and to give your opinions on this topic to others. You may expect to be listened to and your opinions to be respected. And we would be unwise to ignore those who have expertise and who have spent more time than we can on learning about something. If we are sick, we don't have time to go through years of medical training to find out what is wrong with us – we go to a doctor. However, we are entitled to get a second opinion and we have the right to access to information about the pros and cons of different kinds of treatment. We can talk to others who have a similar diagnosis about their own experiences and what has worked for them.

We can make information more accessible and we can give people tools to help them learn, but we must be prepared that people may reach different conclusions than we did and be prepared to listen to and respect this. They bring their own experiences to the process. But the learning is empowering and where there is injustice and an imbalance of power people will recognise this.

The work of the project team accompanied by PACSA did not stop with their own learning. The purpose of the learning was to create spaces where people could themselves learn and thereby become aware of how policy was developed and what impact it had on their lives.

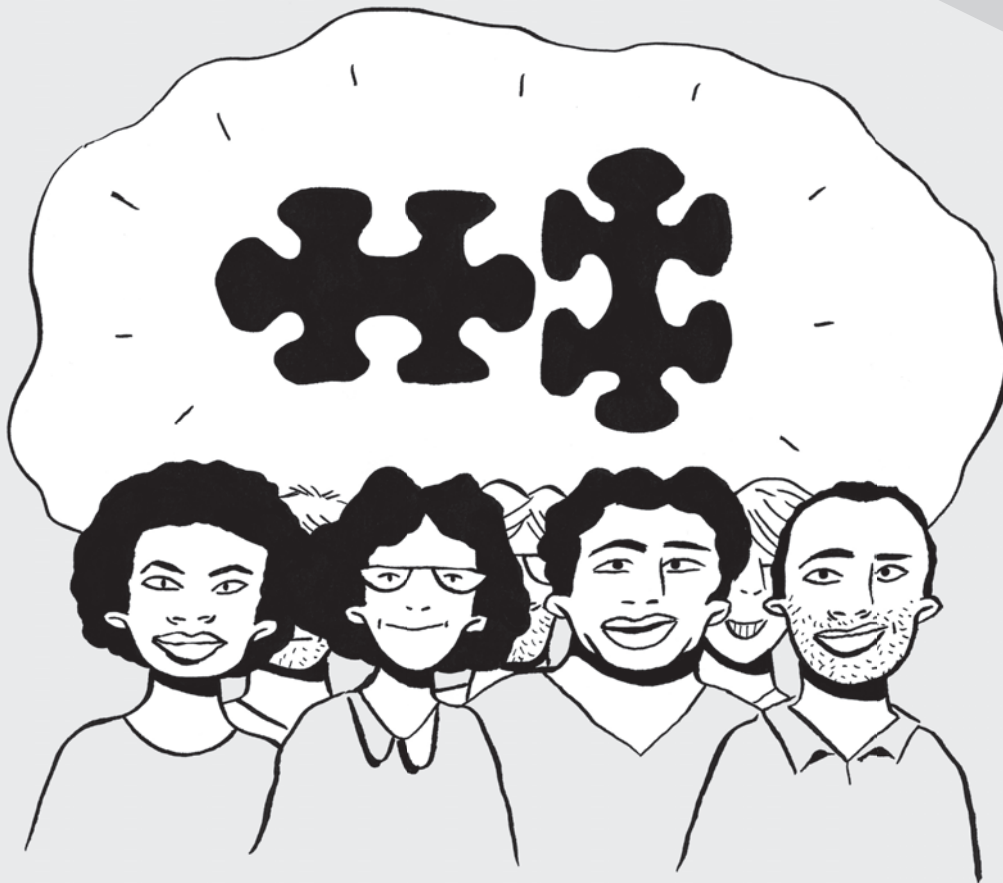


Everyone can think, speak and act – Part 2

The social change that we experienced as a team shaped how we planned, approached and implemented our consultations. We structured the consultations around the same principles around which we had organised ourselves and found such liberation. We provided real space for people to think and speak. We embedded the discussions in the experiences of each of the participants. People felt confident to delve deep. When it came time to deliver the training on the NHI, we did not present ourselves as experts but people who had learnt slowly and reflected on what the policy had meant for us. We were gentle with the information that we provided and made space for rich dialogue around questions that participants had, not so much on the content but on the type of questions the information provoked.

We included many of the questions we, as a team, had been grappling with about how we would want to be consulted and what democracy meant for us. Many participants reflecting on their ‘consultation’ experiences with the state and political parties, expressed that typically they felt that they were not being listened to at all, that political ‘representatives’ were not actually representing them – with many participants struggling to remember when they were actually part of any substantial government decision making. These discussions worried participants in our consultations. They questioned the notion of democracy. “Here (in the consultation) we feel free, we are listened too – we are part of the discussions, we feel that we can be part of future actions; but this is not what happens in our communities when we participate in government spaces.” The consultation process evoked in the participants how poorly the state has really done in structuring its democratic spaces. They questioned that democracy operates differently for different people; and that for them, democracy was not something they were experiencing in the sense of being part of making decisions about their lives. The state simply informs ‘us’ about the decisions it has made ‘for us’ but excludes ‘us’ from being part of making these decisions – this is not democracy, many participants reflected.¹

1. The dialogues in the consultations have been documented in a report to Monash-Oxfam (Monash-Oxfam NHI project. Final NHI community consultation process report. Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action [PACSA]. 5 October 2013. To access a copy, please contact Urvarshi Rajcoomar, Oxfam, Durban on +27 (0) 31 277 0358 (direct) or varshir@oxfam.org.au

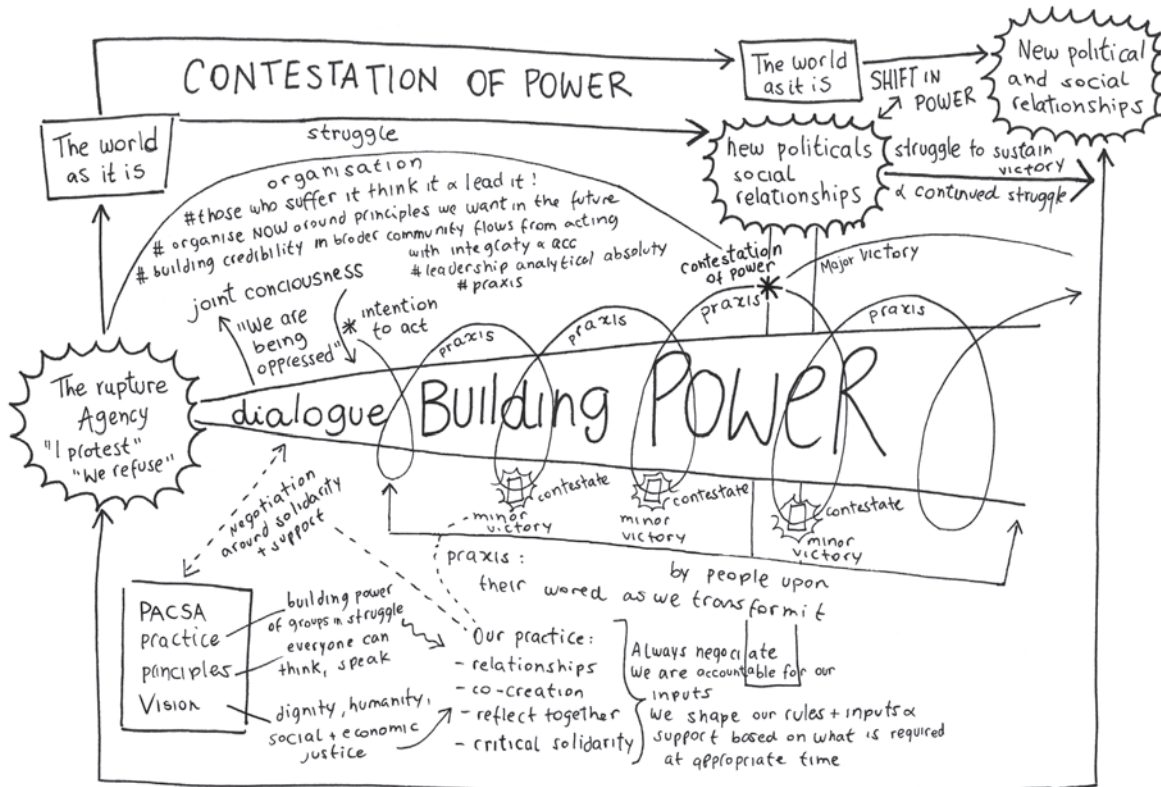


Reflecting with the participants, we noted that naming the oppression and imagining a different way of doing things – dreaming together – assisted us not only to move beyond apathy but provided us strength to work together differently to struggle for not only a better system of health care, but also a better way of being included in our own lives.

We spoke about moving into advocacy, about our strength being built in our togetherness, our solidarity, our continuous questioning about the world around us, and our ability to learn. For us, as 'the NHI Research Team,' we felt excited that our own changes that we had experienced were finding expression beyond us. We believed that if we took our own thinking seriously and the thinking of others seriously; and if we deliberately provided space for this to happen, then other people too would do the same. We learnt that if we were prepared to work slower but in the correct way – treating people with dignity, respecting the experiences and questions of people, being vulnerable, and believing that everyone has the capacity to think and speak – we would find a similar type of magic which we ourselves had previously discovered. And we did.

Our project with Monash-Oxfam (Australia) has ended. We are still having fun. The NHI Research Team still meets weekly. Sometimes we just meet to have lunch together. Most times we reflect deeply about the type of health care system we want and how we will make it happen. We have decided to move into advocacy, but before we start moving into boardrooms or requesting audiences with government officials, we want to build power on the margins. To do that we will continue to ask questions on the margins. Continue speaking with ordinary people, citizens collecting their medicines from public clinics, people who rush their loved ones to public hospitals; we will continue speaking with nurses and caregivers, with cleaning staff and clinic security. By learning that we can learn anything, we started also thinking that we can think anything and we might just be able to do anything. And we will ...together. We will.

The project team knew what they were talking about. They had a deep understanding of the National Health Insurance based on their learning. But they did not present themselves as experts but as ‘people who had learnt slowly and reflected on what the policy had meant for us’. They gave others the opportunity to do the same. They knew the power of this process of learning because they had experienced it themselves.



PACSA'S EMERGING THEORY OF CHANGE

They knew that by encouraging people to relate to the information they gave to their own experience they would begin to ask questions, not just about the legislation and its implementation, but about the whole relationship between themselves and the authorities and how this had an impact on the health system. They knew the power of people learning things for themselves and they trusted this. Social change is about creating new power as well as addressing power imbalances. Learning gives people the power of knowledge and understanding. It also gives them the evidence they need to challenge injustice.

Social change practitioners and activists can support people to create their own spaces where they can explore their own situation and their relations with those who have political and economic power. Within such spaces, people can find their voice and hold onto it without fear of being undermined.

“ Social change is about creating new power as well as addressing power imbalances.

Working with Questions:

What is Horizontal Learning and how can it Contribute to Social Change?

Many people see learning as a way to improve practice over time, to better navigate complex change.

This is true, but, in our view, learning is even more important than that: for us *social change is fundamentally a learning and unlearning process and so to work with it in an authentic way requires a learning-based practice*. Indeed change, development and learning are virtually indistinguishable. Learning is in the DNA of social change.

What kinds of learning are there?

The Action Learning Cycle

This involves individuals, communities or organisations continually observing and reflecting on experience or actions, drawing learnings from those reflections, and building the implications of those learnings into future plans and actions – from these new actions further learnings can be drawn which leads to improved actions and so on in a continuous learning cycle. This connects strongly to emergent change discussed earlier. (see *Barefoot Guide to Learning Practices in Organizations and Social Change* - Chapter 12, page 159).

Unlearning

Sometimes, in order to move forward, learning does not help because we are constrained by ideas, beliefs, or attitudes that are too close to us to easily let go. Before we can continue to learn our way forward we have to pause to unlearn these things, i.e., how white people see black people, how men see women, how women see themselves. These prejudices have to be unlearnt. This connects strongly to *transformative change* discussed earlier.

Indeed change, development and learning are virtually indistinguishable. Learning is in the DNA of social change.

Horizontal Learning

Since time immemorial people have learnt from each other, informally sharing stories and wisdom, trading innovations and recipes, teaching each other techniques and technologies, neighbour to neighbour, farmer to farmer, parent to child. This kind of horizontal learning has always been a powerful motor of social change.

One of the most important discoveries is that if we want to work together, to collaborate, we should begin this by learning together, horizontally. Horizontal learning builds trust, helps people to learn each other's way of seeing the world and helps everyone to see what contribution they can bring. By so doing this can lay strong foundations for working together.



Working with Questions:

What is Horizontal Learning and how can it Contribute to Social Change?

The powerful housing and farmers movements of Shack Dwellers International and Via Campesina use horizontal exchanges at the heart of their mobilization and organization.

But it can be even more helpful: The need for change in marginalized and impoverished communities the world over is widespread and vast. But the ability and resources of governments and NGOs to work with these needs, in helpful ways, are extremely limited. So how can such limited resources coming from the outside help so many impoverished or marginalised communities to develop themselves.

Communities, who often appear to outsiders as needy victims, have reservoirs of hidden and potential capacities and resourcefulness from hard-learned experience that vastly outweigh what can be brought in from the outside. Once surfaced and validated by people themselves these are the seed-beds out of which change can be nurtured. Through horizontal learning processes, communities can share this resourcefulness, stimulating and supporting change in each other. This can happen with minimal external help, with development spilling from community to community, or catching fire as good ideas and innovations spread widely and generously by word of mouth, as they used to before modern times. In this way change is no longer constrained by the limitations of government or NGOs.

In the Limpopo province a group of 60-odd villages revived a traditional practice of meeting once a year for a seed-sharing festival. This had fallen into disuse since the agricultural industry, ushered in by government extension officers, began showing small farmers the modern way, creating deep and worrying dependencies on corporate-controlled seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. An awareness workshop by a local NGO on the looming dangers of genetically-modified seed finally tipped the scales and provoked the renewal of the old practice.

Now, at a different village each year, the farmers once again send representatives of each village to gather and congregate for several days, each bringing bags of their beans and grains to cook and taste and then to freely share as seed, with advice on how best to plant and grow. And all of this generates the revival of other cultural practices, of songs and dances and stories that express a renewed identity of community and interdependency (Reeler, 2005).

The question that we continue to ask is how can we gather support, including funding, for open-ended horizontal learning practices and approaches that, while they cannot guarantee pre-ordained outcomes, are able to prepare the ground for solidarity and creative collaboration and the authentic outcomes that emerge from these?



... good ideas and innovations spread widely and generously by word of mouth, as they used to before modern times.

An African Elegy

We are the miracles that God made
To taste the bitter fruit of Time.
We are precious.
And one day our suffering
Will turn into the wonders of the earth.

There are things that burn me now
Which turn golden when I am happy.
Do you see the mystery of our pain?
That we bear poverty
And are able to sing and dream sweet things

And that we never curse the air when it is warm
Or the fruit when it tastes so good
Or the lights that bounce gently on the waters?
We bless things even in our pain.
We bless them in silence.

That is why our music is so sweet.
It makes the air remember.
There are secret miracles at work
That only Time will bring forth.
I too have heard the dead singing.

And they tell me that
This life is good
They tell me to live it gently
With fire, and always with hope.
There is wonder here

And there is surprise
In everything the unseen moves.
The ocean is full of songs.
The sky is not an enemy.
Destiny is our friend.

Ben Okri

CHAPTER FOUR

How Communities CHANGE – from despair to possibility



If the community was a person, it would have been diagnosed as suffering from chronic depression. Both of the large automotive plants had closed and there was over 26% unemployment. The town and its surrounding municipality did not communicate and in over two decades had never voted together for their joint benefit. Homelessness was pervasive, the hospitals for the mentally ill had been closed and that population sent out on the streets. The main street of the town seemed populated only by drug dealers and patrons of the adult book stores. When discussing the town's situation, despair and blame dominated the conversation. There seemed to be no hope at all.

On the corner of the main street stood the public library. The homeless folks used the fountain in its garden to do their laundry and the back loading dock as their lavatory. In the winter they sheltered, warm and safe, in the reading room. Yet every day, children arrived for story time, students came to fill up the tables to study, and senior citizens came to chat with each other and work to put on a huge used book sale each summer, which seemed briefly to celebrate the community and its former vitality.

Homelessness was pervasive, the hospitals for the mentally ill had been closed ...

“It was the catalyst because it changed people’s perspective from despair to possibility.”

Then the city’s manager said that the public library must be closed, to reduce the city’s budget. When I walked into the library and asked what they were going to do about this, the staff and the library board said nothing could be done.

Fast forward three years later, and 984 dedicated volunteers celebrated their victory in a public vote with a three to one majority that created a district library, which unified the city and its municipality, gave it independent funding of more than eight times the budget the city had cut, and changed local and state law regarding public libraries. More than two decades later, the library won a national award for the best community library in the nation. Its mission is “to enrich life, stimulate intellectual curiosity, foster literacy and encourage an informed citizenry”.

Today everyone recognizes that the library is the hub of an energetic and thriving community. The Main Street of the town is now vibrant with activity: there are new businesses, many restaurants, and a number of artists’ cooperatives. Each year the huge celebration of heritage draws crowds to the town, and to the library’s used book sale.

The Save the Library campaign was by no means the sole cause of this economic and social recovery. It was the catalyst because it changed people’s perspective from despair to possibility. There is a grand new library now, with all sorts of technological tools available to patrons, and busy programs reaching out across the region, but the old library in the heart of downtown is treasured. It is still a sacred place of dignity and discovery, and citizens are proud that it connects them to each other, and to its purpose. (Pssst, if you are curious about how things changed, keep reading...)



How does a community turn itself around when times are bad?

What brings people together to demand that those in power respect their rights and work with them to address their needs and realise their dreams?

In this chapter we will look at stories of communities that have brought about change and explore what allowed them to do this. These stories are not special or out of the ordinary – there are millions of such stories, some documented, most not. These stories were brought to us by development practitioners and community members who wanted to understand better how they had achieved change, both for themselves and so that others could learn from them. By exploring these stories in depth we try to capture what they have in common so that others know what to look for, what to nurture and what they need to be wary of.



What is community?

When we hear the word ‘community’ the image that springs to mind will depend on where we live and what we do but, for most of us, it will probably include:

- A group of people living in the same location who know each other well and know each other’s business.
- People who have a shared history and/or identity.
- People who spend time with each other – farm together, play together, share a similar culture or at least are respectful of each other’s cultures.
- People who support each other when there is a crisis – but whose relationships are also vulnerable to crisis.
- People who make decisions together about their environment and the group – though not necessarily with equal power.
- Strong and close relationships that can mean that people are able to work together but also that there is potential for conflict that can be both creative and destructive.

Communities hold the potential for both cooperation and conflict.

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Human beings are social beings.... and from the earliest times have gathered together to hunt, live, farm, play and to be creative. Our survival has depended on this and living and working together has led to the creation of villages, towns, cities, and also tribes and nations, creating a sense of identity and fostering commitment.

Politicians use the word “community” in an overwhelmingly positive way – as something we should aspire to that will enable people to live well, foster resilience and generally bring out the best in us. Since the 1970s, development practitioners have focused their interventions on communities and community development has become a discipline in itself.

But it is no accident that murder mysteries are typically set in small, tight-knit communities. It is the intricate connections between the characters that provide the tension and drama. Everyone cares about everyone else, in a positive or negative way, and whatever one person does has an effect on the others. Conflict is an intrinsic part of community and for every nostalgic account of growing up in a small village, there is an account of a young person desperate to escape the limitations and lack of privacy of village life.

Communities hold the potential for both cooperation and conflict. Both of these can be negative as well as positive and it is by working with these elements that communities can create or hinder social change.

21st Century Communities

With the advent of long-distance travel and the internet, the concept of community has become complex. Communities do not have to live together or work together. Groups of people who share the same interests or concerns and meet together through a website, chatroom or more formal grouping may call themselves a community. Their relationships may spread beyond the thing that first brought them together but often the community remains defined by their specialist interest (a community of hiking enthusiasts), their profession (a community of psychotherapists), and so on. These people may never meet face-to-face. They can also be riven by conflict and provide support during difficult times in much the same way that physical communities do. Groups of people may coalesce around a single issue or concern. They may sign a petition, debate and plan actions. They may meet to take action or lobby the government. These groups may be timebound; once the issue has been resolved or the change has happened, the group may disperse or it may move on to a new issue. Can we also call these kinds of groups communities? Or are they rather movements that bring different communities together, uniting to bring about a good that goes beyond a community to benefit society as a whole?



These new ways of meeting and taking action with people are increasingly important as many people today do not feel that they are part of a community in the place where they live and work. They may move often and rarely see the people who live close to them. They may be working long hours and cannot get involved in initiatives to change their physical environment. While political parties and advertisers use the language of community, they are often using it to get us to make individual choices about what we buy or who we vote for. The rhetoric of community is being used to separate and differentiate rather than to unite.

Active communities can be the bridge between change happening at the personal and at the regional or national level. But communities can also be resistant to needed change, suspicious of outsiders and take satisfaction in being different from those around them. Sometimes communities resist change because it violates what matters to them. Sometimes communities need an outsider to give them a fresh perspective on their situation or to introduce a different way of doing things. But outsiders can rarely force change to happen. They have to work with the dynamics that exist in the community and the changes that happen may not be what they expected.

Communities are complicated, each with its unique personalities and relationships, a history that they themselves are often unaware of and power dynamics that are difficult for outsiders to fathom. Many people nowadays are not part of only one community but many. These communities relate to our identities, our interests and our beliefs. I am part of a geographical community but also a religious community and a professional community. I may behave differently in different communities, but what is happening in one community may affect how I behave in others.

How can people in communities and people who work with communities encourage and bring about positive social change? How can we avoid inadvertently making things worse rather than better? What moves communities to act together to push for social change?



How would you define community? Write your answer in 5 minutes without lifting your pen from the paper. When you have finished read through and underline the words and phrases that most strike you. If you can, do this with a friend and have a discussion afterwards about what you think community is.

‘What moves communities to act together to push for social change?’



Heather Wood Ion, who was involved in the library campaign reflects on what happened.

The Library brings Life... What actually happened?

The library was not saved and transformed because every citizen wanted it to be; it was saved because a small group saw beyond the grief and the limits of what had been experienced and then worked together to discover new ways for the future. They papered the windows of the vacant buildings on Main Street with a poster which said "The Best Adult Book Store in Town is Your Public Library". They got people thinking and got them involved. They helped others to see that change was possible.

Government entities came together to change the law, businesses came together to support a public cause, educational institutions redefined themselves as contributors to a much bigger purpose, civic groups saw themselves as cooperative rather than competitive, and those who used the library saw themselves as bearers of a mission and a tradition important to an unknown future. At first, most citizens expressed real doubt about involving the unemployed in the campaign and even said that unions would have no interest in a library. Again, some people were able to see beyond the label 'unemployed' to the person underneath. A volunteer living with mental illness, who had often sought sanctuary in the library, commented as he stuffed envelopes for the campaign: "I like being valued for what I can do to help, not just labelled as in need of help."

The Leading Causes of Life

Gary Gunderson has developed a framework that encapsulates many of the key things that really matter and enable social change. He calls them the Leading Causes of Life. The Leading Causes of Life are explored in more detail in Barefoot Guide 3: Mobilising Religious Health Assets for Transformation, Chapter 4.

Intergenerativity

We bridge, with gratitude and responsibility, what came before and what will come after us. When our lives are blessed and nurtured by those who come before and after us, we become encouraged, strengthened, enlivened and more able to shape our own lives, to make vital choices.

Hope

Imagination helps us construct the lives we want to live and the legacies we want to leave. Hope in the deepest sense is about imagining a different, healthier future and finding the energy to do something to try to bring that future into being. If we can see a positive future this nurtures the life force to enable it to happen.

Coherence

We seek meaning from experience; our brains form and seek patterns. Coherence refers to the many ways we make sense of life, how life makes sense to us, to see our journey as intelligible and not wholly random or victim to inexplicable forces.



Agency

To have the will and the resourcefulness to act, and to act with the full capabilities we have as human beings, is a central 'cause' of life.

Connection

As human beings we find life through complex social relationships and connections to one another, building communities of various kinds that enable us to adapt to changing threats and opportunities.

*It is the questions
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The library campaign took place before Gary developed this framework, but I believe it was successful because it generated and cultivated these qualities.

The five terms are powerful in focusing attention and effort. Placing them in context, they remind us of Schweitzer's "Reverence for Life", and their roots lie in the work done in hospices for those with HIV, which had to transform itself into work with the young orphans left behind by the pandemic and focus on their lives, not on death.

The language of life is both clarifying—it helps us ask ourselves what our efforts are for?—and enabling—by focusing our attention on what we can do with and for each other. It serves as an invitation to see our lives in a new way, to reframe our experience from an enriched perspective and to discover new tools within our capacities. Its moral dimension lies in creating sacred space for both the making of sense and the work of living. Saving the public library became for many of the volunteers just such a moral or spiritual commitment. They were aware that they were both saving and creating a sanctuary and a community which would be sustained far beyond their own engagement. One library patron said "We do not have a home, we do not have a safe place, we do not have anywhere that leaves us to be ourselves, except here. This is our safe place."

All is not consistently positive, and the language of life must embrace the shadows and the suffering in every life. Yet the language reminds us that the seeds of joy are hidden in that struggle, and that our awareness of despair and pain helps us appreciate the discoveries made visible to us when we change our perspectives. When the library was temporarily closed campaigners put a wreath of mourning on its doors, and that grief helped to fuel the effort to renew and reform the community.

If we work within systems of denial, or try to build on a faith which is based on a fear of death, we will find ourselves living in societies based on fear, not on the vitality we yearn to experience. Often our economic models delude us into thinking that public measures of success will provide meaning, but most of these measures are not relevant to a meaningful and sustainable life, to connection, coherence, agency, intergenerativity and hope. If my own value is to be measured merely by economic outputs, why should I be concerned that my methods and behaviours treat others with similar instrumentalism? If a public library is only valued for how small its budget can be in the city's accounts, no one will recognize that it can be a home, a sanctuary, a place of wonder, a transformative catalyst of change.

We live in neighbourhoods yet often do not know our neighbours. And we work with colleagues we depend on, yet we often do not know their talents. We can in our own lives create these ceremonies of renewal, and through them, because they are resonant with life, gain or borrow courage until the next time we gather. A potluck, a street fair, or even a simple birth announcement can gather strangers together to celebrate living.

The language of life can change who we are and what we do, because it affirms and strengthens what we human beings have always known: we find healing and wholeness with each other. We must continuously celebrate that this making of sanctuary is sacred work. We are midwives to the future, and our work exists in order to create more life. It is the

questions we ask which lead us forth as explorers and pioneers. As we teach our children that questions are more important than answers, and seeking requires as much celebration and discipline as does finding, let us move forward with reverence knowing that living with reverence is living with wonder. Our task is to explode the constraints on our imagination and release all that we can become to pursue Life.

The story of the library is not unusual. It often takes a crisis to bring a community together to make a change and, if they are successful, this often inspires them to use that change as the springboard for other changes. But what helps people to get started, to inspire others and keep going?

The Leading Causes of Life were developed as a response to work in the HIV & AIDS sector. Gunderson realised that the work with children orphaned by HIV & AIDS needed to focus not on dying but on living. He and many others believe that if the five causes are nurtured then positive social change is possible.

Heather argues that it was because the community action to save the library unconsciously incorporated all the elements needed to bring the community back to life that it was so successful. When you read the other stories in this chapter, it will be useful to reflect on whether the causes are present in those stories too. The Leading Causes of Life is just one lens through which to look at social change and it has been used to help people seeking to bring about change, particularly in the area of health. You can find out more at <http://www.leading-causes.com/>.

QUESTIONS:

How were the Leading Causes of Life cultivated in the library campaign?

Do you think this is a useful way of understanding and promoting social change?



Through community meetings, people were able to identify the root causes and propose solutions by themselves.

What also interests me is the inclusiveness of the process. It would have been easy for those people who started the protest to exclude the homeless and the poor. They would probably have won their case, but would the rejuvenation of the town still have happened? Or would the changes have benefited only the wealthier residents? Because some people were willing to connect with those who had been excluded but who valued the library, the town became more united and more understanding of each other and everyone benefited. Bringing about social change for ourselves may be easier but bringing about social change that benefits all means we have to reach out to people we may feel uncomfortable around but who are nevertheless part of our community. Unless we reach out to them and enable them to be involved, the change will be partial and may lead to more injustice.

Changing ourselves

Most of the stories in this chapter are about people demanding change from the authorities. In the next story a community receives help from the authorities, but they are unable to benefit from it because the assistance did not understand the community. The community wants the change but at first they cannot see how it can happen. They have to decide whether it is worthwhile to make fundamental changes to their way of life. How are they able to do this?

Let the Kitchen Talk

By Vu Le Minh

“You can stay in my house tonight. No worries about mosquitoes! Haha, I have a bed net for you. Come, come!”

I spent that night talking with Ho Van Binh, the house owner, also the head of the health station in A Tuc commune, about the epidemic.

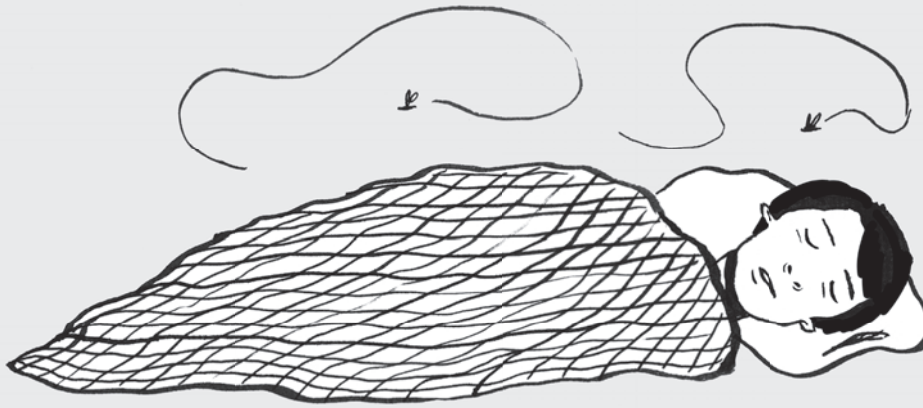
“I heard there was a high prevalence of malaria in the community. How’s that now?”

“It’s still a problem, but the rate’s much lower now. You can’t imagine how bad it was a couple of years ago.”

Huong Hoa is a remote district of Vietnam where the risk of contracting malaria is high. Eighty percent of the population are from ethnic minorities. In 2005, 1,500 people out of a population of 90,000 contracted malaria. Six of these became severely ill and one died.

Then the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) of Vietnam came to help. Its interventions focused on promoting the use of impregnated mosquito nets, spraying houses with permethrin, providing free diagnosis and treatment to poor patients, organising training for health staff at grassroots level, applying monitoring and evaluation systems, and promoting health education via posters and loudspeaker systems.

The NMCP strategies were evaluated by the district and commune authorities as effective as it treated thousands of people at risk of malaria and equipped them with mosquito nets. Despite these activities, the decrease in the number of people affected with malaria was slow and the disease remained widespread in the area, especially in poor and remote communities.



Why weren't the measures working? The national program had a standard approach that was based on selected technology and applied it in the same way everywhere. Local context was not taken into account. People were not involved in finding out what would work in their own community.

In addition, the programme made a number of assumptions. For instance, it assumed that mosquitoes bred in pools just outside houses so the authorities ignored unhygienic practices inside houses that encouraged mosquitoes to breed. Another assumption was that people could get rid of mosquitoes simply by using bed nets, so much of the program's budget was allocated to purchasing mosquito nets. The NMCP applied a "fixed" formula on the number of nets per household based on the sleeping habits of the Kinh majority, not taking into account local variations.

People were aware of how malaria was contracted but traditional practices took precedence over instructions from the authorities. Many people got sick. Some died. They lost a lot of work during harvest season because of weakness due to malaria.

"At that time, all of us were in misery and we wanted to do something to change," a villager told me, "but we didn't really know what to do and how to make it happen."

The Medical Committee Netherlands - Vietnam (MCNV) helped to create a space for the villagers themselves to identify and prioritise problems, analyse root causes, barriers, opportunities and resources to cope with malaria. They proposed solutions that were then described in their own village health development plans. These plans were submitted to relevant parties for technical and financial support, and once approved they were implemented with full participation of local people in a complete project cycle.



One central principle was to listen to local people and to let them do what they could. In community meetings, tackling malaria was seen as the top priority. When asked about why they did not fully participate in the Government program such as not using bed nets regularly and properly, local people came up with various reasons that were surprising to outsiders.

“Hanging a bed net so close to where we sleep is risky; it would catch fire easily,” a man said. Traditionally, people slept round the kitchen fire. The risk of fire outweighed the risk of malaria so most people did not use the nets.

“I think the policy [on the ratio of bed net over household] by the health sector was inappropriate,” a woman shared. “Because in a family men, women and children all sleep together around the fire. So what could we do with one bed net for all?”

Many of them used bed nets for other purposes. “I’ve seen many people using bed nets as blankets when it gets cold,” a boy said, “some of them even used bed nets to catch fish on the nearby lake.”

The habit of raising animals and using open toilets around the house contributed to the spread of malaria. Local people made full use of the ground space under their stilt houses to raise animals. This damp place was an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes.

“You can’t imagine how dirty the houses looked,” a health worker said. “Each time I paid home visits to local people for health check-ups, I wore a gauze mask and had to tread carefully as manure lay scattered on the ground.”

Through community meetings, people were able to identify the root causes and propose solutions by themselves.

“We agreed that using a bed net is vital to protect us from mosquitoes,” a young man said, “but we wondered how we could use it next to the fire.”

The local people discussed this and some of them proposed separating the kitchen from the sleeping room. The risk of fire would then no longer stop people using nets.

The initiative of separating the kitchen from the main house met fierce resistance from other local people. Many people felt angry and left the community meeting quickly.

“No one dared to carry out the proposed idea,” a woman added, “otherwise he would be the black sheep of the whole village.”

Things remained unchanged until two months later. The number of people infected with malaria continued to increase. Some people died.

“So we held a meeting again in the evening,” an old man said. “We discussed and tried to find a way out. But we could not find any good solution. Then some of us had to take the risk and propose separating the kitchen again. The meeting room became noisy with sounds of disagreement. We could not start the meeting. Luckily, some of the oldest men, including my father, stood up and shouted: ‘That’s enough! No-one among us wants to change our customs. Ok. But then what? Our people still get sick and die. Our children still miss school. Our men are still unable to work in the fields. We will surely die soon if we don’t do anything to change! If you have any better idea, say it now!’”

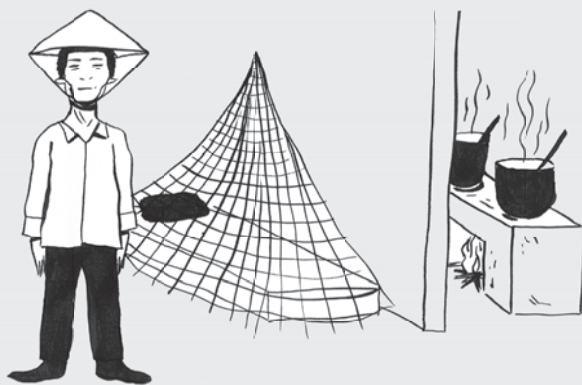


The meeting lasted until midnight. The idea was finally accepted by almost all the participants, but no one volunteered to take a leading role in making it happen.

“My father was the pioneer,” a village head said with pride. “He encouraged his relatives and children to carry it out. We used the nets, but we could not sleep well without the kitchen fire. My children said they felt cold. But it was our promise, for our own sakes. One week later, things seemed alright and we felt better. Our neighbours then learnt to do the same.”

The initiative was rolled out within this village and then to other villages and communities.

Local people felt cold when they slept far away from the kitchen, so many of them used bed nets as blankets. MCNV helped people to buy blankets and bed nets at half price. Community self-help groups were established to train villagers how to fix and maintain old bed nets. Villagers also negotiated with the national programme to provide additional nets to ensure everyone was covered.



Drama in the local language was used to raise awareness of malaria in communities and promote the use of mosquito nets. Villagers, especially children and youth, worked together to design and actively participate in local games such as javelin throwing. MCNV provided support in building domestic latrines and shelters for livestock away from the houses. At the community's request, MCNV helped them set up community funds to finance projects to improve the community.

“There have been significant changes in the communities,” Cu Giac Hien, the Head of Xy commune's health station told me. “I do think it all started from the separation of the kitchen from the house.”

Some men revealed that when moving out of the kitchen, they built separate rooms for different family members just like Kinh people did. They felt that because of this the relationship between them and their wives improved. Others also built separate shelters for their animals away from their house which meant their children had a clean space to play in.

“It was us who faced the problem,” a local man said, “and when we were able to meet up with each other to tackle the problem, we thought we could overcome it.”

Can Dieu, a young woman, revealed: “I think, besides that, another more important reason was that we had brave people who dared to make the change first. When things improved, other people followed.”

Currently malaria still exists in the area but it is not as severe as it was before. According to the 2012 report on malaria control by the district health sector, the number of local people affected with malaria is down to 611 with no deaths or severe infections.

“Malaria is still a problem but we are confident enough to declare that it can be controlled now,” the Director of Huong Hoa district's Preventive Health Centre said. “We have learnt much from the past, especially from the story about the kitchen. We already have the “Three Withs” motto (Eat With, Stay With, and Do With local people), but now we recognise how important they are.”



If local cultural practices are ignored, then technical solutions can be useless ...

What can we learn here?

We are always being told we must scale up our activities and replicate successful projects. But this story reminds us that it is not as simple as that. Mosquito nets have saved hundreds of thousands of lives all over the world but there is no guarantee that they will be effective. If local cultural practices are ignored, then technical solutions can be useless, even if the community can see the benefit.

Changing cultural practices is extremely difficult – female genital mutilation is a good example of this – as they are tied up with people’s identity and self-worth. Outsiders who criticise these practices or tell people to change are likely to be ignored.

This kind of change needs people who are willing to take a risk, to be the first to do this. It helps if they are people who are respected in the community. Leadership is important here. Sometimes they will be people who have power or an official position but not always. And the change will be uncomfortable at first so they have to persevere. Here the role of older people was crucial. People who were respected in the community made the change in their own families. This initially caused discomfort and inconvenience but they had the commitment to see it through.

MCNV, the agency who supported the change, also played an important role. They brought the people together, young and old, and gave them space to discuss the issue. They also gave them time. They did not push people to make a decision; they could make the change at their own speed. The change did not come about at one community meeting. It took several. And the meetings lasted long into the night. This is where timebound projects where targets have to be reached by a certain date can fail. The temptation is to push the change through when the community is not ready, creating resistance. It is highly likely that any changes that do happen when forced will not be sustainable.

MCNV also supported the change when it started to happen, providing things that people needed and persuading the health authorities to do so too. Even if the government’s initial interventions had worked, the compartmentalisation of the work would probably not have enabled the success to be built on and other changes to be made. As with the library, the success of one change provides an excellent opportunity for the community to make further positive changes. In this case the community is stronger because they made the change themselves.

Recognising and addressing injustice

In the next story there is a different approach to change. The change agents are part of the community of the church, but not all of them are part of the geographical community where they seek to bring about change. The church community used a tried and tested approach to bring about change and was able to give the wider community the confidence to get involved in the change too.

In 2007 the general election in Kenya ended in violence. While the intensity and the extent of the violence was unexpected and shocking, it demonstrated that when excluded from power, many people felt that violence was the only way to react. Student demonstrations regularly ended in violence and people in powerful positions used the threat of violence to violate the rights of others, often with impunity because people felt that the courts and the local authorities could not be trusted to defend them.

NON VIOLENCE CONCEPT

Change Agents for Peace International and Quaker Peace & Social Witness introduced Turning the Tide, a non-violent approach to handling conflict and working for justice and peace to try and prevent violence in the 2013 elections.

Turning the Tide methodology uses a participatory and inclusive approach to conflict where all parties are equal though on opposing sides. It seeks to help the participants to understand violence and non-violence in the context of peace. Power, a key factor in governance, is explored to help communities understand how power in the wrong hands can ruin them or, on the other hand, how it can help to build community if those in power understand it as a human relationship, one of **empowerment**. Since 2010, the communities involved have continued to build bridges for peace and justice. Communally they challenge injustices even within themselves or help other community members to see other forms of violence and injustices by collaborating in strategies that will help transform the community and the country into a just society. The concept of power is analysed for the communities to understand how it can be used for positive gains.

The non-violence values and principles applied are:

- Willing to take action for justice without giving into or mimicking violence.
- Respecting and caring for everyone in a conflict, including your opponent.
- Refusing to harm damage or degrade people, living things and the earth as means of achieving goals.

... when excluded from power, many people felt that violence was the only way to react.





- Acting in ways consistent with the ends we seek.
- Being prepared to take suffering on oneself without inflicting it on others.
- Believing that everyone is capable of change and no one has a monopoly on the truth.
- Recognizing the importance of training so that non-violent thinking and behaviour become part of our everyday lives.

[You can find out more about Turning the Tide at <http://www.turning-the-tide.org/>]

Mama Zepreta's Story

Benson Khamasi

Power and rank in Kenya is often used to oppress the poor. A high-ranking government official in the Kenya police force used his rank and power to illegally acquire a farm belonging to this grandmother. It was a place she had called home for over 20 years. She was evicted from the farm and her 6-roomed brick house demolished in the eviction. No legal records could be found in the land registry authenticating the powerful man's ownership of the farm. The community lived in fear but they did not dare challenge the powerful people who were perpetrating injustices. Social change practitioners in the Turning the Tide program and other partner organizations dealing with legal aspects of injustices, specifically for women, managed to file a case in Kakamega high court and obtained an order allowing Mama Zepreta to return to her farm. All parties involved were served with the order, opening up another round in the legal battle between the powerful man and the unknown grandmother.

We were determined to see the law applied to the letter though well aware that a dying horse must give a final kick before it dies. Planning this campaign required



concerted efforts from all like-minded organizations and individuals. We sought direction from key administrative officials like the Area District Commissioner who is in charge of the Security Council in the district. Though he was clear that the law must be followed, he

admitted to not being in a position to implement the order given the fact that the 'buyer' of the land was his senior in government rank and, being a commandant with the police unit, he often deployed armed officers to guard the farm whenever he suspected that Mama Zepreta was planning to go back there.

On the Thursday we intended to take her home, a contingent of armed police officers arrived in the morning in a Government vehicle and waited there the whole day. This confirmed that the powerful man was not ready to respect the rule of law and would use any means available to threaten and intimidate us. The plan was always to change the plan as necessary, so we did not go to the farm but spent the day developing an alternative plan. It became clear that we needed to work with only trusted allies who would not reveal the plan to our opponents. We therefore limited the campaign plans to cluster members and myself until we were ready. We also intentionally resolved not to involve the authorities directly as it was obvious that the land buyer had threatened them with sacking and transfers; hence they could not go against his wishes.

Before the day agreed for the action, we visited the farm to familiarise ourselves with the surroundings. We also visited Mama Zepreta where she was staying in a small church kitchen not so far from her farm. We were moved by the primitive conditions she was now forced to live in with her grandchildren. We also met the Butali market youth in the boda boda industry (motor cycle transport), since Mama Zepreta's son Gilbert was a member, and they assured us of support in the campaign. Only at 8.30pm on the night before the action did we send out invitations to key allies informing them of the plan for the day. This included other Turning the Tide resource persons, civil society organization members and human rights and other activists in the region, including the media.

On the morning of the campaign we said a short prayer and set off. By 9am people started arriving at our meeting point in Butali market, not far from Mama Zepreta's farm. We got all the campaign materials ready and loaded them on a pick-up. The market was slowly waking up for business, not knowing what was about to happen. We got the market fired up with a jig and dance and handed out handbills featuring a newspaper cutting about the eviction. A short briefing of the plan was done to emphasize our non-violence principles and discipline, and many offered to join in the campaign. We set off in a convoy of motorcycles, all beeping and hooting, and women sang songs of praise all the way to the home of Mama Zepreta in Makuu village.



The caretakers who had been hired by the Police Commandant to protect his illegally acquired farm were taken by surprise on seeing such a big crowd at the house. They had been instructed not to allow anyone to enter. The women danced round and round the spacious compound and the entire village came to witness what was happening. Many villagers were happy to receive Mama back many weeks after her eviction. Many too could not believe what they were seeing. They knew the farm had been taken over by a powerful person in government and that it was being guarded by armed police personnel. How could the old grandmother have gotten back her farm when she was so powerless? The community opted to remain silent when Mama Zepreta was forced off her farm, but now they saw how cooperation could challenge power.

We said a prayer and assembled for a group photo. I delivered a press statement on behalf of all those involved. We began to build Mama Zepreta's new home just in front of the one that had been demolished during her eviction. Everyone helped and it was encouraging to see a community united in a common task.

At around 2:30pm, when the house was ready to be roofed with iron sheets, we were alerted that a contingent of armed police was about to arrive. We quickly briefed everyone to stay calm and to wait and see what they said. In less than 5 minutes a police vehicle with headlights beaming sped into the compound and, before it could stop, armed police officers jumped out with guns blazing, throwing tear gas into the crowd and sending us scampering for safety.

The whole village was filled with tear gas and small children could be seen choking from the gas. Several people were injured but this did not deter us from pushing our campaign agenda. We quickly regrouped and discussed a way forward. We agreed to send three representatives

The whole village was filled with tear gas and small children could be seen choking from the gas.

to seek an audience with the armed officers. I led the team carrying the court orders and other legal papers that gave us the mandate to be in the compound. In our discussion we were clear that we were not ready to leave unless by a court order. The crowd was getting agitated but we managed to ensure everyone adhered to our non-violence discipline. The power of cooperation was at work.

After long hours of negotiations, the police officers were obliged to leave Mama Zepreta peacefully in her home. Since the villagers had been angered, we requested them to leave at the same time as the caretakers for their security and to reduce the risk of

violence. Work resumed as the women broke into song and dance. The crowd was determined to finish the house before sunset. By 6pm the house was roofed and we prepared to leave. Everyone was overjoyed that we had succeeded even after being threatened and intimidated with guns. It was proof that non-violence can be more powerful than weapons.

In the days that followed we engaged with the authorities. We visited the Police and District Commissioner's offices, seeking clarification as to why the law was being applied selectively. We learnt that they had never been informed of the General Service Unit, the unit sent by the Police Commandant, operating in their jurisdiction although this was against security protocol. It



was obvious that the Commandant was using his office, power and state resources to bend the laws for his own gain. We recorded statements about the incident. We requested that the Provincial Police Officer set up an investigation and for appropriate action to be taken against this abuse of power.

“When the birds are alive, they eat ants. When the birds die they are eaten by the ants.”
– Times and circumstances change, so does life.

The Kenya National Human Rights commission (KNHRC) visited us. We took them to Mama’s home to confirm what had happened and they later visited the authorities to seek clarity. We made it clear that the rule of law must be followed regardless of status. The court ruled that Mama Zepreta be allowed to stay on the farm as that was her home.

We showed that non-violent strategies can address injustices in our communities. A violent approach could have led to more violence and further injustices. Many people want to know more about these strategies and sharing this story will help the movement to grow.

What can we learn here?



This story is about two communities, a community of people who have come to believe that non-violent action can address the injustices of the society in which they live, and a geographical community that saw an injustice committed but felt powerless to address it until they saw a different way of tackling the problem.

What enabled change to happen?

- A co-ordinated approach using the principles of non-violence which broke a vicious circle of violence which always results in increasing oppression.
- Planning and preparation.
- Bringing like-minded actors together.
- Drawing on what is available – laws and regulations, people’s dissatisfaction.
- Leaders who ensured that discipline was maintained and principles followed.

But something deeper was going on too. Through the commitment of a group of people who could offer a clear way forward, doubt and fear were replaced by faith and courage. The leaders spent time talking to people and understanding them, and helped them to see that change was possible. The non-violent approach was respectful of the people on ‘the other side’, recognising that they were doing their job and helping them to see how they could do it better. It is this deep work that really made a difference and it was supported and upheld by the non-violent principles the group adhered to. And this one change can lead to many others as communities see what can happen if they work together to address injustice in a non-violent way.

It was proof that non-violence can be more powerful than weapons.

Working for change transforms us

Finally, here is a story that is still evolving. On the surface it is a familiar story about a community fighting for its rights. But it is also about learning and growing through struggle.

Creating Electricity

Mandlenkosi Gcwabaza

The Electricity Action Group (EAG) is a network of mainly female community activists in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, campaigning for access to affordable and efficient electricity. EAG was started by three women in 2009. Since 2011, it has campaigned for free electricity for the poorest households. It is supported by an NGO called PACSA in a way that is 'on tap not on top'. EAG operates in 10 communities and the agenda is set by its members.

Msunduzi municipality has the second highest electricity tariffs in the country and 45% of its households are headed by a woman. Typically, households have 6-11 members, often with only one wage earner.

At the beginning of the campaign in the Msunduzi Municipality, EAG conducted research to find out how much free basic electricity was enough for poor households. They organised round table discussions with officials from different municipalities and Eskom (the electricity supplier), business people and political organisations to present the research findings. Msunduzi municipality council then took a decision to give 200kWh of free basic electricity to all residents. This decision was greeted with joy by residents, especially the poor.

Unfortunately, the Municipality only gave free basic electricity to credit meter users but not to pre-paid meter users. Members of the EAG and pre-paid users were angry. At a subsequent meeting EAG members began asking critical questions that reached beyond their initial demand for free basic electricity. The group asked, "what does it mean for us to not have electricity' and 'what is democracy really?"

People were forced to choose between electricity and food. If they bought food they could not cook it, if they bought electricity they had no money for food. The original purpose of pre-paid meters was to serve poor citizens, but now they would be forced to pay more than those who had credit meters. At their meeting, the EAG members concluded that the Municipality was playing games with people's lives. The critical questions they asked made them realise that in a democracy they did not have to ask for, but could demand their rights. They decided to challenge the Municipality about their



inability to provide free basic electricity to pre-paid meter households.

They wrote letters and emails to the Municipality but these were ignored. They held a 'sit in' at both the Mayoral and electricity department offices and were given promises that they would "look into the matter". One week later the Municipality announced that they would issue letters asking people with pre-paid meters to apply for free basic electricity.



EAG called a meeting and the message was communicated to all members. They copied the letter and distributed it in the community. They used print media and community radio stations to inform pre-paid meter households. On registration day the lines were long and the electricity department did not have enough staff on duty. EAG members managed the lines and distributed drinking water. People were given only four days to register. When they argued that four days were not enough, the Municipality promised to give people another week but reneged on its promise. Households were promised that within two weeks of submitting an application they would receive 200kWh electricity free of charge. Months passed and nothing happened.

At a special meeting EAG members decided to take action until they got what they wanted from the Municipality. They developed a strategy and plan of action. This started with picketing outside the Municipality and electricity department offices. This yielded no response and after two weeks they organised a march to submit a memorandum. The chief demand was for the immediate implementation of 200kWh free basic electricity for households with pre-paid meters in line with the council's October 2010 resolution and national policy. They asked that council representatives be accountable to citizens and that real spaces for substantial dialogue be opened up in the city. They also demanded that electricity be provided to all households who as yet had no access.

The march was supported by the South African Communist Party and COSATU (The Congress of South African Trade Unions). When they arrived the Mayor was not in his office and another official was sent to receive the memorandum on behalf of the Mayor. They refused to hand it over. EAG organised another march and demanded that the Mayor be there to receive the memorandum. The authorities refused to grant permission for the march so they approached human right lawyers who issued the municipal authorities with a letter demanding they grant permission or they would take the matter to court. Permission was granted.

EAG members continued to mobilise residents, especially those living in informal settlements who had no access to electricity. On the day of the march the police re-routed the march to the municipal buildings and when they arrived the Mayor refused to see them since they were early. They were told he would not come out until the right time as outlined in the permission document. They waited outside singing until he came out. He promised to look into the matter, the standard response from authorities but again, nothing happened.



EAG approached the public prosecutor, but he failed to facilitate any meetings with the authorities.

Meanwhile people had already started to steal electricity by setting up illegal connections. This caused deaths, many of them children, but these were ignored by the Municipality. EAG was unable to stop people setting up illegal connections because life was so difficult without electricity. EAG decided to train volunteer electricians to re-connect people when they are disconnected.

EAG succeeded in reducing the electricity tariff by 3% by presenting their case to the National Electricity Regulator of South Africa. This was a small victory that encouraged them to continue the struggle.

The free basic electricity matter is currently being handled by lawyers. EAG is an organization that believes in action so it continues to put pressure on municipal officials. They plan to lobby Eskom and the Municipality to invest in renewable energy.

The struggle of EAG in Msunduzi is a struggle for human dignity and not just about 200kWh of free electricity. When they started speaking about what was behind the demand for electricity they saw that it was about dignity, humanity and justice. All people must all have access to services because services are intrinsic to dignity. Nobody must be denied access to services because they are unable to pay. They believe that people must come before money and leaders must be accountable to the people they serve.

They are now organising around this campaign, which is about dignity, about love, humanity and justice. It is about everyone having electricity, water, decent toilets, frequent refuse removal, street lights that work, decent schools, enough and nutritious food, good quality health care and safe and reliable transport so that all people can live in dignity.



Some questions to think about:

What, in your minds, are the real challenges here?

What would you suggest if you were there?

This is a story of working for a change that has not yet come about. But the community has, in the process, learned many things and started to address the challenges that face them proactively. They have been given a voice and space where they air their concerns and grievances and feel they are working actively for change. They have seen their problem as part of a larger problem that affects the whole country. This sows the seed for connecting with others in the same situation.

Finally.....


Many development organisations work to bring about change in communities. We are designated as community development workers or community facilitators and we mobilise community health volunteers, community-based organisations and community groups. Reams of paper have been filled on how to work with communities, how to empower, mobilise and change them. What can we say that is new? Do all these stories have things in common that will help us to understand how social change happens and how we can support it?

Hannah Arendt has said, in reference to the Arab Spring, that in order to bring about a revolution, you need to change not just your way of thinking, but your way of relating.

In the stories we can see how people worked to change relationships in order to bring about change. In the library story, the people who wanted change started talking to people who were homeless, who had been excluded from society. By bringing everyone affected by the library closure on board they not only had more people supporting them but they changed the dynamics in the community. The change could have stopped at saving the library, but the relationships which were formed through working together for change affected many other aspects of life in the community too.

In Mama Zepreta's story, the church group reached out to the boda boda union and the people in the market. They gave them tools which enabled them to work together and there was a common cause. They also developed a different relationship with the local authorities and the legal system. Because they were informed about their rights and the law, they were able to engage with them and overcame attempts to subvert the law. Access to information was important here and also a few people brave enough to use the information to bring about change.

In the kitchen story, the change that some community members were prepared to make brought about changes in family relations. They changed the status quo which is why the change was such a huge step for people and one which many were reluctant to take. Why were they prepared to do this? There was a will to change because the price of not doing so continued to be high. In the past, malaria was probably thought of as inevitable, something that they had to accept. The initial government intervention and awareness raising helped them to understand that they could prevent illness and deaths from malaria. By engaging different members of the community in raising awareness and using drama and games, more people were able to see that bed nets could benefit them. This 'critical mass' of awareness and understanding helped some people in the community to believe that change was necessary.



... in order to bring about a revolution, you need to change not just your way of thinking, but your way of relating.

In the electricity story, again the process of change brought about a change in relationships. The relationships with the electricity company and with the local authorities are still antagonistic, but the relationships between people in the communities have changed. Acting collectively led them to involve more people in decision-making and to do things for themselves rather than to wait on others. The movement has evolved over time but they have not yet been successful. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that they were not been able to change their relationship with the local authorities and the electricity supply company. Perhaps a different strategy – of seeking common ground and compromise – might work better in this situation.



“ So a change in relationships can be a catalyst for and a result of social change.

So a change in relationships can be a catalyst for and a result of social change. It can set in motion a chain of events that leads to people who would not normally speak to each other meeting together. It can change the power dynamics between actors, even in family and personal relationships. This suggests that the very act of bringing people together to interact with each other in ways that encourage people to move outside their comfort zone and interact with people who they perceive as different can be a way of promoting and supporting social change. People need time and space to talk about what they want to change and how.

Intergenerativity, one of the leading causes of life, is about respecting and appreciating what has gone before and what will come after. In practical terms, it suggests that movements for social change benefit from being inclusive of the old and the young. Bringing different generations together gives access to both the experience and historical knowledge of older people and the enthusiasm and idealism of the young. These are of course generalisations – there are of course young people who have a lot of experience and older people who are enthusiastic. Acknowledging this, rather than stereotyping is also important.

Cultural norms are important here. While young people could raise awareness in Vietnam, it was the more senior people who needed to make the change if the rest of the community were to follow. Mama Zepreta was vulnerable because she was old but people also rallied round her because of her age and vulnerability. Understanding the dynamics between the generations is important. Projects that focus on ‘target groups’ often ignore the need to involve people from different generations and different groups within the community. People who are vulnerable or oppressed within a community can gain a lot of strength from meeting together and working for change, but if they can engage other groups to work with them then change can be more long-lasting and avoid exacerbating an ‘us and them’ mentality.

Crucial to all attempts to change relationships and to involve people in social change are time and space. Time to talk and a safe place to meet with others are important elements of the stories. Sometimes communities can find time and space themselves but often outside agencies can provide this – either directly or by providing the funding to make it possible. The community in Vietnam needed more than one meeting to get to the point where some people felt able to change where and how they slept. The communities in South Africa need regular meetings and events to keep the cause alive and to support each other.

The stories also demonstrate how people working together for change need to learn and adapt. If they fail to achieve the change, they need to reflect on what they have done and why it has not worked. Change happens in the process of working towards a goal. As people are working towards it, they learn to trust each other and hatred, fear and doubt are gradually replaced by love, courage and faith. The real work is developing the will to work for change and the courage and faith to see it through.

The real work is developing the will to work for change and the courage and faith to see it through.



Working with Questions:

What is our Primary Role as Development Practitioners?

People have to be seen as being actively involved, given the opportunity, in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs.

– Amartya Sen (1999)

Most Development Aid Projects unthinkingly dump capacity-building, technology, and funding, onto communities, mobilised around the idea that people lack capacity, resources, and organization. Highly-planned, logframed, capacity-building Projects. And in doing so they further bury the hidden reservoirs of community potential.

And of course in burying what people already have and know and bringing answers and resources from the outside, inevitably people's own will, confidence, and ownership are also buried and the projects continue to fail to sustain themselves once the capacity and resource bringers leave. Failure is blamed on the same incapacities and people are left worse off than before. This is the grand narrative of the Development Aid Industry.

We must recognize that people were developing long before Development Aid came into their lives and will continue to develop long after it leaves. The will to develop is innate, inborn. It is an inside-out and a continuous process. It may not be happening in a healthy or productive way in this or that community and it may be that its potential is blocked or buried by a series of constraints, but it is the only game in town to work with.

Development is already happening and as an outsider I cannot deliver development to anyone or indeed bring change to anyone any more than I can eat for them or cough for them! People can only change themselves. Any change that is forced on people is likely to be unsustainable or unhealthy.

In the Letsema Program we support the rural women's groups to bring their leaders together for five day workshops. These are not training sessions but development sessions where the women are encouraged to tell their life stories, to listen to each other, to experiment with asking better questions, to inquire into the power relationships they are caught in, and to build trust and solidarity between them. There is very little teaching, just the odd concept or two, and no fixed curriculum.

The workshop moves as the women suggest, increasingly facilitating themselves and setting the agendas. They are continually encouraged to reflect on themselves, to draw strength, forgiveness, and learning from lives that, without exception, are filled with experiences of hardship, trauma, sacrifice, initiative, and triumph. In a few days they start to look at themselves and each other differently, each a bit taller, their eyes filled with hope and courage and their minds with new ideas. Do we have the patience and faith to support and let people to find and learn from each other in their own way and time?



... people were developing long before Development Aid came into their lives and will continue to develop long after it leaves.

Working with Questions:

What is our Primary Role as Development Practitioners?

By Warren Feek of The Communication Initiative Network

Guidelines for supporting people from the outside

“Can you please help us to develop a strategy, plan a programme, review some work, write a document, critique a situation, solve a problem...?” I often get these kinds of “can you please help/support” requests, whether from a member of a local community group or a leader of a major international organisation.

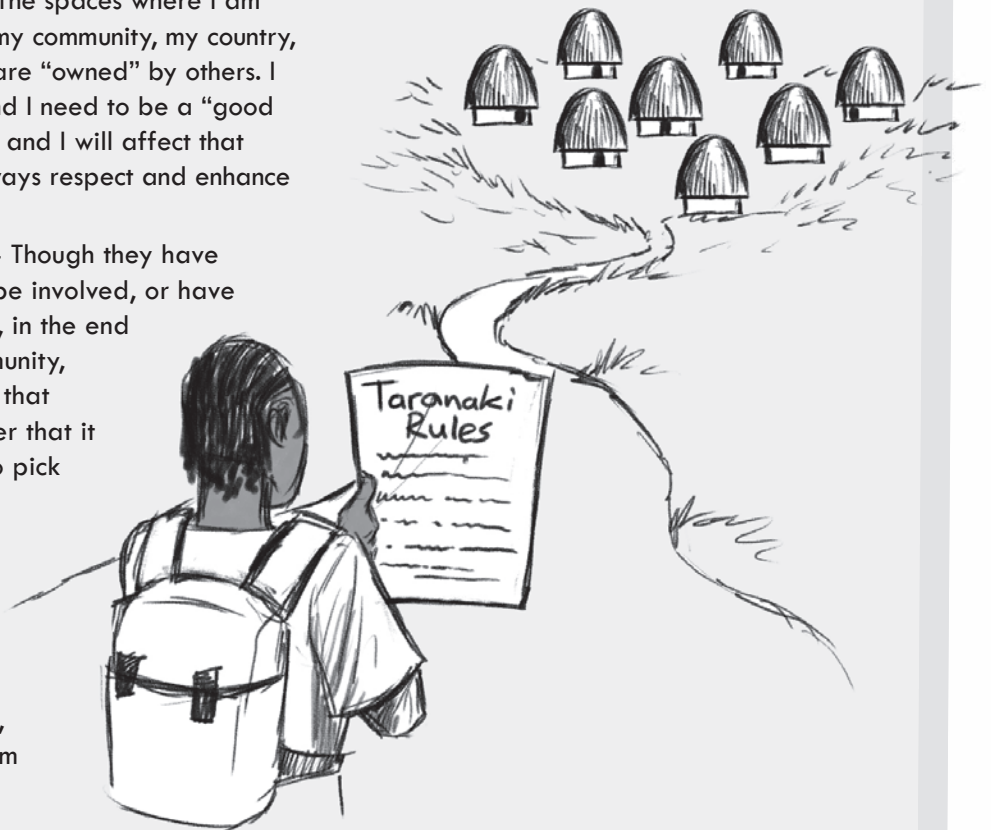
But being put into the position of outside helper I can easily do more harm than good. As the centre of gravity of local, national, and international development moves to more local and national decision-making and control, the numbers of such requests are also rapidly growing. With this there are also more requests for peer support, with a priority on South-South support and co-operation. The world is asking for more collaborative learning and working approaches. And less for top-down expertise.

And so, I have developed a set of 10 rules that I seek to follow when in a “please help/support” situation. I call them the “Taranaki rules” after my home province in New Zealand. Many of them are grounded on small community contexts, and experience. Of course I break the rules below all the time. And each time I do so I kick myself and try to learn from the experience!

The world is asking for more collaborative learning and working approaches. And less for top-down expertise.

The Taranaki Rules

1. The “I am a guest” rule – The spaces where I am engaged are usually not my community, my country, or my organisation. They are “owned” by others. I am there as their guest and I need to be a “good guest”. I am in their space and I will affect that space, and so I should always respect and enhance that space.
2. The “I get to leave” rule - Though they have very kindly asked me to be involved, or have accepted my involvement, in the end I get to depart that community, country, or organisation - that space. I need to remember that it is not me who will have to pick up the pieces afterwards.
3. The “90/10 knowledge” rule - No matter how much I may think or be told that I know about a situation, issue, dynamic or problem, I can only know a maximum



Working with Questions:

What is our Primary Role as Development Practitioners?

of 10%, while the “locals” know about 90%. Often this knowledge is hidden or not valued. This applies to even the most technical of topics. So, I try to create space for the authentic surfacing, valuing and peer sharing and examination of that “local” knowledge.

4. The “10% talk” rule - If I am talking more than 10% of the time, I am doing a really poor job (and I can talk!). If I dominate with “my knowledge” I close the space for engagement, sharing, learning, and creativity, and I begin to undermine rather than help.
5. The “4 out of 5 are questions” rule - Questions open up spaces for engagement. As an outsider I may be able to ask some different questions that open up a process – questions that create space for new or different understandings or relationships. So I try to ensure that my questions outnumber any specific ideas or statements I may share by a ratio of 5 to 1.
6. The “marginal voices” rule - As an outsider in a process I am less hidebound by pre-existing dynamics such as who gets to speak most or whose opinion carries the most weight. Trying to change the dynamics in the space means respectfully encouraging the quieter, “less important” voices to surface and be acknowledged.
7. The “would you mind sharing your story with us” rule - My culture places high value on getting down to business as quickly as possible, but this is not always a good way for an outsider to work. So I try to create time and space for people to share their stories. It is amazing what even close colleagues or neighbours do not know about each other. The inclusion of personal elements creates a closer and more meaningful space for understanding and working with each other.
8. The “5 year” rule - People struggle to look past the day-to-day problems, opportunities and worries, and to have a long term view. When it feels appropriate, I ask everyone to outline where they want to be in 5 years related to the priority issues on the table. This is an attempt to raise the group’s gaze and direct their actions to longer-term solutions rather than just fighting fires.
9. The “when to share my ideas and proposals” rule – I get invited to give support because I am regarded as having some technical knowledge and expertise that can be helpful. Everything in rules 1 to 8 above works against that happening! So I have a dilemma. My rules for when to share my ideas and proposals revolve around: being asked at least 3 times by 3 different people; being substantively into the process that is underway; having sufficient time left for my ideas or proposals to be critically examined; and, being able to explain them using the analysis emerging from the process to date. Timing is critical.
10. The “what agenda or plan” rule - If you are 25% of the way into a support/help process and the opening agenda or plan is still being followed – well, that is not good!

These are just my views, what guides my attempts to support others. What do you think?

CHAPTER FIVE

Through the gathering STORMS: From community to societal change

*Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
The books are filled with names of kings.
Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?
And Babylon, so many times destroyed.
Who built the city up each time? In which of Lima's houses,
That city glittering with gold, lived those who built it?
In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished
Where did the masons go? Imperial Rome
Is full of arcs of triumph. Who reared them up?
Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Byzantium lives in song.
Were all her dwellings palaces? And even in Atlantis of
the legend
The night the seas rushed in,
The drowning men still bellowed for their slaves.*

*Young Alexander conquered India.
He alone?
Caesar beat the Gauls.*

*Was there not even a cook in his army?
Phillip of Spain wept as his fleet
was sunk and destroyed. Were there no other tears?
Frederick the Great triumphed in the Seven Years War.
Who triumphed with him?*

*Each page a victory
At whose expense the victory ball?
Every ten years a great man,
Who paid the piper?*

*So many particulars.
So many questions.*

Bertolt Brecht



In another life and time Winston Churchill may have been a ship's cook or Mao Tse Tung a singer!

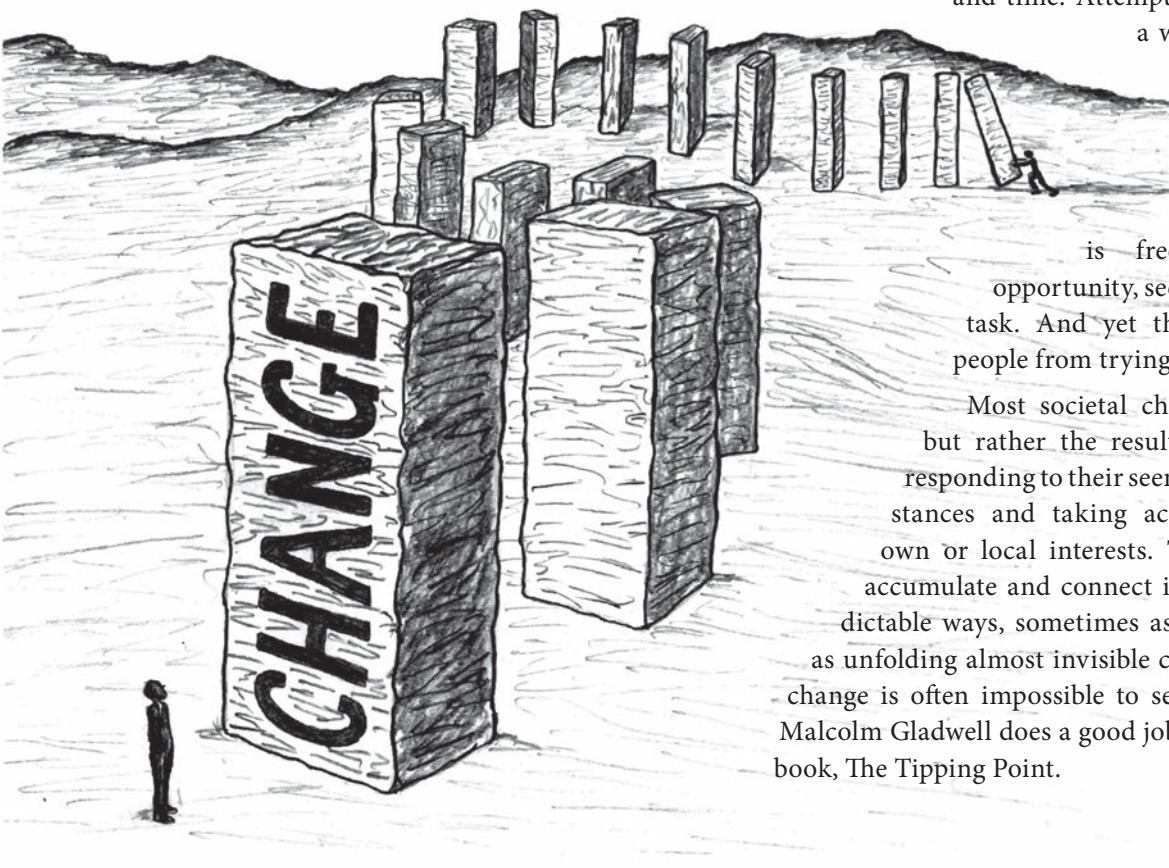
Our history books have tried to explain how societies change but they tend to focus on the achievements of a few powerful men (ignoring the women, of course), the wars they provoked, the laws they enforced and the organisations they led. The books focus on the dramatic events, seen as the turning points of history, because they are visibly rewarding and can be more easily captured in a story or on video. And of course they often only tell the stories from the viewpoint of the winners.

It is true that "great" leaders wielded great power, making bold or brutal decisions that shaped the course of history. But, as the Brecht poem invites us to do, we have to ask ourselves who gave them this power, who supported them or stood by when they acted? And what complex, developing forces of society came together to give them the opportunities to act as they did? Put Nelson Mandela or Genghis Khan in a farming community in Guatemala two hundred years ago and it is quite likely they would have become farmers, perhaps farmer leaders, known only to a few people but not of revolutions or empires. In another life and time Winston Churchill may have been a ship's cook or Mao Tse Tung a singer! Who else worked behind the scenes acting in unseen ways, no less influential, but still unrecorded and unacknowledged? Who and what were the kingmakers? We may think that history is made by great leaders, but actually great leaders are made by history.

What does it really take to make history, to make significant change happen at a societal level? Deliberately. Individual change is hard enough, as is observable from the people we live and work with and as we all make our way through the world. We may have all the knowledge or theory about the change we wish to see but find the new habits we have to practice and new ways of doing and being to be difficult and easily revert back to our old ways. For communities to discover their vitality and to thrive requires great dedication, patience and time. Attempting to change the way

a whole society works, to help it to become more human, a better place for its citizens, where the laws are just and where there is freedom, support and opportunity, seems to be an impossible task. And yet this has not prevented people from trying and even succeeding.

Most societal change is not deliberate but rather the result of people intuitively responding to their seemingly isolated circumstances and taking action, usually in their own or local interests. These smaller changes accumulate and connect in complex and unpredictable ways, sometimes as crisis, but most often as unfolding almost invisible change. And so societal change is often impossible to see or explain although Malcolm Gladwell does a good job of explaining it in his book, *The Tipping Point*.



Then there are those of us, NGOs, CBOs, change agents, facilitators, governments, consultants, communities and a whole host of others who come to this space deliberately. We have an agenda. Societal change initiatives taken by people who actively seek to advance freedom, equality or human well-being are a conscious force of history, to take courage and learn from. This chapter shares four stories, with some analysis, of groups of people who deliberately set out to change their societies, and how in different ways they struggled and succeeded, sometimes failed and in so doing learned their way forward.

We cannot copy any approach, method or understanding because what works in one society may utterly fail in another, but behind a story we may find new questions, learnings, connections and ideas to consider and try. And if we choose to work with change, we can learn to be more conscious of these considerations when designing or shaping our own actions.

We cannot copy any approach, method or understanding... but behind a story we may find new questions, learnings, connections and ideas to consider and try.

How to find the sleeping leader and wake her up!

The story of the creation and impact of a disabled women's movement in Central Asia

How to live, if you have a disability? What can you dream of, if in addition you are a woman and live in an Eastern society, where the role of the leader can only be filled by men? In a society where people with disabilities are sexless creatures surrounded by countless barriers?

At the time we were only observers of Life, but not active participants. Real Life, with its colors, passions, ups and downs was seething and in full swing outside the windows of our homes. While sitting at home and observing the Life outside our windows, we could not even dream of studying, working, going on dates, falling in love, having children, traveling or engaging in politics.

The turning point started just over a decade ago when several of us women, wheelchair users, from one of the Central Asian countries, were invited by a disabled people's organization to visit Finland. There we experienced a new way of thinking; a human rights based approach to disability issues. We saw strong women with disabilities give public speeches. We felt the power of peer support from these women.

When we returned home we decided: Enough with observing! We need to participate in Life! In our lives, nothing good will happen if we will not make it happen ourselves!

We started to dream of a Central Asian network of disabled women that would use role models and peer support to spread new ideas about gender issues. Working together built our courage to face society.



But after creating a small organization of women with disabilities, we were still strangers among our own: Men with disabilities considered the gender approach to disability as caprice and fancy, the women's movement saw us as only sexless persons with disabilities.

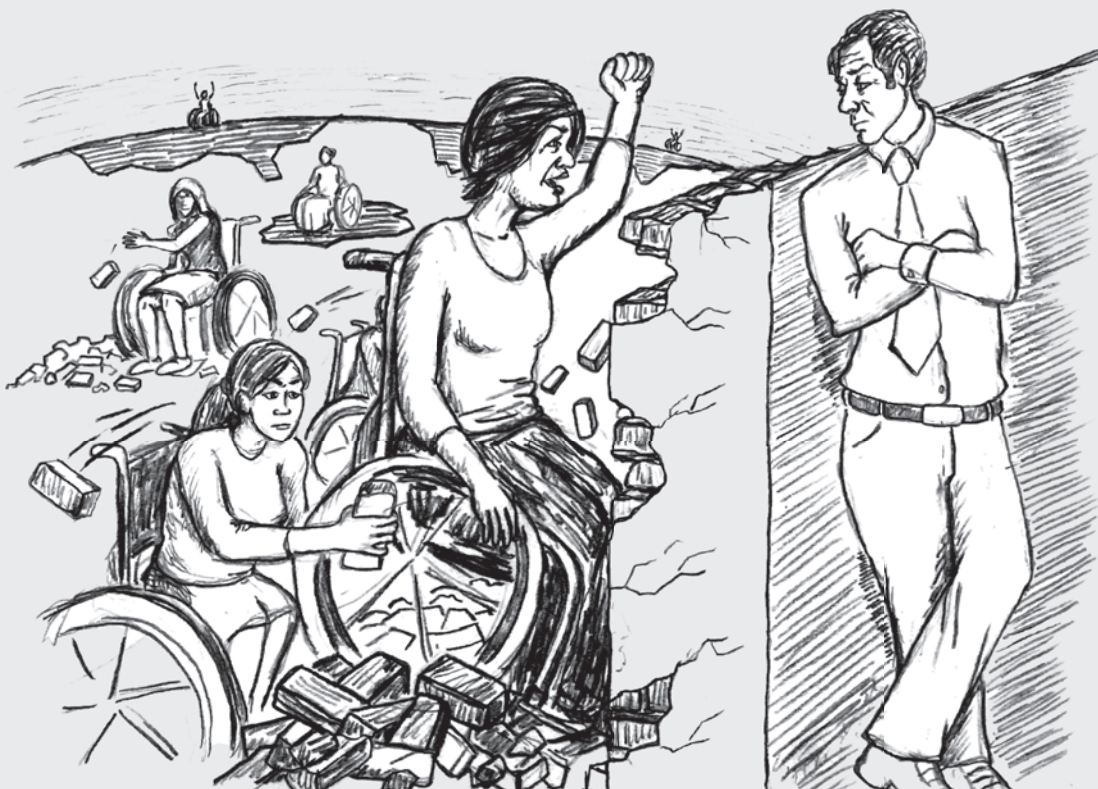
Then we realized that of all the barriers, the highest one is prejudice in the minds of people. To make changes in our lives, we needed to break stereotypes. Of course, we could have used the usual ways of raising issues such as education and employment, rehabilitation and accessibility. But we had seen how these issues have been discussed for decades and for decades nothing has changed.

So we developed our own strategy. We started talking about the sexuality of women with disabilities. We women gathered our courage to speak out about our rights. We went in front of parliament; we approached the officials – all men – and talked about our private and intimate lives, about access to toilets and washing sanitary napkins in the sink. This was extreme and very risky in our Central Asian countries.

We started in one city and in one country, and then it spread quickly to all regions and other countries. One bell ringing is too small, many bells are louder. An orchestra of bells can spread the same message. We rang our bells everywhere, in schools, in universities, in theatres, in the media, in meetings and conferences.

We published our research about the situation of women with disabilities in our countries with findings not only about education and employment but also taboo topics such as sexuality, abortion and suicide. At first the public reaction was shock and shame. But the day when our organizations were flooded with phone calls from the media, we knew our strategy was working.

Finally, society was paying attention to us. People noticed the humanity in us and more than that – that we are women that have the same needs as everyone else. We had caught the public's attention with taboo issues; next we could also discuss other rights.



Now, that they listened to us we talked about our needs that are not met, about dreams unfulfilled and the numerous barriers existing around us. We created a network of leaders and organizations of women with disabilities in the five Central Asian countries, to show that the problem is serious and those who face it are many.

Ten years have passed. All the barriers are far from disappeared from our lives. But we became visible in this Life. Some of us got married and became happy moms. Others received an excellent education, found work and built businesses.

We are often asked: You are so many, bright and strong leaders. How did you find each other? And then we say, when we started, we had been isolated units. We met with many people showing through our experiences that changes are possible. And we firmly believed that in every town or community a leader is waiting for us. Perhaps she sleeps still. It is important to wake this sleeping leader, give her the feeling that she is not alone and help her believe in her own power.

Wake up the sleeping leader, and then the next time you arrive in this community, you will see that not only one person has changed.

Lyazzat Kaltayeva, Association of Women with Disabilities “Shyrak”, Kazakhstan

Lyazzat’s story shows how change can emerge from small seedlings, sparked by an invitation and stimulated by in country and cross country peer support. A community of people with disabilities emerged and then a powerful vision developed, organisations formed and as people gained courage all kinds of possibilities were released. The women here broke from a more conventional advocacy approach to wake people up to the deeper personal and cultural issues of being disabled, which in the culture of Central Asia seemed almost impossible to talk about. This is an interesting challenge to those who see cultures of silence, taboos, patriarchy and exclusion as factors which limit people’s ability to stimulate change. They are missing the point, because challenging these factors are at the very heart of change, the very purpose of our endeavours, the real work of social change. Working at this level culminated in changes in policies and practices and more importantly, changing cultural perceptions.

Their approach was unique, but the real difference was the process that led to the courage and resolve they collectively reached to take on shifting mindsets and getting to the heart of the matter so that women with disabilities could have the life they wanted for themselves. Social innovation cannot only be a technical fix, it requires working with courage, not just with bravado, but with an intelligent courage that learns its way forward. So this story may not make the history books but we think it is an important one to share because it shows how people can change their community and so change the world. There are no hero leaders in this story because, well, everyone in the story is a hero.

The women here broke from a more conventional advocacy approach to wake people up to the deeper personal and cultural issues of being disabled...

Jansatyagraha - A non-violent action for People's control over land, water and forest

A story of the work of EktaParishad, a people's movement in India.

"Between Silence and Violence is Active Non-Violence"

"Satyagraha" was the name of Mahatma Gandhi's practice of non-violent resistance – meaning "insisting on the truth"

For these communities, land is a source of identity, dignity and security.

EktaParishad is a people's movement, in India, dedicated to non-violent principles of action. Our activists work towards building gram swaraj or community-based governance, gram swawlamban or local self-reliance and jawabdehsarkar or responsible government. Our aim is to see India's poorest people gain control over their livelihood resources, especially land, water and forest.

We are a federation of approximately 11,000 community-based organizations and have thousands of individual members. We are currently operating in 10 states working for the land and livelihood rights of India's most marginalized communities (tribals, dalits, nomadic communities, agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers, etc.). Our work is expanding to over 20 Indian States.

Losing access to the source of livelihood, identity and dignity: land, water and forest

We see the problems of access and control over livelihood resources like land, water and forest as the fundamental underlying conflict that we are trying to mediate and resolve in the interests of marginalized communities. We do this by advocating for

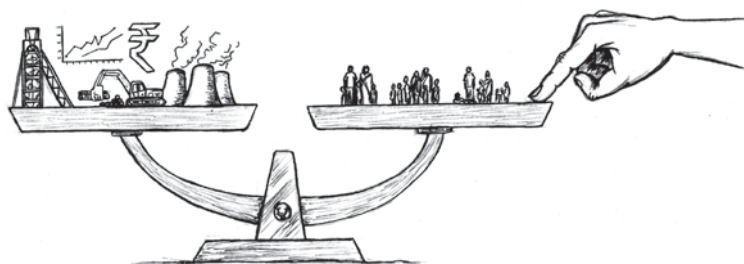
a pro-poor land-reform policy. In India, millions of people are at threat of being forced off their land due to schemes that include mining, logging and nuclear power. On one hand, government and corporations are colluding to transfer these livelihood resources to corporations in order to produce profits and increase the GDP of the country. On the other hand, in an agrarian economy like India, large sections of the society depend on these resources for their sustenance. 9% of India's population of 1.2 billion belongs to one of the many adivasis (indigenous) communities, 22 % are Scheduled Castes (Dalits) and 12% are from nomadic communities.

These communities depend on resources like land, water and forest for their sustenance but they do not have easy access and control over these resources. For these communities, land is a source of identity, dignity and security. Land also has a deep cultural importance.

Ekta Parishad



We see the creation of laws and policies that enable the transfer of these resources to large corporations as a form of systemic violence. Jansatyagraha is a non-violent action that was organized at such a moment of increased systemic violence on the landless and homeless, to advocate for a pro-poor land-reforms policy that will promote increased people's control over land, water and forest.



Our approach: non-violence and dialogue

EktaParishad is a 23 year old organization with a history of numerous non-violent actions in the Gandhian tradition and collaborating with the government to deliver justice to marginalized communities who are landless and homeless.

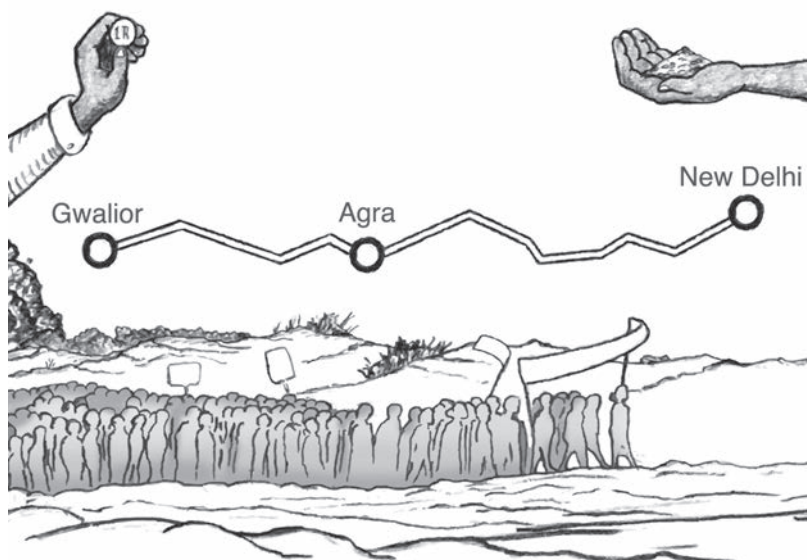
In order to mediate this conflict, EktaParishad adopted a twin strategy of struggle through large-scale non-violent actions and dialogue with government. Dialogue is always our first choice, but if the government is unwilling to talk then non-violent actions are organized to apply moral pressure on them to engage with the issues and set the stage for a dialogue. We do not threaten but peacefully compel change because people are suffering unacceptably under a sacred constitution that the government has sworn to uphold. Through dialogue we try to collaborate with government officials, to assist them in developing and implementing a pro-poor land-reform policy that will address the issues of landlessness and homelessness.

We do not threaten but peacefully compel change because people are suffering unacceptably under a sacred constitution that the government has sworn to uphold.

Jansatyagraha

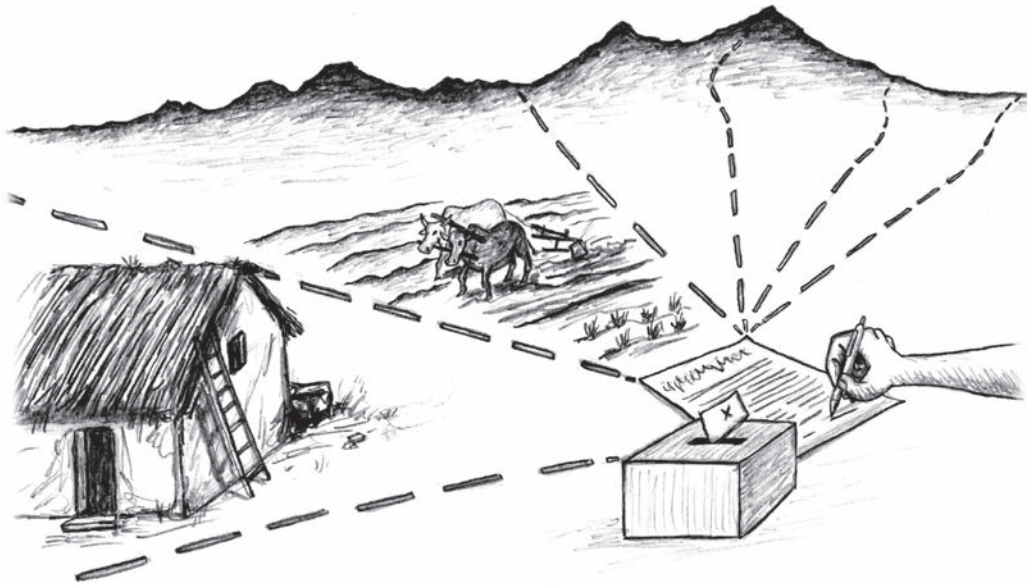
Jansatyagraha was our latest large-scale non-violent action in which 100,000 people from marginalized communities participated in a foot-march of over 350 km over a period of one month, from the 2nd of October 2012, walking together from the city of Gwalior in Central India to the capital city of New Delhi.

Many participants travelled 4-5 days to reach Gwalior. They ate, bathed, slept, defecated and washed their clothes on the national highway during this action. They spent their own money travelling to and from Gwalior. They had each saved one rupee and a fistful of grain everyday for 3 years to prepare for this action. The money they saved was used by them for their expenses and the fistful of grain they saved for 3 years were left behind for their family while they were walking.



To build public opinion for this campaign and to develop a participative agenda for the negotiations, Rajagopal P.V, the leader of EktaParishad, travelled around the country with a small group for a period of one year, through 80,000 km, visiting 335 districts of India. 2000 organizations and individuals had expressed their full support for this action and many of them were able to participate in the action.

The action convinced the government of India to sign the 10-point “Agreement On Land Reforms Between The Ministry Of Rural Development (Goi) And Jan Satyagraha” at the historic city of Agra to address the problems of landlessness and homelessness.



The underlying principles that inform our work

We try to convert these strengths into a visible show of power by organizing long foot-marches that make it possible for participants to undertake suffering on themselves to advocate for their cause.

EktaParishad’s philosophy and practice of non-violence is encapsulated in the four principles described below. The core thinking behind our understanding of non-violence is captured by the phrase “Between Silence and Violence is Active Non-Violence”.

1. Leverage the power of the ‘poor’

EktaParishad works with those who are considered to be at the bottom 40% of the society but instead of working from a deficit-based lens we work from the principle of leveraging the strength of the ‘poor’ for their own benefit. The ‘poor’ in India have the capacity to walk long distances even when they are on a minimalistic diet of a single meal a day. They have the capacity to withstand harsh living conditions like walking under the hot sun or sleeping under the open sky on a cold night. Their general levels of immunity is much higher in the sense that they are able to sustain themselves in conditions that would make a middle-class urban dweller sick. We try to convert these strengths into a visible show of power by organizing long foot-marches that make it possible for participants to undertake suffering on themselves to advocate for their cause. In this process they are able to exercise soul-force to counter the forces of systemic violence.

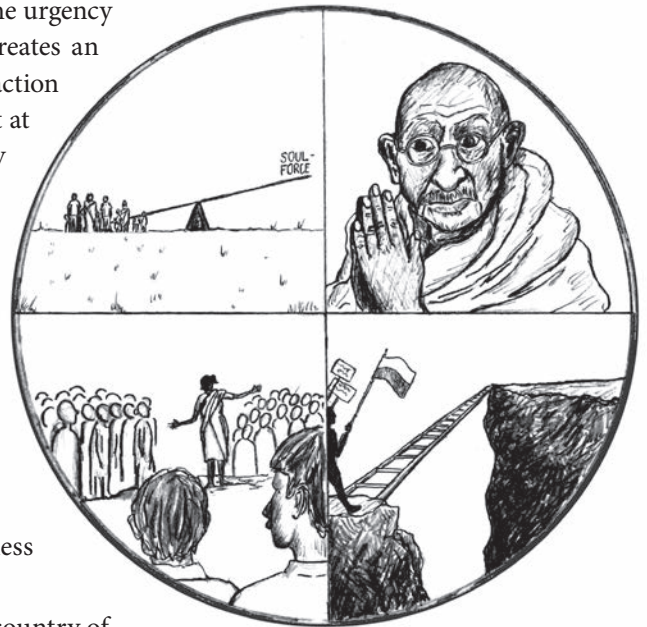
2. Discipline, a key component of non-violent soul force

We engage in non-violent actions only after we have exhausted all avenues of dialogue and advocacy and so we see our non-violent action as another form of dialogue with the 'other' party. During our non-violent action, our effort is to reach out to the heart of the 'other' party by making them uncomfortable but never going to the point of threatening them. For this purpose, we keep up our rhetoric at a level that conveys the urgency and importance of our agenda but never at a level which creates an environment of animosity. So our participants undertake the action in a celebratory mode, singing and dancing along the way but at the same time, maintaining a sense of serious intent. The key in this entire process is discipline among the participants and leaders of the campaign.

This discipline is developed over time by participating in many actions at local levels. We publish a guideline that has instructions on people's response under various circumstances so they can prepare for different contingencies.

Slogans like the ones mentioned below remind everyone to maintain the position of non-violence even in difficult circumstances.

- “Hamlachahejaise ho, haathamaranahinuthega” (“Regardless of the kind of attack, we will never raise our hands”)
- “Gandhi kedeshmein, hinsakaraajnahinchalega” (“In the country of Gandhi, the rule of violence is not acceptable”)
- “MarengenaManenge, Jo Hum se Takrayega, Usko Hum Samjhayenge” (“Neither will we hit nor will we accept, we will transform the one who fights with us”)



3. Every social action is seen as an opportunity for learning

Every non-violent social action is seen as an opportunity for different kinds of learning for different groups of people. There will be a section of people who will take up different kinds of leadership roles that are commensurate with their abilities, and in the process grow in their leadership. During Jansatyagraha about 12,000 leaders were trained to take responsibility for different aspects of organizing the campaign. At the time of designing the campaign itself, we take into consideration the number of leaders who will need to be trained using different training methodologies and set about developing those capacities within our organization.

4. Social transformation is like climbing a ladder of success

The social action is organized with an intention to strengthen an ongoing dialogue process with the government. So during our negotiations, instead of engaging with an all-or-nothing mindset, we are mindful of the sacrifices and efforts people are making and strive to get the maximum from the current round of dialogue so that people can go back with a sense of accomplishment.

“The social action is organized with an intention to strengthen an ongoing dialogue process with the government.”

... promoting the underlying principles of non-violence to speak to the fear, anger and doubt of the people and to inspire them to find the courage...

Such a success builds people's faith in the power of non-violence and collective action and they are more enthused for a larger action in a few years' time. This is another kind of learning that people go through. So slowly the spaces in the country where people engage in non-violent actions for addressing their problems grow and the culture of non-violence gets strengthened.

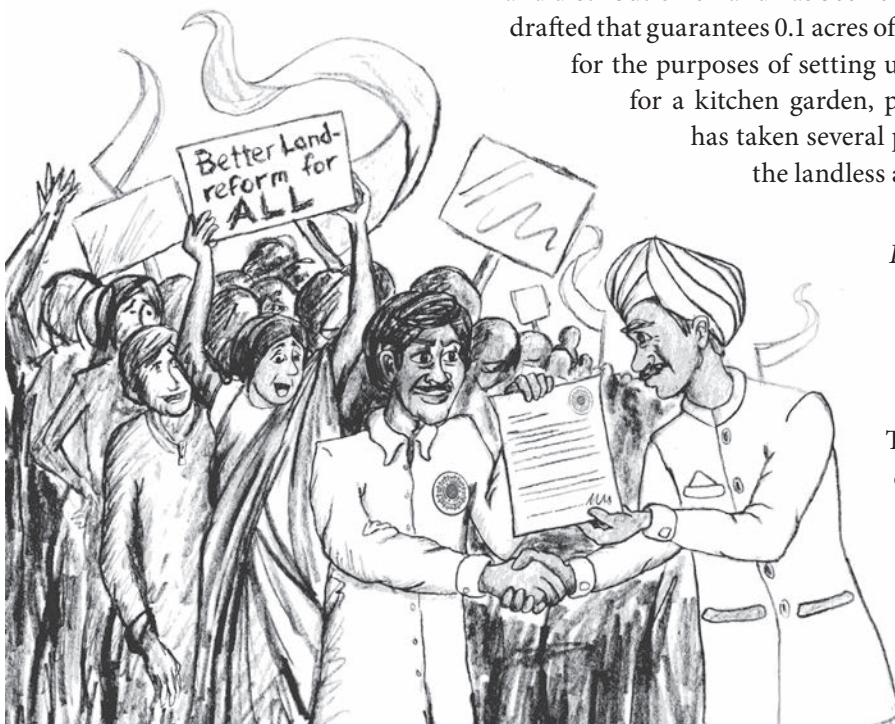
Some key outcomes of Jansatyagraha

Even though India has a long history of people's struggles on the question of land-rights, in the post-liberalization era, in the minds of planners and policy makers, welfare became the key strategy for poverty eradication and land-rights was pushed to the back-burner. A key achievement of Jansatyagraha is that government, policy makers and bureaucrats, who until now refused to consider land-rights as a key component of any strategy to eradicate poverty, have begun to take the issue seriously. In the recently held elections in the state of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, leading political parties took land-reforms more seriously while preparing their manifestos.

Concretely speaking, a draft land-reforms policy that outlines the government's stand on the different questions pertaining to utilization, and distribution of land has been completed. A Homestead bill has been drafted that guarantees 0.1 acres of land for every rural homeless person for the purposes of setting up a small shelter and having spaces for a kitchen garden, poultry, and cattle. The government has taken several pro-active steps to distribute land to the landless and homeless.

Principal writer: Ravi Badri of EktaParishad (ravibadri@gmail.com)

(More information about EktaParishad is available at www.ektaparishad.com)



The story of EktaParishad's campaign contains a clear set of lessons about how to pursue a deliberate and significant process of social change. The outside story is of a mass of people being mobilised to march on Delhi which woke up the politicians to change the law. But the inside story was of a long preparatory process,

spreading an idea and promoting the underlying principles of non-violence to speak to the fear, anger and doubt of the people and to inspire them to find the courage and solidarity to act in a disciplined way. The quality of endurance and discipline is what makes this story so unique. It is a massive achievement to bring together 100,000 people in a month-long and peaceful march. This story should be in the history books of tomorrow.

The next story is one where the change succeeded but subsequent delivery and achievements wavered to the extent that women's health indicators declined instead of improving or stabilising.

WE DID IT TOGETHER... AND THEN WE DID NOT.....

Written by Barbara Klugman

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

This is a story of social change over time, how a victory may not remain a victory, how often a process of change has all sorts of outcomes beyond the articulated goal. It is also a story about strategizing and how, even though our strategies may change, many different stories of change illustrate the same processes of strategic thinking and action. It is a story about how we ensured that the values for which we were struggling were also embedded in the process of the struggle

– the way we did the work. It is a story of a type of leadership that aims to build and validate multiple voices rather than a few individuals holding onto that role; which makes writing it difficult because while ‘I’ am in the story, the whole excitement of the story is that it became ‘we’.

This story focuses on how we changed the abortion policy of the country.



A Time for Change – South Africa in the mid-1990s

Democracy was on its way in South Africa and recognising that huge opportunities were on the horizon for changing laws, policies and ways of seeing, I set up the Women’s Health Project. I wanted to involve people concerned with women’s health who wanted to, create a new society that recognised the dignity and rights of all people. I wanted to challenge the inequities created by apartheid and to frame what we wanted for women’s health in a new South Africa. I spent the first six months consulting across the country about what the Project should do.

What did we do? We networked and identified organised groups all over the country – pensioners groups, youth groups, women’s rights groups, nurses’ organisations, doctors’ organisations, rural women’s groups, religious groups, workers organisations and unions, sports groups. Over a period of two years, we invited representatives to meetings in sub-regions of provinces, asking them ‘what women’s health issues should we be taking up?’ From this we established ‘expert groups’ of academics and practitioners to write draft policies which we took back to the regional networks to get their feedback and input. There were huge debates in each group. We tried to use key values such as equality and equal access to services as the guiding principles to resolve differences. Each group sent one representative to debate and finalise each policy proposal at a Women’s Health Conference in December 1994.

“ We tried to use key values such as equality and equal access to services as the guiding principles to resolve differences.

These were new experiences for most of us; being in groups with people we seldom met and worked with. The process was empowering and shifted many of our understandings of each other's experiences and needs, building solidarity between us. Many of us took that experience and debate back to our different constituencies and took up the issues there.



Coalitions for Strategic Thinking and Action

This process helped reveal the need to formalise a coalition to develop a strategy to get our abortion proposal, now owned by everyone involved, into law. The Reproductive Rights Alliance brought women's reproductive rights groups, reproductive research groups, legal rights groups, and groups focusing on primary health care together. The meetings allowed us to see who was doing what to prepare the ground for the legal process. For example the Reproductive Health Research Group was completing a major study under the auspices of the Medical Research Council of the costs of illegal abortions to the public health system; the Centre for Applied Legal Studies was identifying laws and legal arguments from other parts of the world from which we could learn.

The different groups in the Reproductive Rights Alliance carried out different tasks and we identified and worked with a range of people to push the process forward. This included identifying and engaging public figures such as Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, to raise his voice on why women end up needing abortions and parliamentarians who already agreed with our proposal to draft the law.



We also spoke with those who were uncomfortable with our proposal, to understand how to build support among parliamentarians in the dominant party – the ANC – and others. This process demonstrated the importance of making the time for debate and negotiation in order to express a problem and develop a solution / policy option that works for as many people as possible, builds everyone's knowledge and motivation in the process, gets people on board and excited, and has everyone working in the same direction even while they make different contributions, and sometimes have varying priorities and perspectives.

Ultimately the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act was passed in 1996 including some of the most controversial aspects of our proposal, namely that nurses (with appropriate training) should be able to do abortions, and that minors should be able to access abortions without parental consent. *Our reason for this was that many of these girls became pregnant because of coerced sex including in the home; if parents could not protect their girls from such coercion, they should not be allowed to prevent the girls from having abortions.*

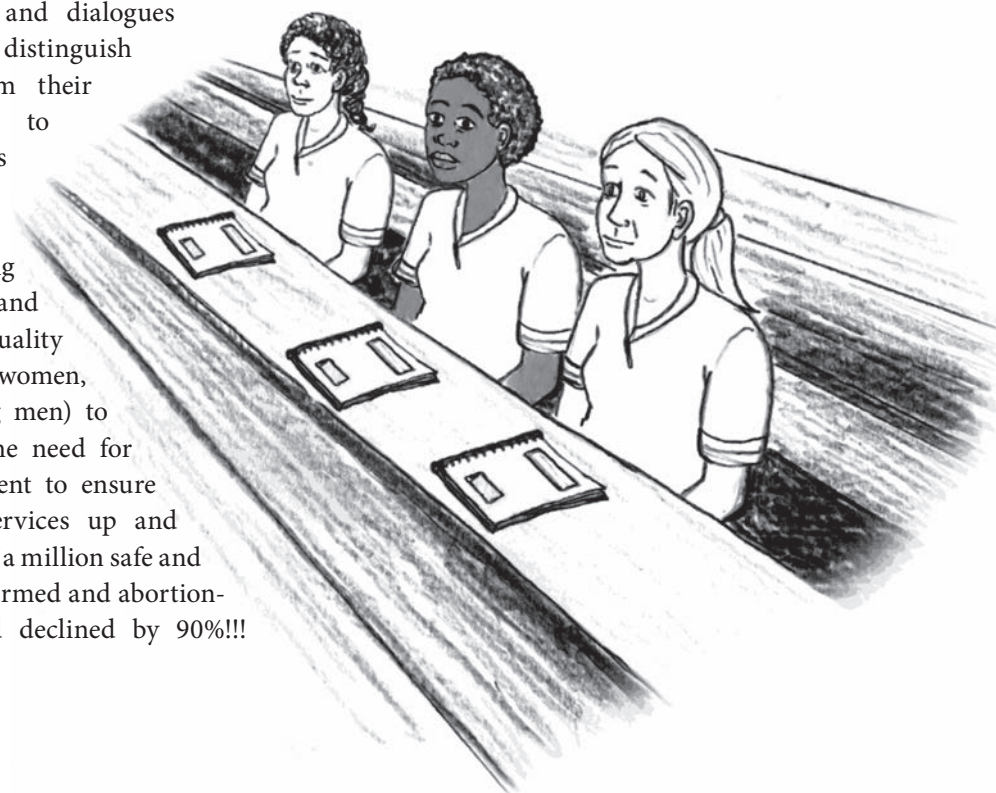
Winning the law was a victory for everyone who had participated. The country was on a 'high' - democracy had come and the aim was to end all forms of discrimination. Alongside arguments about human rights, dignity and preventing maternal mortality; in addition to being able to show that abortion was not 'unAfrican' but had been part of all of our cultural traditions (although often as 'women's business', not in the public eye), we could show that under the abortion law of the apartheid era, most of the approximately 1000 legal abortions done every year were for white women. We could 'fit' our goal of increasing access to safe abortions into the general commitment to end discrimination. This was a particular moment in history and it played a significant part in our win, especially since most people's gut response was to reject the idea of women having a right to abortion, despite being the same people whose sisters, mothers, wives, girlfriends, and daughters have had and will have abortions.

Yet, we also won because we strategized so well and we used the context effectively. Part of what made the strategy successful was the huge range of people we involved from the start, including people who went into the new government and who we knew in parliament. We learnt the value of identifying all the possible players and where they stand on the issue so that you can work out what kinds of strategies might bring them on board, or stop them from undermining your efforts (see the tool for analysing power and influence).

But what about Implementation?

Many of us focused on changing a law and didn't think about what had to be done to get it implemented. We soon realised, however, that once we had the law we needed additional measures and actions. For instance, regulations about how it would be implemented, training for health service managers and nurses and support for them to experience the kinds of self-reflection and dialogues we had, so that they could distinguish their personal feelings from their professional responsibilities to implement. Again many groups used the Reproductive Rights Alliance to develop strategies together, working with health care providers and health workers to improve quality and delivery of services for women, with communities (including men) to improve understanding of the need for abortion, and with government to ensure nurses were trained and services up and running. Within 10 years, half a million safe and legal abortions had been performed and abortion-related maternal deaths had declined by 90%!!! (NDoH, 2003).

Yet, we also won because we strategized so well and we used the context effectively. Part of what made the strategy successful was the huge range of people we involved from the start, including people who went into the new government and who we knew in parliament.

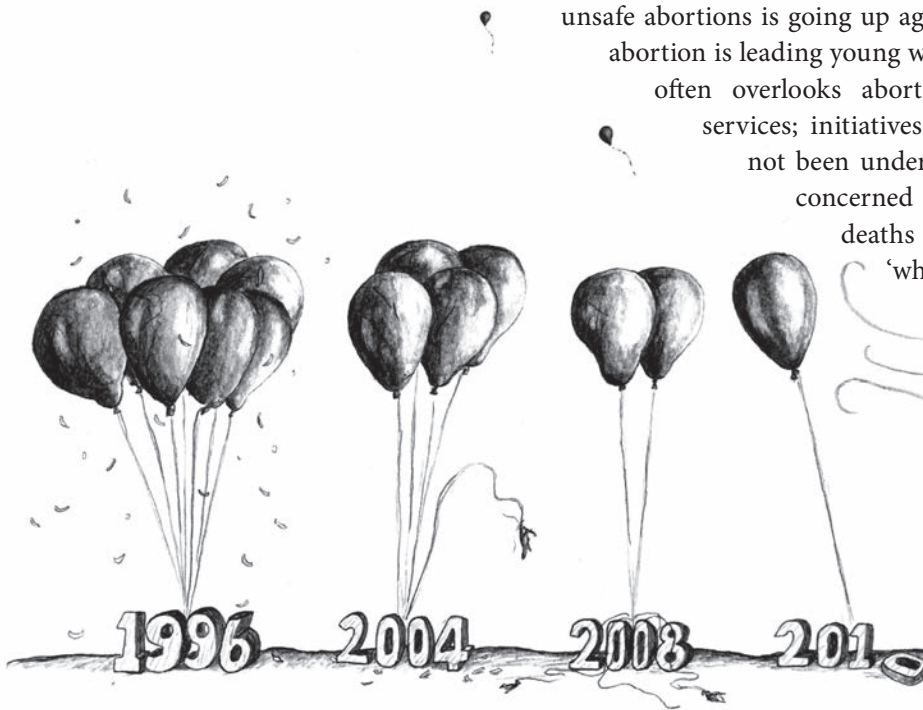


... if we work together, thoughtfully, intentionally and respectfully, we can move mountains.

Wow! Victory again!!

But as our organisations slowly demobilised after these victories, and new issues came up, particularly HIV, and funding for the work we were doing lessened, many of us as individuals and organisations took our focus off abortion. Slowly the impetus we had created declined, services that had been designated by government for abortions stopped delivering – by 2008/9 only 45% of Community Health Centres were providing termination of pregnancy services and by 2009/10 only 25% were doing so. (NDoH, 2010) There was no longer a women's rights movement, the connections between groups were gone. Some of the groups that had been central to this process had closed their offices: the Progressive Primary Health Care Network in 2002, the Women's Health Project in 2004, the Reproductive Rights Alliance in 2006, the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa in 2008.

As I write this in 2013, the numbers of women dying from illegal and unsafe abortions is going up again; myths are growing that access to abortion is leading young women to be promiscuous; government often overlooks abortion when discussing strengthening services; initiatives to limit the need for abortion have not been undertaken and the few remaining groups concerned with women's dignity and women's deaths from abortion are asking themselves 'what do we need to do to get this onto the agenda again?'. In addition, the kinds of interventions we had pushed for to limit the need for abortion – such as massive efforts to challenge the culture of sexual violence, to build the idea, ability and commitment of women and men to manage their fertility consciously, and to ensure that young women have access to friendly and supportive contraceptive services – have still not been realised.



On the other hand, so many of the people who were part of this process have taken the experience with them into new places where they are fostering change; the experience that if we work together, thoughtfully, intentionally and respectfully, we can move mountains. So while there were some lasting positives, we learned that victories can be rolled back. Therefore we must continually build and rebuild our base of support for an issue, reframing the issue as times change, and monitoring and holding those responsible to account. Social change is rarely a one-off or short-term affair.

My primary lesson from this, which I took into a new role as a donor, and more recently into my role in providing strategy, monitoring and learning support to donors and NGOs, is that no victory is forever secure which is why movements need ongoing mobilisation and support to keep engaging new generations of people on their values and practices and to keep monitoring government and other service providers to hold them accountable.

Useful Frameworks and Tools we used

Advocacy is a complex and multi-faceted process requiring some frameworks and tools to help us keep focused on what matters and to remember important questions. Frameworks and tools are not recipes which answer our questions but are useful for the questions and conversations that they stimulate.

TOOL 1: NAMING and LIVING OUR VALUES

One of the lessons we learned was the importance of naming our values and ensuring our process supports those values; believing that everyone has something to contribute, and creating a process that values people's diverse experiences. In this way the process models our goals of respect, dignity, and equality.

As I worked in different contexts and on different issues I realised that we have multiple names for the vision of “a better life for all” (a phrase from the anti-apartheid struggle) that was so much at the forefront in South Africa in 1994 when we said we were struggling for ‘our rights’: social justice, human rights, dignity, equality. There are three terms (that come from Nancy Fraser 1997) that together capture much of what we're hoping to achieve, and clearly highlight the unequal power relationships that define injustice:

- Remedies of Recognition
- Remedies of Redistribution
- Remedies of Representation

I like these because they are not just end goals; they recognise that achieving social change in challenging and complex times is a long struggle. When I apply these to our advocacy for abortion story I see them in the process and in the outcomes.

Remedies of Recognition

In the process: we recognised people with very diverse histories, levels of education and approaches to issues as experts. Many people had their first experience of being consulted about what would become national policy. Participants felt recognised and that built their self-esteem and confidence to take action, on this issue and elsewhere in their lives.

In the content: the abortion policy proposal, and the law, fully recognises women as people with agency, able to make decisions about their own bodies irrespective of class, race, or age. The law challenges the assumption that parents always know best for adolescent girls; it acknowledges those girls' agency. It also recognises nurses as people with the professional skills to provide a service that doctors wanted to retain for themselves.

... believing that everyone has something to contribute, and creating a process that values people's diverse experiences.





Remedies of Redistribution

In the process: While we raised funds through the Women's Health Project for the process of consultation towards the Women's Health Conference, we used the funds to enable the widest possible participation; we made choices in line with the principle of fair use of resources, such as bussing (not flying) people around and finding simple accommodation.

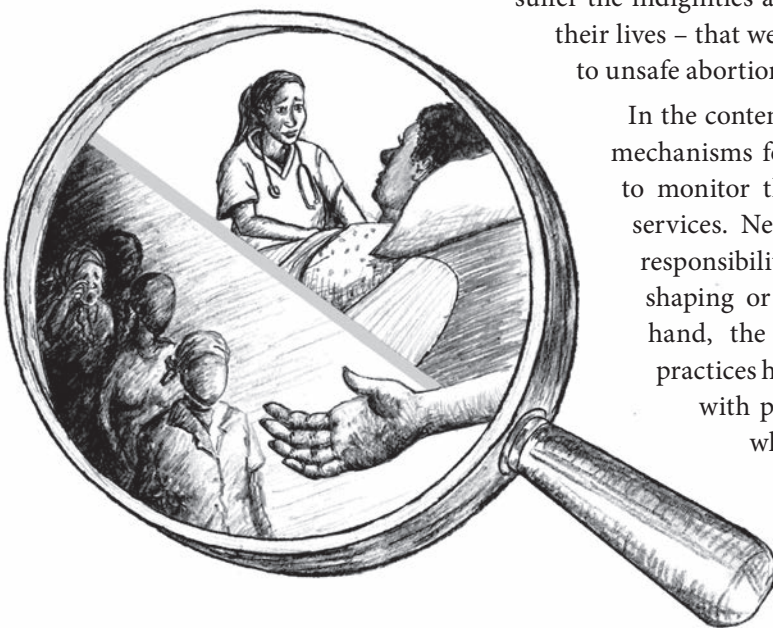
In the content: Before the new law, wealthy (predominantly white) women were frequently able to access safe abortions illegally by paying their gynaecologists to do them secretly or flying to countries where abortion was legal. The new law made abortion possible for everyone regardless of their access to resources. In addition, by enabling nurses to do abortions the policy ensures reasonable access not only for women in the cities but for those outside cities as well.

‘ But by grounding the process in explicit values of equality and women's rights, we could work through these debates.

Remedies of Representation / Participation

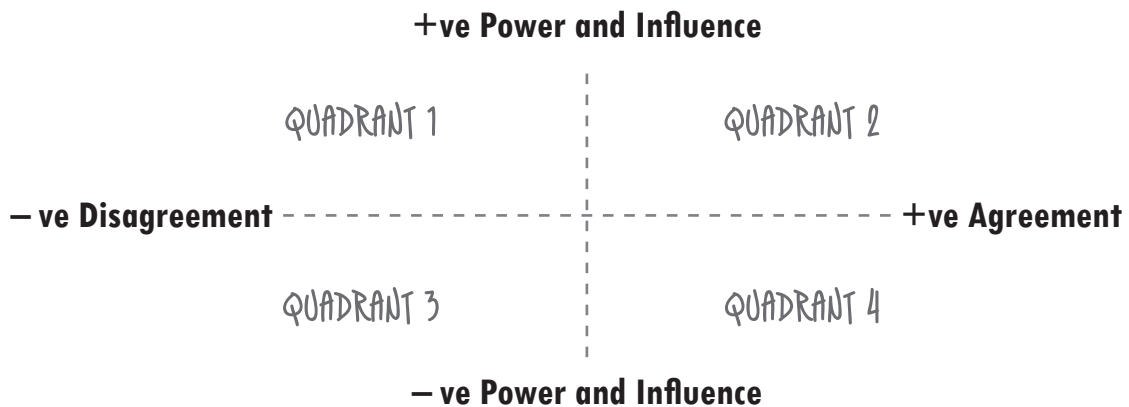
In the process: the underlying idea was that proposals for policies in the new democracy should be developed by the people for the people, especially those most affected by the problem. We included people who had little voice under apartheid, and gave as much weight to their participation as to those of the usual policy-makers, researchers, corporate players and national NGOs. This was risky given the silence and taboos around issues like abortion and other issues the process took on such as sexual orientation. But by grounding the process in explicit values of equality and women's rights, we could work through these debates. In addition, once in a safe and supportive space, participants found it easier to acknowledge the lived reality of women having to suffer the indignities and damage to their health – and sometimes their lives – that were resulting from them only having recourse to unsafe abortions.

In the content: Both the policy proposal and the law lack mechanisms for women's groups or community members to monitor the implementation and ongoing quality of services. Neither do they clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of nurses and nursing associations in shaping or monitoring implementation. On the other hand, the country's constitution and parliamentary practices have enabled civil society to continue engaging with politicians to push for better implementation when the law was under discussion.



TOOL 2: MAPPING & ANALYSING POWER & INFLUENCE

Here is an excellent tool for mapping the players and for stimulating conversations to work out who you need to engage with and for what purpose.



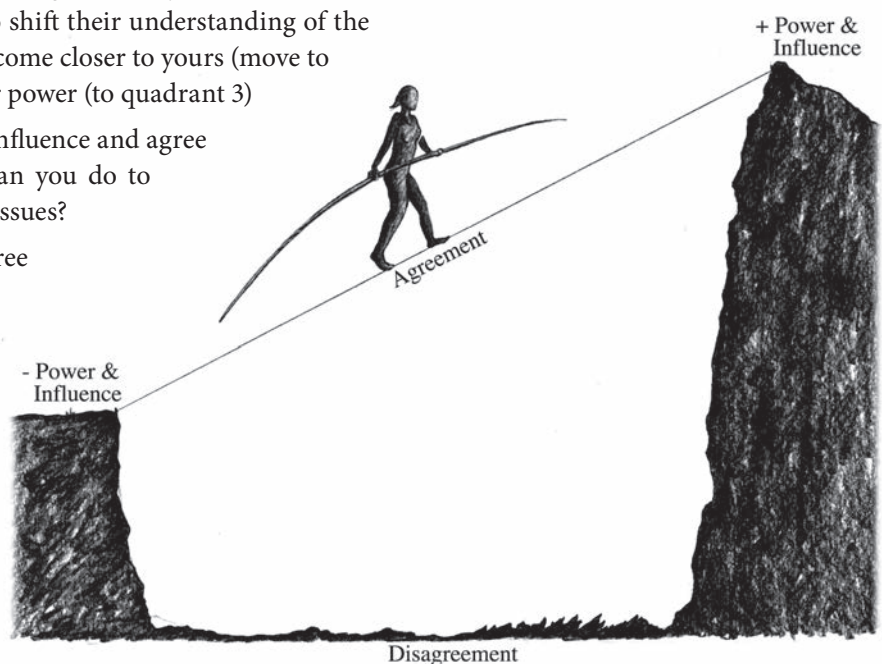
Viviana Waisman & Mónica Roa, Strategic Alliances,
Madrid: Women's Link Worldwide 2013.

The idea is to position all role players onto the map according to:

- a) How much they agree with you at this stage (to the left they disagree and to the right they agree).
- b) How much power and influence they have (up is high power and influence and down is low power and influence).

Once you can see where the players are, you can work out what you, as activists, need to do. You can talk together to answer the following kinds of questions:

- Which agree with you but do not have much influence (in quadrant 4)? What could you do to help increase their influence (up to quadrant 2)?
- Which have a lot of influence and disagree with you (quadrant 1)? Are there actions you could take to shift their understanding of the issues, so that their perspectives become closer to yours (move to quadrant 2)? Or even to lessen their power (to quadrant 3)?
- What about those who have some influence and agree with you to some extent? What can you do to motivate them to speak out on the issues?
- Should you ignore those who disagree with you and have little influence, or might they be persuaded by those who oppose you? Do you need to do anything to try to stop them from mobilising against your perspectives?



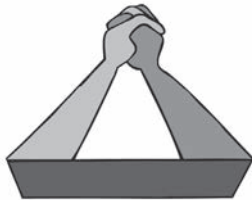
TOOL 3: OUTCOME CATEGORIES – naming where we are and the progress we make

This story shows some things that usually mark progress. Evaluators call things that mark progress ‘outcome categories’ (Reisman et al 2007). When we map where we are at the start, it’s worth thinking about all of them – where are we now (what’s our “baseline”) and where do we want to be. That can help us plan our strategies and to see how far we have come.



The first four form the basis for effective advocacy:

1. Strengthened organisational capacity – *without organisations to see the need, this action could not have taken place; had communities not been organised into religious groups, sport groups, women’s rights groups and so on, we would have struggled to find a way to consult people and get them involved.*



2. Strengthened base of support – *Such a large number of people working together developed the voice and credibility of our demands; famous people with huge credibility, like Archbishop Tutu, speaking positively about the issue increased the legitimacy of our demands and got us greater media coverage.*



3. Strengthened alliances – *it was not just a few small women’s groups, but also the labour movement, the professional organisations of nurses and so on, strengthened the legitimacy of our call. The debates among these groups helped build everyone’s understanding of the complexity of the issues, and forced us to develop a clear message.*



4. Increased data and analysis from a social-justice perspective. *This provided all the different kinds of evidence (on public health benefits, cultural relevance, similarities with progressive laws elsewhere) that more sceptical people needed.*

These four outcomes form the basis for conducting advocacy. They enable the following outcome, which indicates significant progress in advocacy:



5. The development of consensus around a common definition of the problem and possible policy options *by an ever widening constituency of people. This grew over time from a few people to a huge group, and the process aimed to achieve this. When the issue went to parliament many people in different positions supported us and were willing to speak out despite this being such a contentious issue.*

These form the basis for the advocacy movement as a whole - the individuals, organizations, and alliances that are continually adapting to changes in context in order to ensure the “readiness” of their organizational capacity, messages, and strategies. They make it possible to effectively engage in the policy process, and this comes under the sixth outcome category:

6. Shifts in access to & influence in policy processes; changes in or maintenance of a law/policy; policy implementation. *Our ability to engage politicians, to work discreetly, supporting them to develop the law, and to work publicly by accompanying people to give evidence, all influenced the final outcome. The law itself and the implementation of the law is also an outcome, but the latter has no end point since it can always be implemented more widely and with better quality. Moreover with new politicians and a shifting political context laws can be ignored or changed so maintaining links with politicians and government officials remains essential. Sometimes, of course, things change so badly that civil society groups have to go back to protesting from the outside, because all effective access to insiders has closed off.*



7. Increased visibility of the issue in policy processes, resulting in positive policy outcomes, including holding onto gains, and maintaining pressure through ongoing monitoring of policy implementation. *Our process generated media attention, and we actively pursued media to participate in consultations and especially in the final conference, and formed positive relationships with individual journalists who could contact us for our perspective when covering negative responses to the proposed law.*



Ultimate impacts, which are usually beyond the timeframe of any grant or set of grants:

8. Shifts in social norms, such as decreased discrimination against a specific group or increased belief that the state should provide high-quality sexuality education. Yet changes in public understanding and visibility of the issues may occur in the process as the definition of the problem or potential solutions become more socially accepted over time. *We did not give this area enough attention as we worked mostly with organisations, and usually with their leaders. For example, even though the nurses association supported the law they did not conduct ongoing work with their members to win and maintain their support for implementing it.*



9. Shifts in population-level impact indicators – *the numbers of women dying from back street abortions declined. The subsequent increase in these numbers shows the need for a new phase of struggle for better access (Klugman 2011).*



Principal writer: Barbara Klugman

It illustrates the importance of human beings coming together to tell their stories and reveal something of their soul so that the 'other' can see them, connect with them and know them.

Creating Social Spaces for individual agency, collective identity and intention and authentic community

"Healing means the creation of an empty but friendly space where individuals can tell their story to someone who can really listen with real attention"

– Henry Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*

In our last story there are no hero leaders either, only ordinary people coming together to create a thriving, economically viable district. It illustrates the importance of human beings coming together to tell their stories and reveal something of their soul so that the 'other' can see them, connect with them and know them. When these conditions are met people can work together effectively because then they truly 'get' each other.

Shaping a dialogue: a story

Three years ago our organisation, a small development agency in Cape Town, South Africa, was requested to facilitate a process to help a diverse stakeholder group to develop a socio-economic framework to stimulate development in a particular rural area not far from the city. While we were excited by the opportunity, the size and diversity of the group filled us with trepidation. The stakeholders included poor, marginalised communities, research institutions, municipalities, provincial and national government departments, environmental organisations, land owners and both big and small businesses.

To prepare the ground, we decided to undertake an initial consultation with the different groupings to surface expectations, interests and priorities. After this, given the diversity of expectations, interests, culture and ways of working, we decided to start working in parallel sessions with the different groupings, to prepare each of them for engagement with the other.

Part of this work was helping people understand what genuine dialogue means by building their capacity in dialogic practices:

- Voicing what you think, feel and want
- Listening deeply for what other is trying to say – their thoughts, feelings and intentions
- Respecting each other's humanity, equality, rights and differences
- Suspending one's judgement and private agendas for the good of the whole.



These practices enhanced their abilities to express their intentions, fears and doubts whilst being able to listen to others. We worked attentively and slowly in the parallel processes; helping to allay fears and anxieties and to build confidence, particularly of those who were not used to speaking out or being listened to.

Although there was value in working in parallel processes, the real test would come when we bring the different groupings together into a shared space. We had to contend with the frustration expressed at the slow pace at which the process was unfolding. The agency wanted quick results.

The venue organised for the first stakeholder engagement was the town hall – in a small town this was the only option to accommodate a large group. Whilst government officials and business people felt very comfortable in the space, other groups felt uncomfortable. The community activists associated the town hall with power, with exclusion – there was an uneasiness being in such a space, but they were able to hold themselves together.

On the first day of the 3-day stakeholder engagement we began by allowing people to congregate in their own ways and, unsurprisingly, they stuck to their own groups, inside their own boundaries. We were aware that in order to build a stable collaborative system this situation would have to change. We needed to create a sense of solidarity between the groups, to transform the space itself, to lower the boundaries.

Positions were laid out. As the powerful land owners expressed fear of losing their land and the community activists expressed their scepticism about legitimising processes of those who hold the power and resources, it felt like the boundaries were reinforced. The groups were a hindrance and so on the second day we moved them into smaller mixed groups, allowing time and space for people to share personal stories and creating space for individuals to speak to each other about their fears, anxieties, scepticism, doubts and concerns. They began to connect as human beings.

By the morning of the third day, the conversation started to take on a different tone, gravitating towards common issues and concerns. Although the powerful land owners were uneasy talking about their personal circumstances, they listened to the indignation expressed by the community activists about the inequality in society and the role of those with power and resources in entrenching this. We had created space for the difficult issues to be raised and heard; for the hard questions to be asked and listened to. When all the groups started to recognise and express opinions about the inequality of society and amongst them, we recognised the opportunity to take this turn in the conversation to begin a process of developing the norms and rules that would govern the shared space.

It was the critical moment we had been waiting for and it came just in time. Through this we were able to establish the human foundation for the cooperation that was to follow.

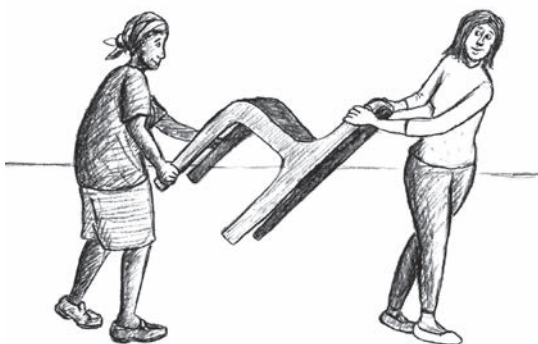


The question “Who is participating in whose process?” is vital.

The real work in preparing and facilitating collaborative social spaces

Government, business and civil society, if they are to creatively collaborate, are increasingly challenged to make the shift to working in a diverse and complex array of collaborative, participative social spaces, away from top-down expert consultations. Such spaces, if well designed and facilitated, allow for a flow of information, experiences and knowledge through which thoughtful and nuanced solutions emerge that are able to meet the complex problems we face.

The technocrats and officials, who often make the crucial decisions that make multi-stakeholder engagements possible, tend to bring a strong expert-driven, results-orientation, unaware of the importance of paying attention to social process and space. They are frustrated by these slow processes of laying foundations. Part of the work is to help them to see its value, for the quality and sustainability of the whole project, and that time invested up front can actually save much time, frustration and costs later on down the line.



Invited and Invented Spaces – who is participating in whose process?

The question “Who is participating in whose process?” is vital.

Typically, government *invites* others to a consultation where the space, agenda and process are decided by them, however well it may be facilitated. This may be appropriate for certain issues but often it makes a silent community even more silent.

But if community agency is critical, where their ideas, feeling of responsibility, energy and ownership are central to the viability and sustainability of the initiative, then the creation, or *invention*, of new types of spaces, *invented spaces*, where they are central to the organisation of the process, where it takes place and who facilitates, is key. Even the way the chairs are laid out and who does this can shift the whole space.



Cultivating authentic community – telling stories

If we are able to bring ourselves into social spaces with authenticity, where people can be their best selves, we stand a better chance of building authentic community. Many communities are built by subjugating the individual to the collective will (usually the will of the leaders) but authentic community relies on both the freedom of each individual to bring themselves fully to the other, and the consequent unlocking of further capacities that would remain dormant without community. This is the concept of *Ubuntu* - a person is a person through other people.

Practically this requires the telling of stories. Individuals and communities are not fixed objects but developing stories, each with a past, a present and a future. If you do not know my story you do not know me. Helping diverse stakeholders to share their stories not only builds shared understanding but lays the basis for authentic community, helping each person to see themselves and each other more clearly.

Individuals are links in the chain

Some individuals will need their own attention and need to be encouraged to speak – the quiet ones, who do not call attention to themselves, are easily ignored by the group and become disempowered and disaffected, creating problems down the line. And often the quiet ones are more observant and can see things that others have missed. Ask them to speak.

The loud ones, who look for attention, still need to be heard, but contained and helped to bring themselves more constructively.



Preparation is key

Facilitated preparation on all sides, before the stakeholder meeting, can be critical, so that when people enter the social space they come more open to the other, more confident, more skilled, and with equalised expectations.

Here the dialogic attitudes and skills mentioned below are key.

If there has been conflict or alienation then, assumptions about “the others” may need to be surfaced by the facilitators beforehand and given perspective and possibly questioned, suspended or “put on ice”, so that each group comes with a “willing to listen” attitude towards the other.

Dialogic attitudes and skills to enable good conversations

Good conversations are most of the process. Community representatives may arrive cautious and lacking in confidence or, if aggrieved or angry, they can be unproductively suspicious and aggressive. Government officials and business-people may, because of status or professional education, have a superior attitude or swagger, or an over-formal approach that stifles natural interaction.

“And often the quiet ones are more observant and can see things that others have missed.”

And so, attention must be given to the development of dialogic attitudes, skills and facilitated moments to enable people to:

- **Find their best voice** – so that they are able to say clearly and confidently what they think, what they feel and what they want;
- **Listen to each other deeply** – so that they are able to hear what people are trying to say, what they feel and what they want;
- **Ask powerful questions** that help people to look more honestly and deeply;
- **Respect and curiosity** - that all people, their opinions and experiences are valid and interesting
- **Suspend judgement** – to give people an opportunity to fully explain themselves, to appreciate difference and to try to see things from their point of view.

These attitudes and skills can be strengthened and taught before and during the processes. See the Barefoot Guide Resource Library for ideas, including the Barefoot Guide 2 Companion Guide to Designing and Facilitating Creative Learning Processes – www.barefootguide.org.



Working with Questions:

What social change approaches and strategies work best?

By Peter Westoby

First and second order change

Many change practices are one-dimensional, focused either only on very practical initiatives to improve the daily lives of people, or only on more political work to influence government policy and practice. But both are critical and can be mutually reinforcing.

During 2013 I worked as a researcher accompanying an NGO called the Southern Cape Land Committee (SCLC) that works across communities of the Western and Eastern Cape in South Africa. Their work has two dimensions:

- Practical *first-order change work* of supporting emerging black farmers to promote agro-ecology, as demonstrated by Via Campesina. This work supports farmers to produce their own food towards food sovereignty. This requires engaging local government to gain access to communal land and water.
- Strategic *second-order change work*, which is more explicitly political, to build consciousness, organization and the capacity of people to influence their context. They encourage *emerging farmers* to 'act as one voice' within local-level multi-stakeholder forums. Governments find it easier to relate to each individual group separately, buying off this one and ignoring that one. However, when groups organise horizontally, for example through learning exchanges, and then form cooperatives or coalitions then it is difficult for local municipalities to discard the arising issues or manipulate outcomes.

Part of this work revolves around raising awareness of poverty-producing processes. Here they work in close partnership with other NGOs like Khanya College, an organisation that is experienced in running 'critical schools', to help people to understand the world, particularly "why they are poor", and to stimulate and strengthen social movements.

Using participatory rural appraisal practices, farmers conduct their own analyses of their issues and what lies behind them and are then able to consider for themselves how to move forward. Leadership groups are formed from these processes, preparing them to participate in municipal forums, enabling them to more effectively engage with the formal structures of local government.

The SCLC community development field workers are closely embedded within the geographies they work. This ensures that they are quick to hear about emerging 'hot-spots' and can support the farmer's organisation to quickly respond, e.g. to organise mass meetings within the hot-spot, following these up with horizontal learning processes between different farmer groups, and building cross-locality networks to enable local people to learn about their rights. Each time, farmers are supported to organise more local structures that enable them to sustain their advocacy from the grassroots level.

This is a dual strategy that begins with first order social change work, enabling farm workers and potential emerging black farmers to 'survive the existing system' through para-legal work, seeding and supporting new agro-ecological initiatives, so people can grow food for themselves. As this proceeds they support second order social change work, 'to change the system' through community organising, campaigning and advocating for new models of land reform.

Working with Questions:

What social change approaches and strategies work best?

Five Strategies of Change

In our experience there is seldom one strategy that is sufficient to meet the complex processes of social change. *Very often a combination of strategies are called for.* Most of the approaches in the stories in this book involve two or three of these:

Top-down strategies. Democratically elected governments, legitimately appointed leaders and skilled managers are empowered to implement changes from above, particularly those that meet initiatives from below. Universal healthcare, sanitation, education, transport and communication infrastructure, police forces to combat criminality may all be top-down initiatives. Of course how they meet the varied needs of communities and at what point they require community engagement from below must be considered, but there are valid aspects of social change that are legitimately and developmentally brought from above.



Bottom-up strategies. Sometime change begins from below, where stuck power above cannot move, whether in its own interest or because of external uncertainties. Marginalized and oppressed people must free themselves. Communities cannot wait for a collapsed local government to deliver water before it takes matters into its own hands.

Inside-out strategies. All sustainable change begins as an inward journey. Before people and organisations can free themselves from their oppressors they must free themselves from their own self-identification as powerless victims (and on the other side as controllers, saviours and experts). This is a kind of transformative change, of individuals and communities unlearning what they have held to be true of and seeing themselves with new eyes, before embarking on changing the attitudes and even the laws and practices of society.



Sideways strategies. This is closely connected to horizontal learning, as a powerful motor of change, where people connect across boundaries within and between communities and organisations, perhaps involving some unlearning, to create new communities and to face their problems together and take advantage of new possibilities.

Do nothing strategies. Sometimes a situation needs the space and time to sort itself out, for a crisis to ripen, for the will to change to gain sufficient strength. We may need to spend time to simply observe to see if we do have a role and what that role might be. We should not assume that the kind of change that we can support is always needed or possible.



(adapted from Rowson, 2014)

Remember that complex or comprehensive change programmes quite often contain several of these strategies, running concurrently, or strategy paves the way for the next. Horizontal exchanges (sideways strategies) have proven to have surprising success in creating foundations of learning and solidarity for collaborative or co-creative initiatives. Top-down or bottom-up strategies seldom succeed unless they provoke some transformative inside-out change in key actors.

CHAPTER SIX

Rigorous HUMILITY: Measuring and evaluating the real work of social change

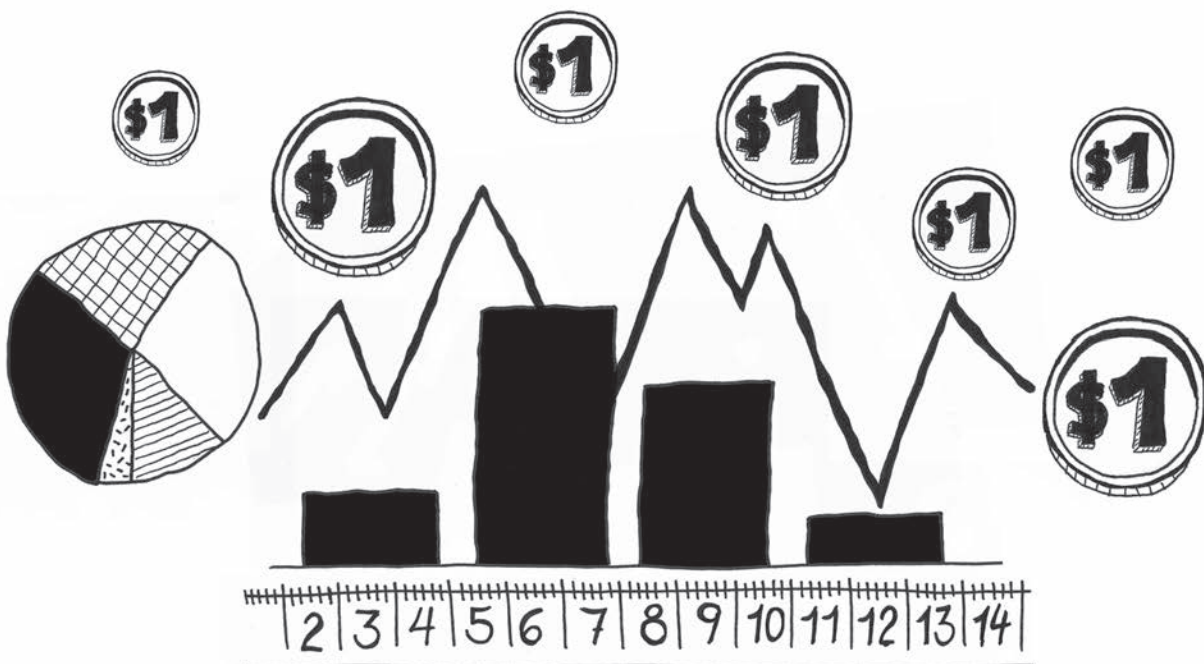
"The instruments for the quest of truth are as simple as they are difficult. They may appear quite impossible to an arrogant person, and quite possible to an innocent child. The seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust...Only then, and not until then, will he have a glimpse of the truth."

– Gandhi

Social change can happen without money. Or social change activists may decide to spend their own money or ask for money from their community. But nowadays social change is often funded by organisations and individuals who are not part of the social change themselves. It is funded by governments, foundations, trusts and other grant-making entities that seek to support and promote social change to address injustice, poverty and inequality. The demand for the resources of these grant-making bodies is high – how do they choose between one social change process and another?

The employees of the grant-making bodies are accountable to the people whose money it is. Government agencies who give grants are accountable to

taxpayers. Organisations which raise funds from the public are accountable to those who give donations. These bodies therefore have to prove that the money they are giving is actually making a difference and that things are getting better because of it. How do they do this? Do they measure? Or rather, they ask the people and organisations to whom they have given the money to measure. If they are giving to many different organisations and movements working on social change, they prefer it if all of them were counting the same thing – so they can tell the taxpayers, the wealthy donors or the public how many people they have helped or how they have reduced slavery or poverty or sickness or whatever it is that they are working on.



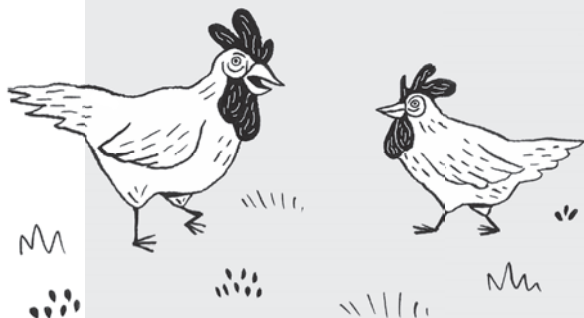
... they are spending too much time measuring and not enough time doing.

This seems reasonable but, because social change is often messy and complex, the people and organisations who are trying to bring about social change find it difficult to provide the information that donors need or get frustrated that the information they are asked for leaves out important elements of what has changed. They find that they are spending too much time measuring and not enough time doing. Being able to demonstrate that you have brought about positive change in people's lives is important, and the process of evaluating what has happened and how, helps us to learn. But too often the processes do not result in learning, and the real work of social change is not understood or documented. How can we change this?

In this chapter we propose a different way of approaching and understanding information about social change and Charlotte Boisteau of the Paris-based evaluation organisation [f3e](http://f3e.asso.fr/) <http://f3e.asso.fr/> explains how external evaluators can help those involved in social change to listen and learn.

Chickens and Paraffin Pumps: Uncertainty and Humility in Measuring Social Change

Jennifer Lentfer



It was seemingly straightforward. We provided a small grant to a youthful and energetic group in Malawi for an income-generating project. They wanted to start a small chicken-rearing business and sell the eggs and offspring to generate revenue for their work.

But the group explained to us in their first report that they had not seen any profit. That was because a “beast” had eaten all of the chickens.

The group now wanted to abandon chicken-rearing in favour of installing a paraffin pump in their community. A paraffin pump is much like a gas or petrol pump used to fill up your car. This one would be used to sell oil for people to light their homes and cook with. According to the group in Malawi, this change in strategy away from the chickens would require much less maintenance and security once it was up and running.

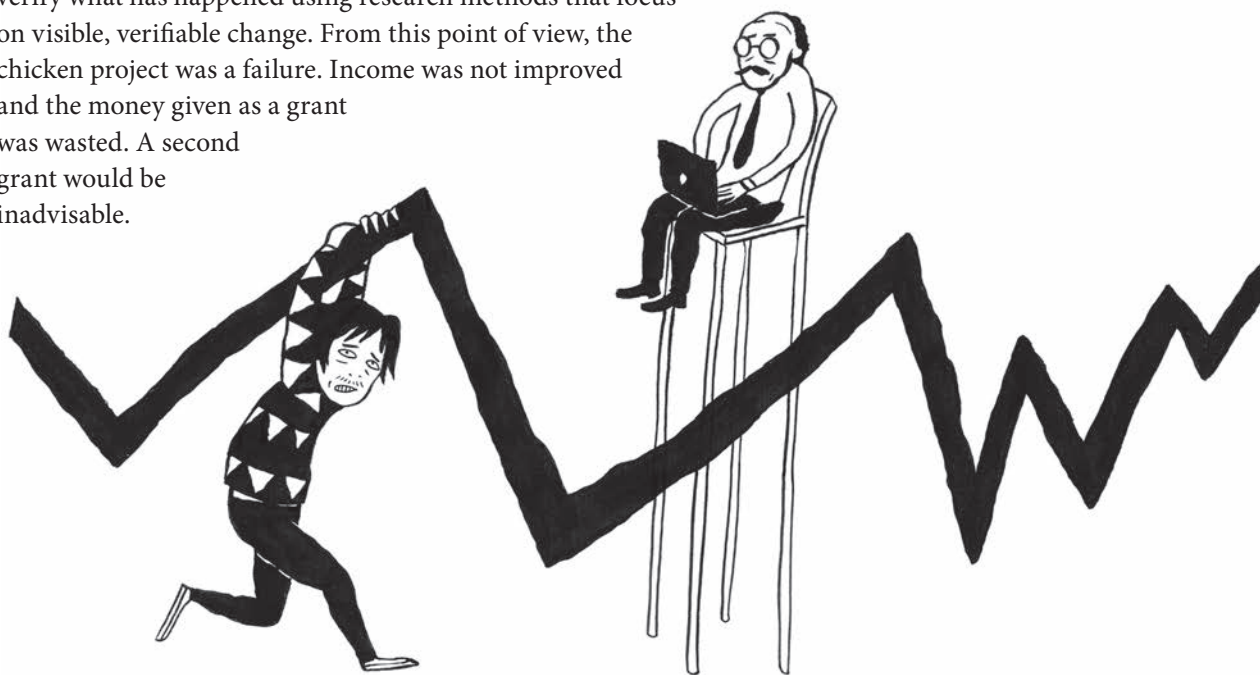
At my desk, far away from the village and with no funds to visit, I was faced with a question – should I fund this group again? What would it take for me to be confident that a paraffin pump would be more successful than the chickens?

More information? Or faith in the group's ability to learn from its experience and assess the context they lived in?



In social change, our work is often focused on unanswered questions. What is social change? Does it necessarily improve the lives of people who are poor? How do we best support local leaders and organizations as strong forces for change in their communities? How can outsiders help in the most effective and sustainable ways? What kinds of beasts live in Malawi and how *does* one get into the chicken coop?

Many of us have observed what some call the growing “data dash” of recent years in the government, international aid, and philanthropic sectors. There is a growing demand for ‘proof’ that things are changing – this often involves a requirement to be able to verify what has happened using research methods that focus on visible, verifiable change. From this point of view, the chicken project was a failure. Income was not improved and the money given as a grant was wasted. A second grant would be inadvisable.



In our experience of working extensively in building the monitoring and evaluation capacity of grassroots organizations in Africa we have found that logframes, abstract metrics, and research frameworks often don't help people understand their relationship to the real work of social change. Rather, local leaders, as members of a community, read real-time trends via observation of what's happening on the ground. This, in turn, drives intuition. They know that this ephemeral life is governed by a multitude of forces.

If we value learning, we might consider that the group has learnt from their mistake. Perhaps they have discovered that protecting chickens from beasts is too costly or not feasible. On the other hand, everyone needs paraffin and there is a demand for somewhere to buy it in the community.

That doesn't mean that we don't ask questions, we do. We might ask what has led them to choose a paraffin pump this time – have they seen it work in another community? Is there no source in the community? It doesn't mean we never use statistics – we might want to look at the cost of transporting paraffin to the community, what they would sell it for and the profit margin. But the purpose is to acknowledge that people have a better knowledge of their own circumstances than we do, and seek to understand the basis of their decisions rather than to assume that a set of statistics will tell us whether the community's choice is right or wrong.

How can outsiders help in the most effective and sustainable ways?

... the purpose is to acknowledge that people have a better knowledge of their own circumstances than we do...

Accountability and social change

Obviously the desire to be accountable in the social good industry is not going away. No one wants to see resources squandered. It's natural for us to look for ways to prevent this.

Some people see evidence-seeking behaviour in a very positive light. To them, social change work will be more effective and less wasteful of resources if it is guided by data and objective decisions. The logic

goes that with more information at our fingertips, we can take stronger steps towards ensuring accountability and value for money. Without measuring our progress, what we are doing is useless.

Some people see the search for evidence in a different light – as tedious, time-consuming, burdensome, and limiting. They see social change as a force beyond logic and predictability. To them, abstract metrics and research design is quite far from the difficult, intimate, and complex factors at play in the real work of social change.

Are these irreconcilable world-views? Or is it our approach to information, rather than the type of information that is important?

In the real work of social change, it is worth exploring the differing worldviews of the thinkers (or the people who make decisions behind their desks, based on the information

before them) and the doers (or those working on the ground, with communities, families, and individuals in their change processes).

There is absolutely nothing wrong with deepening the thinking behind the doing. These labels we have used, “thinkers” and “doers,” are completely artificial. Though many of us will find ourselves more readily identifying with one camp over the other, we definitely need more thinking doers and more doing thinkers. However what we hope we'll discover is that what matters most is *how* the thinking takes place in social change work. What's needed for us all to listen more effectively and become more responsive to those at the forefront of social change?

We need to consider the dangers of an increasing desperation to solve the world's problems using rigorous measurement. Why has quantitative and generalizable information become the “gold standard” by which social change work can be measured? We have seen that the space for possibility shrinks when a person's or an organization's need for certainty or control takes over. Those who make the decisions fear that lack of verifiable evidence will be interpreted as failure and that they will be held responsible. They are afraid to take risks. But, as we have seen in many of the stories in this book, social change can only happen when people take risks. And it is the ability to try things out and learn from our mistakes that enables change to happen.



... we definitely need more thinking doers and more doing thinkers.

Can we develop for ourselves a **rigorous humility**? Can we use this idea to remain unsatisfied with disappointing results, and yet begin to embrace the mystery of how social change occurs?

The fear of failure and the valuing of quantitative knowledge over local knowledge and the experiences of the people involved has a real impact on social change.

For social change activists and those working in communities:

Searching for evidence in practice can mean imposing funders' needs on people who are in the process of organizing at local levels. This can be a severe drain on their already-scarce time and resources. Funders' risk-aversion can constrain local leaders' decision-making and responsiveness to communities. Their fear can limit possibilities or the ability to even see possibilities.



Because of the power imbalances inherent in funding relationships, funders can easily distract partners from their mission and constituencies. Do funders adequately consider and analyse the real costs of time and resources devoted to overly-complicated reporting, evaluation, or research exercises? Are funders offering useful capital if lengthy proposals, burdensome reporting, and heavy-handed funding mechanisms get in the way of people doing the social change work they've set out to do?

For funding relationships:

A former administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Andrew Natsios, coined the term “obsessive measurement disorder” in 2010 to refer to the rules and reporting requirements that crowd out creative work and create the wrong kind of incentives in the international aid sector. Natsios argues that “obsessive measurement disorder” stifles innovation and leads to a focus on short-term results. Susan Beresford, former president of the Ford Foundation, calls this “evidence disorder” in philanthropy.

Natsios and Beresford are both asking: Where's the room for possibility and innovation if we're always looking for what's wrong? From our own experience in the international aid and philanthropy sector, we can tell you that data-gathering or reporting solely for the purpose of accountability to funders fails time and again to result in improvements at the community level.

“Obsessive measurement disorder” can deepen the inequalities in funding relationships, leading to a lack of trust and understanding between the thinkers and the doers. We have observed that often the search for evidence creates a glass ceiling to prevent the involvement of those who supposedly matter most – those whose lives we are hoping to affect. An over-reliance on generalizable data especially leaves those without a graduate degree behind.

However brilliant the indicators or survey questions, thinkers and doers should both be concerned that “obsessive measurement disorder” may actually be hurting our decision-making processes.

“Where's the room for possibility and innovation if we're always looking for what's wrong?”

For those who work in organisations that support social change:

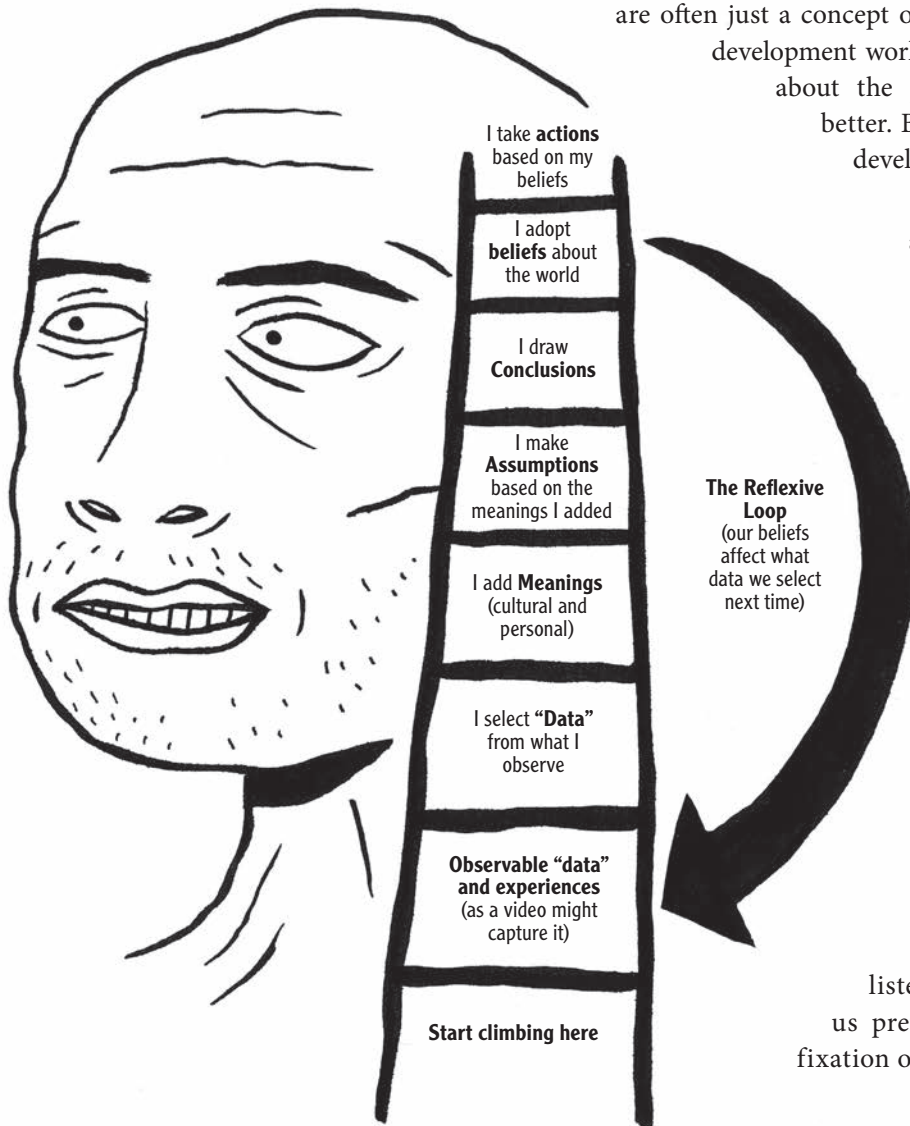
No matter how self-aware we are when we begin work in social change, in the beginning many people will be operating from a worldview in which change in poor or marginalized people's lives is possible with our help. We may believe that change will occur with enough hard work, sound management, and commitment.

The international aid and philanthropy sector tends to be overly technocratic and detached. Because most people are working from their desks in capital cities, ordinary people's lives are often just a concept or an abstraction. Young, idealistic development workers are driven by passion, excited about the possibility of making the world better. But often that desire gets lost as we develop a career.

Without rigorous humility, we can appear less sensitive, hardened, more disconnected, less caring, less open to possibility – qualities that do not make for good partnerships.

Our ability as thinkers to high-mindedly question everything about “what works” can insulate us. It can become a tool of our egos and create a “gotcha mentality.” And it can greatly remove us from the realities of ordinary people. Thinkers and doers, it's in the interest of social change to prevent this and to make sure we're breaking out of our reflexive loops. (See graphic.)

Rigorous humility can help us to listen more effectively. It can also help us prevent and mitigate an unhealthy fixation on evidence and measurement.



What is rigorous humility and how can it help?

As humans, we are drawn to explore, examine, and respond to the world around us. Not surprisingly then, the concept of rigorous humility has its roots in all faith traditions. Rigorous humility is also a key part of the scientific process. It is found in the “searching” for answers in which we are continually engaged.

The most effective and inspiring community leaders, philanthropists, social entrepreneurs, development practitioners, and agents of change embody rigorous humility. They know the limits of their experience and their attitude and actions reflect that they see themselves as only one of *many*. Rigorous humility involves:

- Giving up the role of expert;
- Taking concrete steps to bring power imbalances into check;
- Active engagement in self-reflection; and
- Most importantly, seeing our others' full potential to be capable agents of change, with or without us.

Several things differentiate a person who is rigorously humble.

First, when it comes to evidence and measuring results, rigorously humble people exhibit a **keen awareness of where they are positioned within the information supply chain**. They know how this affects what information is available to them. They consider and make their requests of their partners accordingly.

Especially for funders, there are many layers between themselves and where most social change work is happening: at the community level. No matter the organization or program in which you're working, rigorous humility requires that we consider what is the appropriate cost and complexity needed for measuring results. Does a US\$5,000 project need the same kind of evaluation as a US\$500,000 project? Rigorous humility enables us to also consider what is practical and proportionate given the size and scope of our programs.



A couple of years ago I was the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) advisor for a regional team at the US-based headquarters of an international organization. There was a big push for project management happening in the organization and so the regional director decided that it would be best to have monthly reports from the projects' implementers. The funding the regional director provided was to sovereign national-level organizations on another continent.

I didn't disagree with him. Yes, more information about activities would be helpful. However the people

who reported directly to him, that is, those more connected to the partner organizations, knew that this was an unreasonable request. A LOT of bureaucratic hoops would have to be jumped to make this happen.

As the advisor, I quickly drew up a flowchart that I showed to the regional director. Did he realize that for his request to be fulfilled by volunteers or field officers working on the ground, the report had to pass through eight different levels of approval before it came to him?

No he didn't. He honestly wasn't thinking about that. He told me that he needed to make better financial projections in order to keep funding flowing for the projects. To do this, he told me, he needed more real-time information about what activities were happening and which funds were being spent. Who could argue with this? (Though this M&E advisor was keenly aware we were not even talking about outcomes yet!)

Eventually the team elected me to institute monthly check-ins. These *phone calls* could provide the necessary information to the director. In the process the team also started to improve relationships due to more frequent interactions with the partner organizations.

Jennifer Lentfer

Employing rigorous humility is about embracing and welcoming mystery and continually recreating our work as we learn.

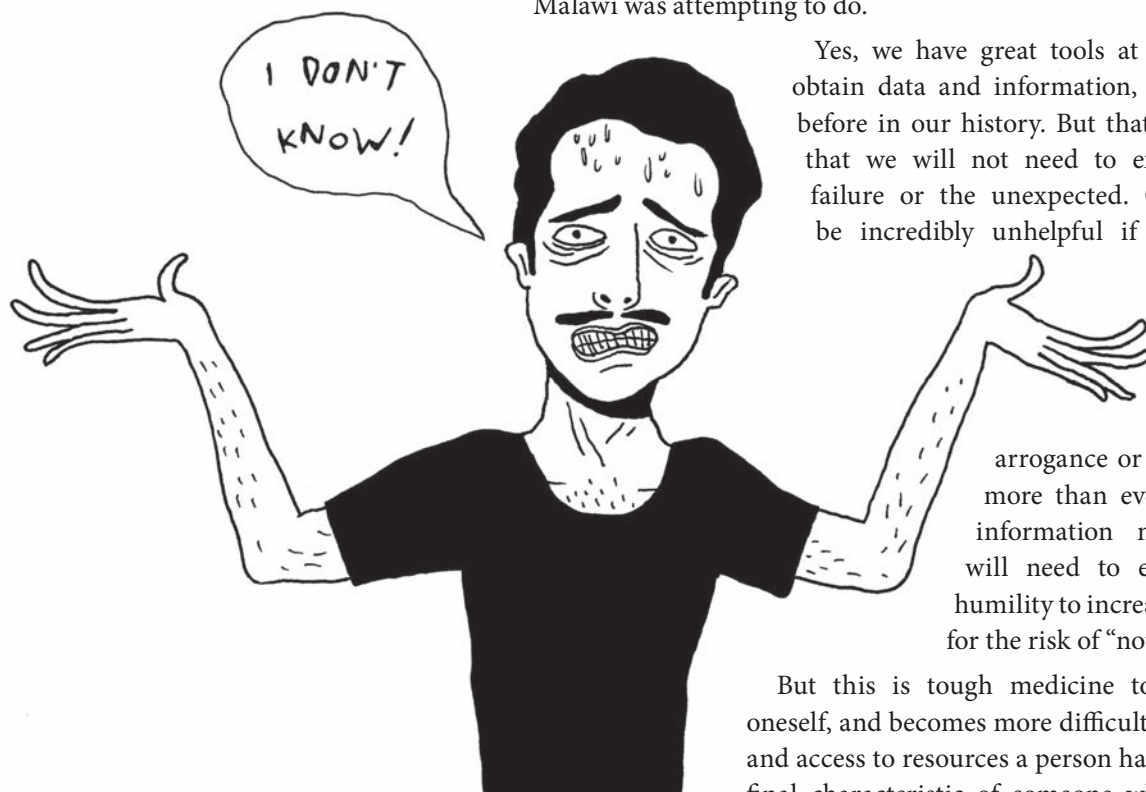
Another way to tell if a person is using rigorous humility is to listen carefully when they speak. You are listening for **one key phrase**.

If someone is using rigorous humility, “I don’t know” is an acceptable answer to a question. This requires something different of us. We must step away from the usual role or position of authority, or people who “know” or are “in the know.” Most of us are unconsciously trying to avoid critique and judgment of our peers. This happens as a result of our education and training, organizational processes, and our own fears.

We don’t want to appear foolish, or indecisive. Why? Because that is a very vulnerable place to be.

But that is not necessarily a bad thing. “I don’t know” is found in imprecise information, in unseen or undetectable outcomes. It’s found in our trust in people, in their innate capacities and energy. “I don’t know” appears when we are grounded in a higher purpose. It is a necessary part of the cycle of rigorous humility.

Even if you are not deciding whether to fund a beast-invaded project, you are engaging in leaps of faith involving “I don’t know.” Employing rigorous humility is about embracing and welcoming mystery and continually recreating our work as we learn. By abandoning chicken rearing in favour of a paraffin pump, this is exactly what the group in Malawi was attempting to do.



Yes, we have great tools at our disposal to obtain data and information, more than ever before in our history. But that does not mean that we will not need to expect or accept failure or the unexpected. Great tools can be incredibly unhelpful if employed with

arrogance or ignorance. Now more than ever, having more information means that we will need to employ rigorous humility to increase our tolerance for the risk of “not knowing.”

But this is tough medicine to administer to oneself, and becomes more difficult the more power and access to resources a person has. That’s why the final characteristic of someone who is rigorously humble is that they **consciously surround themselves with people who offer differing perspectives** – people with different skills, different backgrounds, and/or more years under their belt.

These critical friends are vital because they help us discover our own blind spots, assumptions, and biases. In other words, if you’re a thinker, you need doers around you for a reality check. And for doers, vice versa. Karen Armstrong describes this as the “hard work of compassion,” or constantly “dethroning” yourself to challenge your own worldview. This is a vitally-needed skill set that can help cultivate new kinds of institutions.

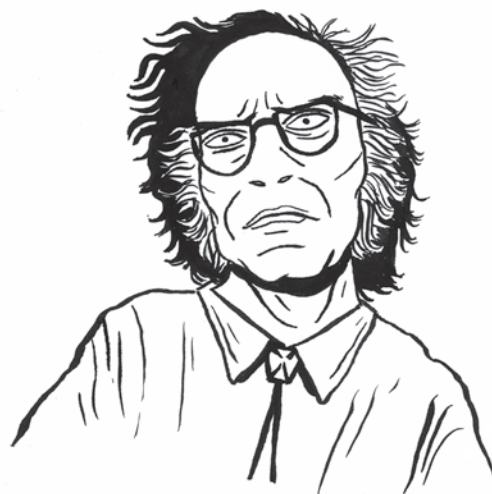
In our lives and in our relationships, it's often the conflicts, the breakdowns, and the mistakes that make us more sure of who we are. These sometimes difficult times are what remind us of our connections to each other, and of what's most important. Those grounded in rigorous humility remind themselves and those around them of this tremendous transformational opportunity.

Here's the bottom line. **Anyone can identify what's wrong. But it takes much more skill and strength to wake up everyday, and help identify what's right, what's possible, and where incremental changes can occur.** This is rigorous humility.

Amazing things can happen with more rigorous humility...

The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom.

Isaac Asimov



...We can invest not just in projects or ideas, but invest in the people who have them – those whose expertise and critical thinking is grounded in their day-to-day, lived experience.

...We can expand the notion of accountability to include not just funders, but the people we serve.

...We can use data for learning, adaptation, and improvement, not compliance or risk management or policing.

...We can acknowledge that the information needs of a funder may not be (and usually are not) the same as those working on the ground.

...We can focus on real-time learning and quick adaptation as evidence. Our responsiveness to realities on the ground can be increased.

...We can put just as much or more effort into measuring the strength of our partnerships as we do “following the money trail.”

...We can start to see the difference between words on paper and people coming together, willing to be changed by the experience of real dialogue.

...And we can have more fun!

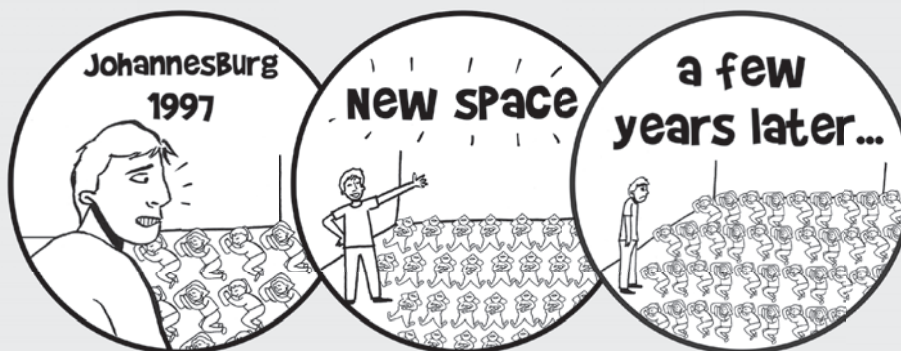


Making evaluation work for social change

Charlotte Boisteau, F3E

Johannesburg, 1997: With parents of the children in the kindergarten where I worked in Alexandra township, we decided to build a new space so the kids (120 in around 30 square meters) wouldn't have to sleep with their legs bent.

A few years later, when I was back visiting, I realised that the director had now enrolled double the number of kids in the same space.



The change I tried to initiate was not positive. In a way, nothing had changed at all.

Since this experience, I have tried to understand what hinders us from making positive changes that endure. I believe that the cause is a lack of depth in our learning processes.

I find myself asking:

- Are we listening enough?
- Are we humble and respectful enough to remain open to the idea of others?
- Are we in too much of a hurry so we act first before thinking?
- Are we ready to improve ourselves or do we consider we are so experienced that we don't have to learn more?

Listening and learning spaces are not easily created and have to be supported. I now accompany people in planning, monitoring and evaluation. I believe there are approaches that can create spaces for listening and learning. If we truly listened in these processes then we would enable learning as well as accountability. Yet these processes are often not perceived in this way. Why?

Well, firstly, because **it is easier to question others than to question oneself.**

Yet deep questioning of our individual and collective practice is the basis of a critical and constructive process which will lead to learning, enabling us to change and adapt. Planning, monitoring and evaluation should be a re-assessment, a continuous improving and learning approach.

The learning process can be validated and deepened if it is supported by an external point of view and accompanied in the methodological process.

The more voluntary the approach is, the better. To accept change, you need to want to change from the beginning.

We also need to accept that we learn more from our mistakes than from our successes, whether on an individual, organisational or structural level.

While it is possible to do this ourselves, within our own organisations, it can be difficult to address and be honest about unequal power relations – between staff and managers, between the organisation and its donors and partners, between ourselves and those whom we are trying to support to bring about social change. Increasingly, we need to work with organisations and entities that are very different from us to bring about change. It takes time to develop relationships of trust and this too can inhibit our ability to plan, monitor and evaluate what we are doing in a way that enables real listening and learning. External accompaniers or evaluators can play a valuable role by maintaining the integrity of the process and enabling all to be heard.

To accept change,
you need to want
to change from
the beginning.

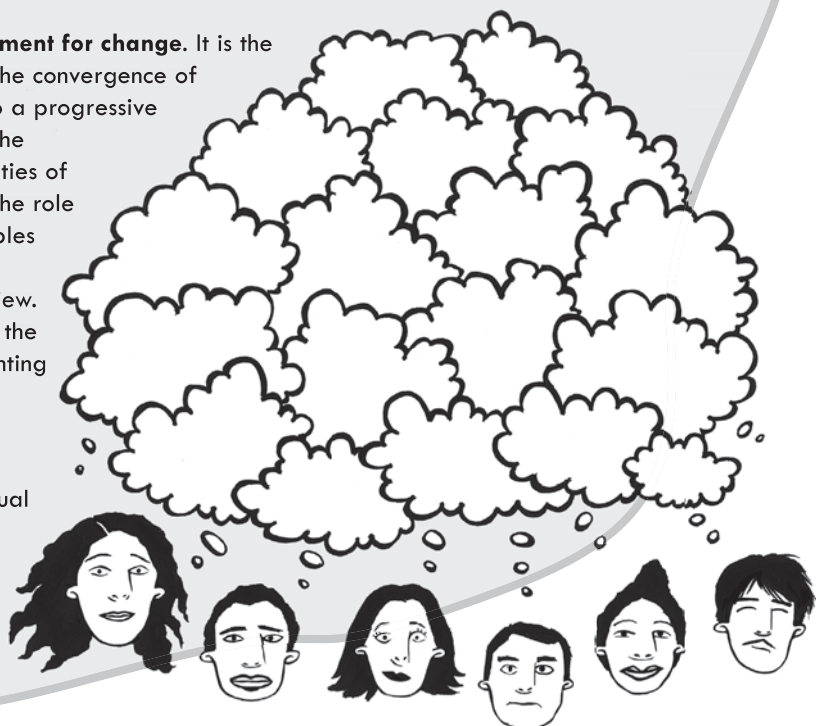
The F3E approach

Evaluation creates a meeting space that can be regarded as a game and, as in all games, there are dominant and dominated personalities. That's why F3E **supports** planning, monitoring and evaluation and research, and defines its role as a supporting, mediating and demanding outsider ("tiers exigeant, médiateur et accompagnateur"-TEMA). The role of a TEMA is to ensure a good balance between the actors in the game. When planning, monitoring and evaluation is not supported, the game is dominated by some actors and its use is perverted. There are a lot of biased evaluation studies.

The support provided by F3E is a key element for change. It is the integrity of the supporting actor that allows the convergence of critical opinions necessary to learning and to a progressive approach. The supporting actor facilitates the identification of the needs and the possibilities of change. This actor is not neutral but plays the role of an analyst, often an opponent that enables a mirror effect. But it is responsible for the objectivity with which it builds its point of view. The supporting actor acts as a guarantor of the good use of the evaluative approach, preventing it from being distorted to meet the needs or wishes of a particular group or individual.

Thus step by step, through people working together, knowledge is built and, beyond individual knowledge, beyond the sum of the parts, a **collective intelligence emerges**.

(F3E is a Paris-based organisation that seeks to evaluate, exchange and illuminate to improve practices in the international development sector.)



Evaluating to understand

Evaluations are not always strategic or innovative. They are sometimes based on a simplistic analytical framework that does not acknowledge complexity of reality.

The analytical framework called the logframe often acts as a straitjacket. By shaping the observations to make them fit in the logframe, you miss the surprises, the unexpected, the hidden aspects of collective intelligence and learning.

Development cannot be summarized – and is not measured – only by the results achieved and their consistency with the expected results. It is a process in which reality and complexity must be appreciated.

Methods and tools for promoting learning and informing evaluative approaches are numerous and becoming more aware of complexity and the richness of social change.

They are called theories of change, incidence mapping, the most significant change, etc. But tools, however nuanced and innovative they may be, can always be misused. The key to learning and evaluation is **your attitude**, or the '**rigorous humility**' we describe above.



Key methodological principles to support the planning, monitoring and evaluation of social change:

1. Acknowledge complexity

Take into account subjectivity

The assessment of change is very subjective. The choice of actors invited to express their view on change is not neutral, as much as for planning or evaluation.

Get rid of linear planning schemes

To support complex change processes, it is useless to plan by asserting "if I do this, this will happen". It is more useful to say something like 'I want this to happen – in similar circumstances, this and this has worked so I'll try these and see what happens'. Or perhaps 'people want to try this, I'm not sure it will work but I will support them to do it and make sure that we check to see whether it is working or not.' The idea is to start with simple tools and a method that would allow a certain degree of uncertainty and allow for unforeseen events rather than using classic planning schemes based on a predetermined model of reality.

Get away from the anxiety to prove our own impact

A change process is the result of a combination of multiple interactions. We can analyze how the action contributed to change, but it is quite difficult, even impossible, to attribute specific actions as the causes of social change. If we are collaborating well, we are more than the sum of our parts so it doesn't make sense to measure what we are doing by measuring the effect of the different parts.

2. Change your evaluation practice

Focus on the system rather than the project

We usually look at our project to assess its impact. But we have to do the opposite. If we accept the idea that our action only contributes to change in a complex system, rather than being the single cause, we need to look at the system. We should first analyse the system that produces the change, and then make the link with our own project.

Focus on learning and capacity building

Planning, monitoring and evaluation exercises should be designed as opportunities to strengthen capacities.

Report differently

Report to actors who were involved in and affected by the change as well as to donors, in order to explain what you are doing and why.

Reform yourself

Supporting change implies changing your own practice by agreeing to take the control from the project management and hand it over to those who are acting to bring about change. Supporting the development of the social change actors leads invariably to your own development.

You have to accept and anticipate this.

From Sierra A. et al. (2014)



In evaluation, the core issue is to take your time, to **create a space-time continuum for reflection and continuous improvement**. It does not mean that you have to create change directly, but that you have to observe the changes created and to appreciate their complexity.

Evaluative approaches are only tools that allow each of us individually, collectively, institutionally (and it is crucial to act on these three levels at the same time) to strengthen ourselves and our processes, and to correct ourselves or to redirect our efforts if necessary.

It is difficult and perhaps even wrong to attribute change to a single individual or a single organisation. On the other hand, it is possible and desirable to support change and its contributors in identifying a change that has occurred and in understanding how it came about.

... why it is essential to try and understand how the action makes sense for those who are expected to benefit from social change.

Positioning social change actors at the heart of evaluation

The question of actors is at the heart of the challenges faced by those involved in planning, monitoring and evaluation. Who evaluates and who is assessed? To whom do we talk when we plan, monitor and evaluate? How do we make the process as inclusive and as empowering as possible?

The question of participation and even more the question of the **governance of the evaluation** is a major issue in the evaluative process and is crucial to the smooth implementation and good use of the evaluation.

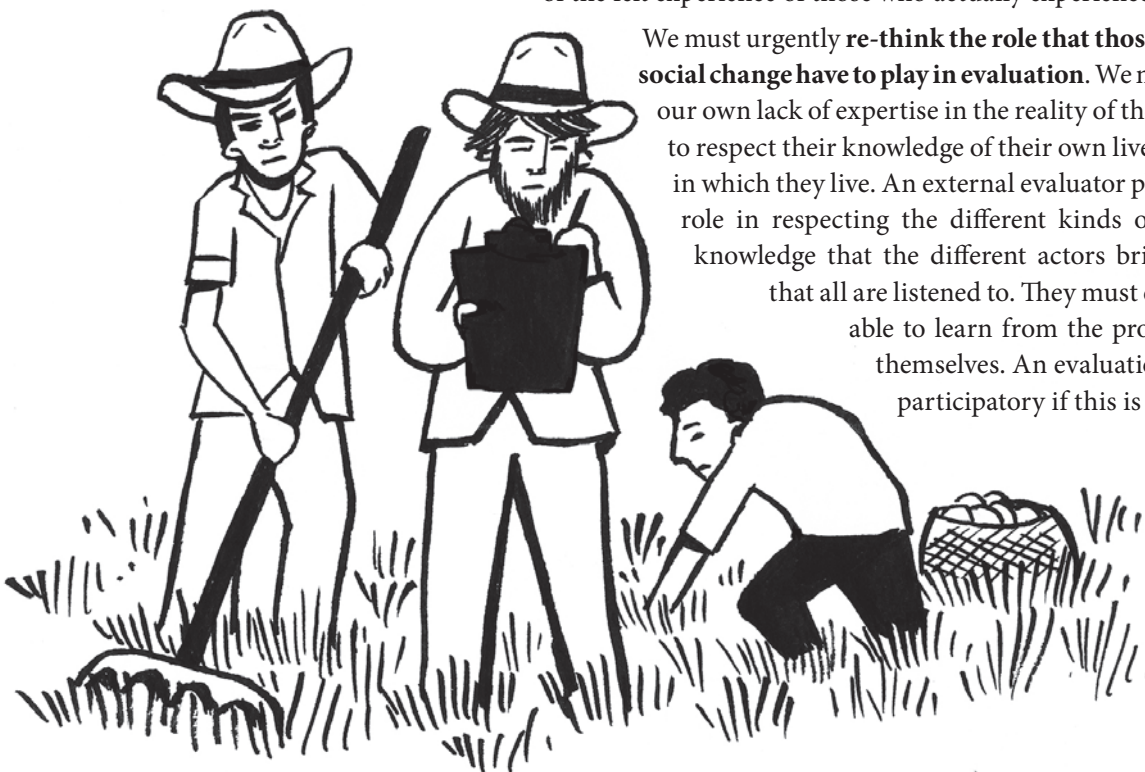
There are a lot of tools that promote participation in the evaluation process, but do we know who we want to participate and why? By involving those who we want to directly benefit from the change, we provide an opportunity for them to both inform our learning and deepen their own learning. The more we involve them, **the more the learning benefits them rather than our own operations**. Until then, the action is more important than the actors.

Actions and the changes that result from them are perceived differently by different people, depending on their involvement, their status and a whole variety of other factors. That is why it is essential **to try and understand how the action makes sense for those who are expected to benefit from social change**.

Evaluation is often motivated by the notion of accountability but, as strange as it may be, we often do not report to the beneficiaries for our actions. We are more accountable to our donors.

This is the more negative aspect that the logframe approach brought: the relegation of beneficiaries to the end of the chain and a weakened ambition to reach them. And an approach to evaluation that is sceptical of the felt experience of those who actually experience the change.

We must urgently **re-think the role that those who experience social change have to play in evaluation**. We must acknowledge our own lack of expertise in the reality of their lives and learn to respect their knowledge of their own lives and the context in which they live. An external evaluator plays an important role in respecting the different kinds of and sources of knowledge that the different actors bring and ensuring that all are listened to. They must ensure that all are able to learn from the process and apply it themselves. An evaluation process is only participatory if this is able to happen.



Capitalisation: making the most out of evaluations

Because external evaluations have their own budget line and are seen as independent and unbiased, they are often treated separately from the learning that is going on within the organisation or project itself. But unless they are part and parcel of the learning processes then they have very little value and the potential to do a lot of harm. Fearing the negative reaction of donors, organisations are much more likely to take action as a result of recommendations of an external evaluator. They have less trust in their own learning processes.

By strengthening organisational learning processes and linking research, M&E, learning events and making sure they speak to each other, the value of external evaluations can be greatly strengthened. They are not a single event, often taken out of context, but part of the learning practices of the organisation.

The strategy of F3E since 2005 has been to promote a host of studies and methodological procedures to complement external evaluation, **preliminary studies** and **cross-cutting studies**: guided **self-evaluations**, strengthening the systems of **monitoring and evaluation**, **capitalisation of experiences**, **impact studies** and **change analysis** and “**post-evaluation**” support to interrogate and facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the external evaluation.

In addition, organisations and social movements can strengthen their own learning practices to capitalize on their experience, i.e. to learn as much as possible from their own experience and practice and to apply that to their practice and future activities.



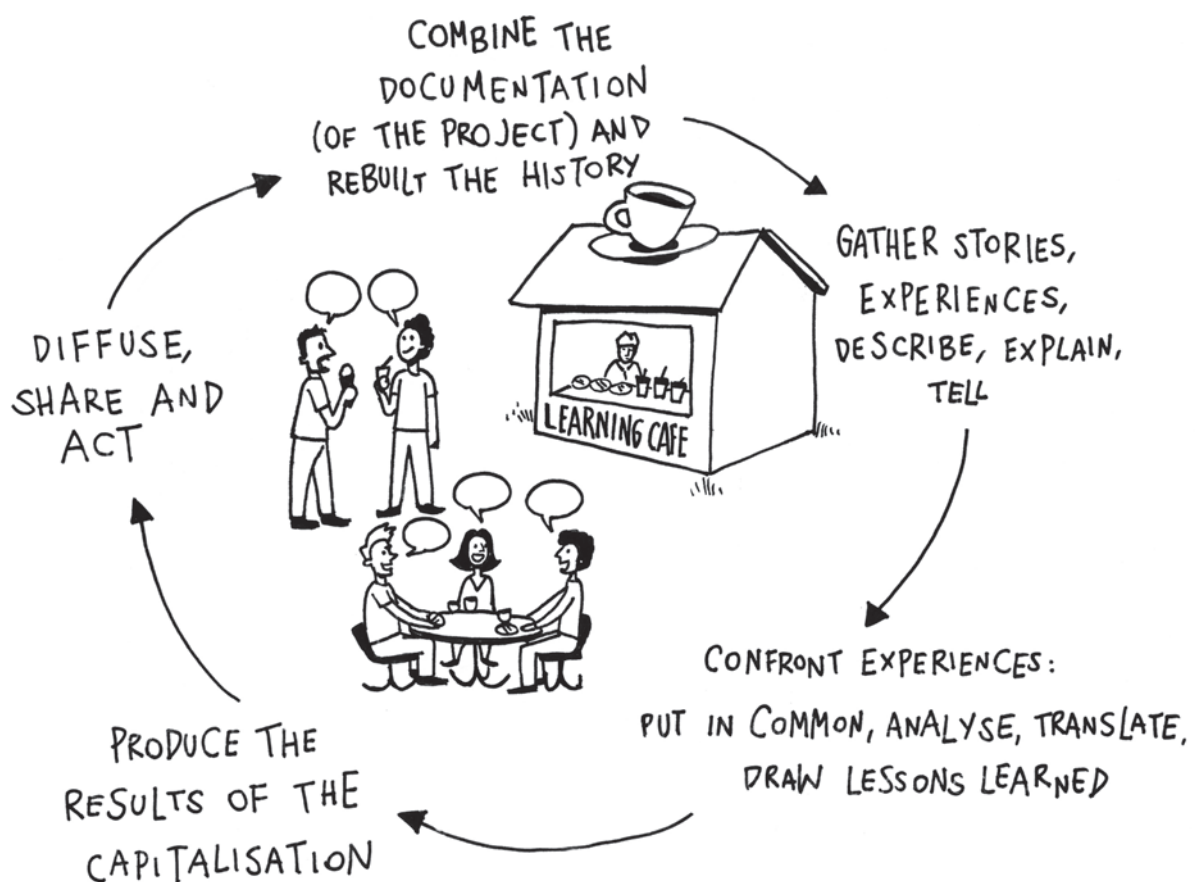
Capitalization: small steps

Creating a culture of learning within your own structure can start modestly. The most important thing is to experiment and find out what works for you.

- Dedicate one hour per month during a management meeting to taking a different look at what you have done. Forget about activities, results and programmes. Discuss experience, feelings and process.
- Identify or develop some simple tools to collect stories: testimonies, photos with comments, an « other comments » section in the monitoring form. Encourage actors to talk or write about the questions that have arisen from them and the unintended effects of activities. These are all low-cost tools to develop a culture of experience and to encourage people to find time to discuss, interpret and draw lessons from experiences.

Adapted from : Capitalisation des expériences: Concevoir et conduire sa capitalisation d'expériences en replaçant les acteurs au cœur de sa démarche Marthe-Valère Feuvrier, Odile Balizet et Audrey Noury, mars 2014.

Where learning is not already built into the work (see how it can be in Julie's story in Chapter 3), then a conscious effort to draw together all the information about the work is needed. You can do this yourself but, in many cases, it helps to have an external person. This person is there to accompany you through the process, to help you understand your own learning and the implications it has for your work. It is a very different way of evaluating your work – not a 3-week process where the evaluator collects information, analyses it and then feeds it back to you with a list of recommendations. It is a longer term process where the accompanier helps you to recognise and value your own learning and analyse the information you have yourself. You decide what the recommendations are. Of course, the accompanier will challenge your assumptions and question your conclusions. But they will not tell you what you have learnt. Only you can know that.



Finally...

There is much more to be said about how best to evaluate social change and how to capitalise on learning opportunities in evaluation. So much to say that we will be devoting a whole Barefoot Guide to evaluation. The fifth Barefoot Guide will explore innovative and reflective approaches to evaluation and how these can support and deepen social change. Massive resources are allocated for evaluations. We want to see these resources being used not just to tick boxes or to prove that we are doing what we said we would, but to deepen our understanding of social change and enable us to improve our practice. We want to see evaluation that is not extractive but contributes to positive social change.

Working with Questions:

What Kinds of Organizations and Leadership do we Need to Face the Future?

"There are respected and good hearted informal leaders in every village I have seen. They have hopes for peace and for restoring the life of their village. If they recognise the same qualities in the community development workers who befriend the village they will enlist our help. They will begin to show us that there is a way forward despite the problems. If we win their respect we will be invited into their company. The changes that they can support are usually quite different from the changes that may be imposed by the district or the commune or the village leader."

Meas Nee, 1999

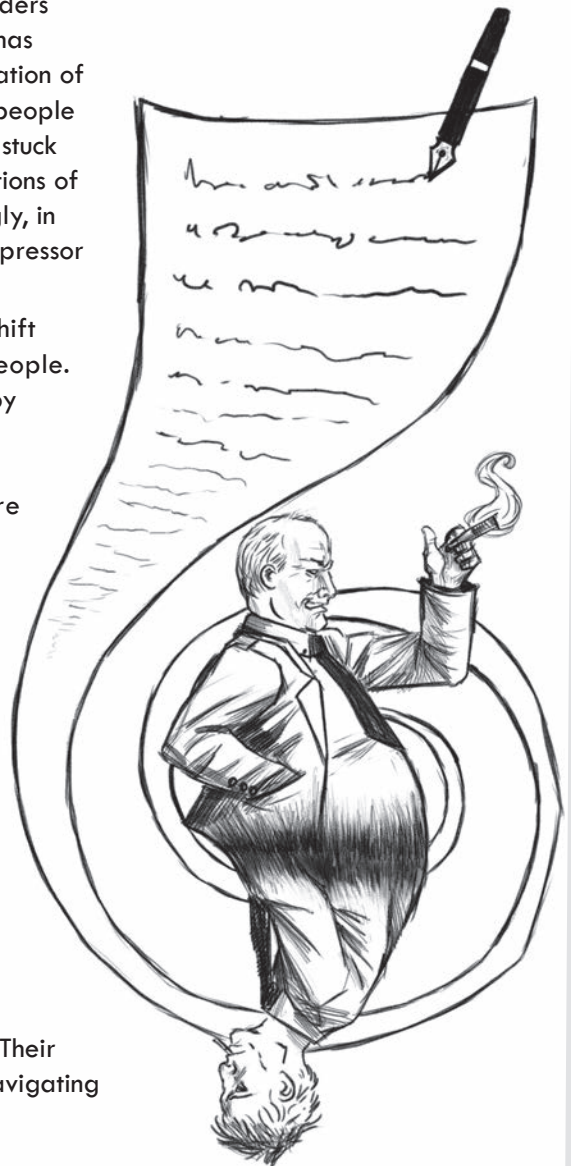
Organisation. In this post-modern age the conventional and traditional hierarchical forms of organization and strong leaders appear to be less and less appropriate. Although this book has addressed itself largely to the empowerment and transformation of the marginalised and oppressed, much the same applies to people and organisations of the powerful, those at the centre, often stuck in their power, and needing to be freed from entrenched notions of their superiority. We are all trapped, wittingly and unwittingly, in this binary of leader and follower, boss and subordinate, oppressor and victim, playing out an old script that needs rewriting.

New organisations need to take account of a massive shift that is taking place in the culture and identity of young people. They are emerging en masse, informed and empowered by education, the TV, and the internet as never before, yet unwilling to meekly follow strong leaders. This has huge implications and challenges for conventional activism where a more politically sussed vanguard have relied on their authority, enabled by a disciplined solidarity in their followers, to manoeuvre and use their followers as a force for change. It seems that young people are simply less willing to be herded around by anyone, more active but less tolerant, *easier to mobilise yet more difficult to organise* than ever before.

How do we work with people who can be mobilised but don't want to be organised?

The world is starting to experiment with less controlling, more participative, less hierarchical, self-organising and networked forms of organization. But these are tentative. What is clear is that they are not so easily held together by formal structure and rules but rather by new kinds of relationships, values, understandings and new conversations. Their ability to be agile and to learn, is a determining factor in navigating an uncertain future.

It seems that young people are simply less willing to be herded around by anyone, more active but less tolerant ...



Working with Questions:

What Kinds of Organizations and Leadership do we Need to Face the Future?

We need to continue to experiment with organisational forms and processes. For example some organisations, including NGOs and professional partnerships, are seeing themselves less as stiff structures and more as rhythmic processes within which diversity is harnessed rather than controlled or minimised. Self-control is the key, lessening the need for management, where individuals take responsibility out of the sense of equality, freedom and solidarity that they experience in the organisation (as discussed in Chapter One) and then find ways to cooperate with other individuals in ways that are best suited to the tasks at hand. The rhythm is provided by regular reflective and replanning reviews, enabling a learning process forward.

... it is through conversations, in meetings and workshops, that leadership, as a process, is taking place.

Leadership

How leaders are brought forward is critical. In the daily savings groups allied to the Shack Dwellers International, leaders are not elected from people who can speak well or show impressive authority. Rather they emerge from a process of women electing collectors from amongst themselves whom they can trust to collect and bank their savings. Trust becomes the key quality. Speaking well and being confident can be learnt. These collectors are then worked with and empowered and many become effective leaders.



But leaders are only one form of leadership. Conventionally they are the dominant form. But increasingly, as people demand participation and joint decision-making, it is through conversations, in meetings and workshops, that leadership, as a process, is taking place. As this grows the role of leaders becomes more facilitative, paying attention to the quality of the learning and creative processes that lead to good decisions made more collectively. This puts Action Learning at the centre of leadership practice.

Leadership can also be claimed by those who work hard and take initiative.

How can we re-imagine leadership, so that the most trusted people and the most creative and effective leading processes, in many possible forms, can be pushed forward to meet the complex and diverse challenges we face?

CHAPTER SEVEN

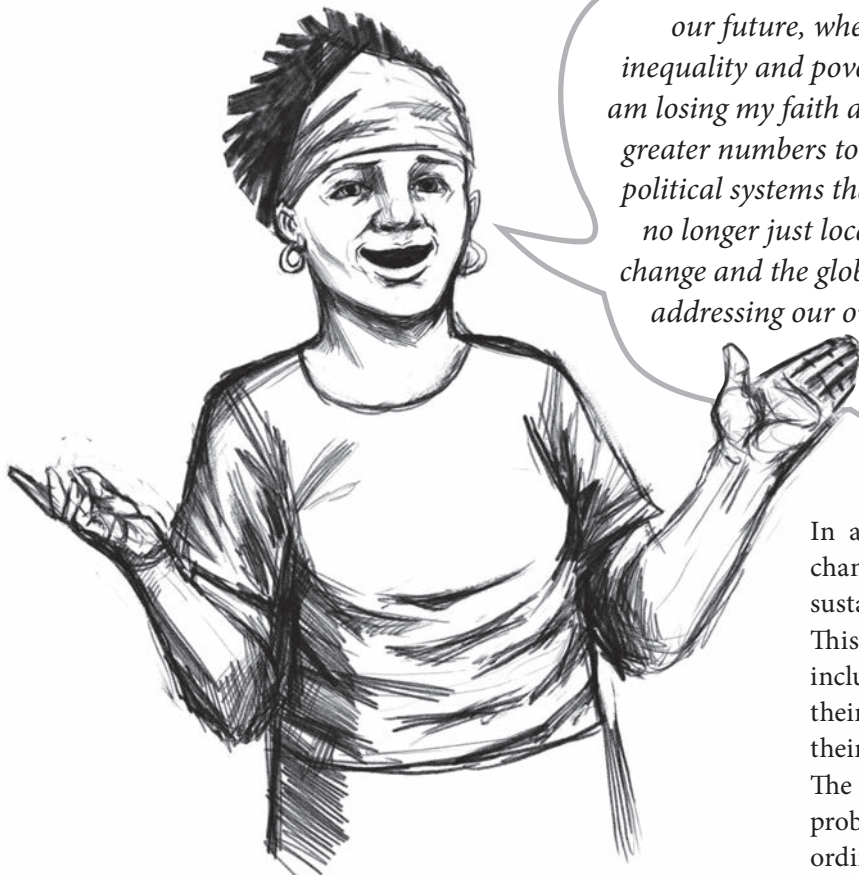
Another World is POSSIBLE and is already happening

Towards a Great Transition through a Global Citizens Movement

"We've become something of a bacterial species, and our fingerprints are everywhere. The planet is dying, and there is a need to reform or rethink or out-think the ways we've been thinking about the world and our relations to it. Today's most pressing imperative is to turn to each other."

– Bayo Akomolafe

While governments, corporations and NGOs argue over words and definitions in never-ending international negotiations about our future, whether addressing climate change or global inequality and poverty, I, like many citizens all over the world, am losing my faith and patience. People like me are mobilising in greater numbers to challenge the bankrupt global economic and political systems that no longer work for us. The change we need is no longer just local but has become global. Just look at climate change and the global economic collapse. We can't carry on each addressing our own social change and ignoring the 'elephant in the room' – here are some ideas for how we could join up the dots.



In an ever more interconnected world, any social change and transformation towards a more just and sustainable future cannot be done without its citizens. This is not only because they are demanding to be included or because it is democratic, but also because their ideas, their work and how they choose to live their lives will be what makes real change happen. The contribution of citizens to solving our planet's problems and realising possibilities is key. When ordinary people think, create and work together the extraordinary become possible.



We need to ignore the false promises of those whose only interest is to maximise profit through short-term economic growth, destructive competition and wasteful consumerism. They have failed us in the past and they will continue to destroy what matters to us if we allow them. But we should not lament what they are doing because it is up to us to change things. In their place we can cultivate more sustainable lives for all based on values that appeal to the best in human nature.

A global citizens movement can reshape the course of history. For many this may seem an impossibly ambitious venture, perhaps even naïve. And yet all great citizens movements in history, the countless struggles against tyranny, for democracy, equal rights and freedoms of all kinds, faced down the same cynicism. And we have already seen in every corner of the earth citizens gathering together, in connected struggles, to find a new way forward. Another world is possible and is already happening.

Of course it is going to take continuous processes of mobilising and organising, but behind this all two things are critical:

We need to support radical experimentation... it is not enough to put the unworkable behind us. We need to create what will take its place.



- **We need to change our paradigm**, how we see, understand, value and talk to each other about the world, humanity and the issues that matter; crafting a new language for thinking, conversing and collaborating.
- **We need to support the radical experimentation** that creative people of all kinds are conducting in the niches and corners of the current system (whether organisational, economic, technical, social or political). It is not enough to put the unworkable behind us. We need to create what will take its place.

This chapter explores some approaches to how this could happen.



A New Paradigm: The four pillars of the Earth Charter

If we are to move away from an unworkable, unsustainable system then in what direction do we need to go? The Earth Charter, described here, is a product of a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The Earth Charter project began as a United Nations initiative, but it was carried forward and completed by a global civil society collective.

I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life

- Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
- Care for the community of life.
- Build democratic societies.
- Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.



II. Ecological Integrity

- Protect and restore biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
- Prevent harm to the environment and apply a precautionary principle.
- Adopt patterns of production, consumption and reproduction that safeguard the environment, human rights and community well-being.
- Advance understanding of ecological sustainability.



III. Social and Economic Justice

- Eradicate poverty.
- Economic activities and institutions to promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- Affirm gender equality and universal access to social and economic resources.
- Uphold the right of all to an environment supportive of dignity, health and wellbeing.



IV. Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace

- Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels.
- Teach knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
- Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
- Promote a culture of tolerance, non-violence and peace.



The Earth Charter was finalized and then launched as a people's charter on 29 June, 2000 by the Earth Charter Commission, an independent international entity, in a ceremony at the Peace Palace, in The Hague. The drafting of the Earth Charter involved the most inclusive and participatory process ever associated with the creation of an international declaration.

(<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/What-is-the-Earth-Charter%3F.html>)

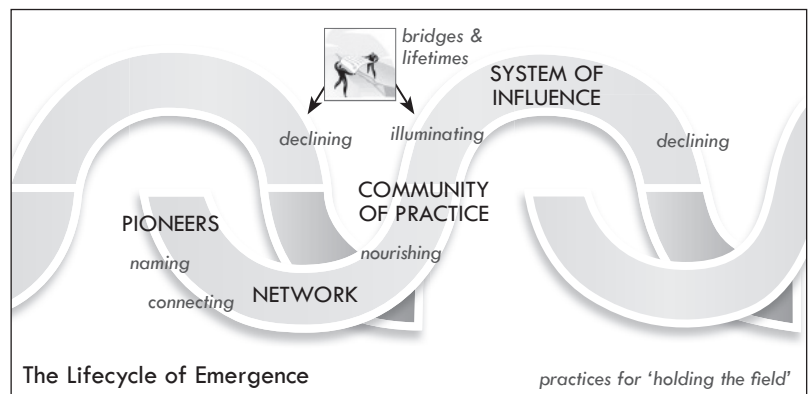
... to better appreciate and understand the essential elements and processes of change.

1. Understanding Transformation

Before we can propose approaches to change transformation we need to understand how change happens. Here are some “models for seeing” change, or “windows” through which we can look behind all the detail and complexity to better appreciate and understand the essential elements and processes of change.

A. The Berkana Model – the Lifecycle of Emergence

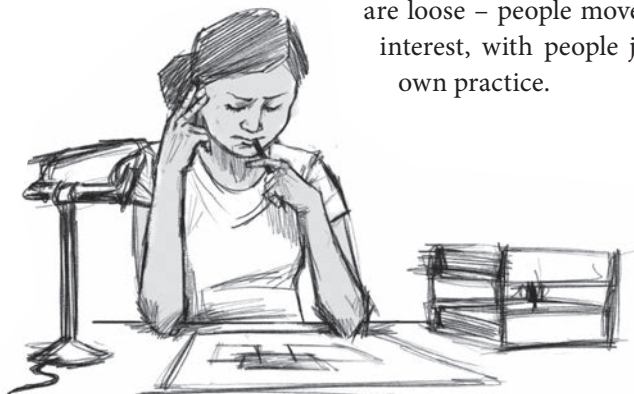
Margaret Wheatley and colleagues at the Berkana Institute, an organisation supporting communities in change efforts, developed a model for system transformation that is based on “lifecycles” that cyclically emerge and decline (Wheatley and Frieze 2006).



The Berkana “lifecycle of emergence”
 (image from howtosavetheworld.ca/2010/04/22/the-lifecycle-of-emergence/, accessed 7 August 2014)

Phases of the Lifecycle:

1. **From Pioneers to Networks.** While a current system is still at its summit of influence (top left of diagram), pioneers begin to experiment with alternatives. Once identified, they might discover shared meaning and purpose with other pioneers and initiatives, connecting with them and forming *networks*. These networks are loose – people move in or out easily – and are based on self-interest, with people joining because they see benefit for their own practice.



2. **Communities of Practice.** Then, motivated by the increasingly obvious decline of the current system and nourished by emerging alternatives offered by the pioneers, such networks can grow into communities of practice. In contrast to networks, *communities of practice* have stronger cohesion: They are based on a shared and intentional commitment to advance certain thinking and practice, and the benefit for the group as a whole is prioritised over individual needs. There is the intention to share discoveries with a broader audience, and to advance quickly on joint learning and innovation.



3. **Systems of Influence.** At a point, they might become *systems of influence* and the new societal norm. This point is however difficult to predict, as systemic change such as in the fall of the Berlin Wall or Apartheid, the decline of the Soviet Union or the global domination of corporate power comes into reality in a quick and unforeseen way. The former pioneers become acknowledged leaders in their field, now recognised by the mainstream, and former sceptics turn into supporters.



Inevitably, these systems fall into decline, outliving their usefulness, and new pioneers and then networks emerge, and so the lifecycle continues.

The Transition Town Movement¹



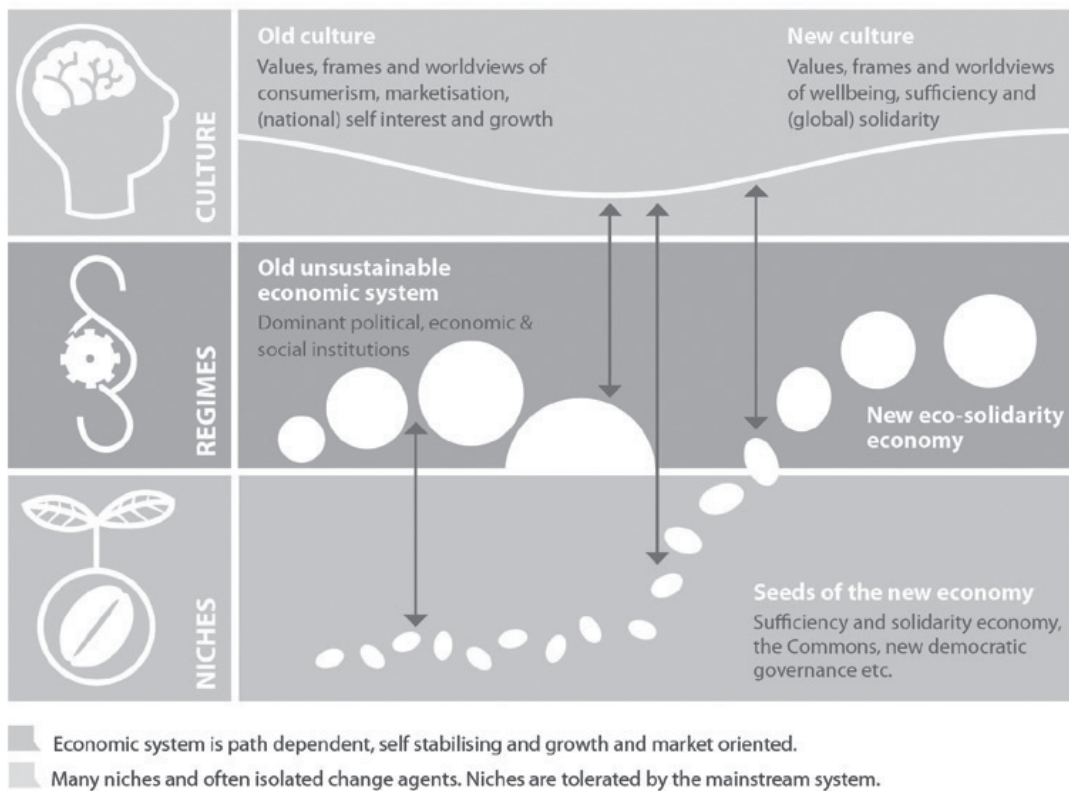
An example of the move from pioneers to a network to a community of practice is the Transition Town Movement, which aims to create resilient communities through implementing collective, local alternatives to an oil, growth and market obsessed economic reality, e.g. through local currencies, community gardens or “free markets”. Starting in 2005 in the small town of Totnes, England, it grew by 2011 to a global network of 714 initiatives in 31 countries with a strong concentration in Europe and North America. This process was facilitated, or “nourished” through a well-crafted “start-up manual”, peer support and horizontal learning dynamics through the growing network itself. While the Transition Town movement is an encouraging example of community based

alternatives, the “tipping point” to become the new standard or system of influence for how cities and local communities are economically and socially organised has not yet been met; cars and corporate retail stores still dominate the way of life in most towns.

Today's conservatism is invariably yesterday's radicalism, and today's radicals, if they are successful, will become tomorrow's conservatives.

– Michael Lind

1. www.transitionnetwork.org



The Smart CSOs change model (Narberhaus 2014)

B. The Smart CSOs model

The “Smart CSO Lab” is a growing community of practice of a broad range of people involved with a range of civil society organisations (CSOs) and networks from a variety of sectors, such as environment, global justice, women’s rights or social rights. Regular workshops, meetings and seminars allow participants to reflect on the systemic questions and challenges CSOs need to address, beyond the daily business of management and policy work.

The Smart CSOs Change Model describes change happening at 3 levels:

1. **Culture – from old to new** – from values, frames and worldviews of consumerism, marketization, national self-interest and growth... to values, frames and worldviews of wellbeing, sufficiency and global solidarity.
2. **Regimes – from old to new** – from old unsustainable economic systems and the dominant political, economic and social institutions... to new eco-solidarity economies.
3. **Niches** – seeds of the new economy characterised by sufficiency and solidarity, the Commons and subject to new democratic governance.

According to observations from the Smart CSO change model, civil society organisations (CSOs) currently act mostly at the regime level, fighting losing battles within the existing paradigms of markets and competitions, applying change strategies based on policy work and institutional lobbying. The Copenhagen climate summit is maybe the most prominent illustration of the limits of this approach.

As an alternative, the Smart CSOs model proposes to move the weight of change efforts from the level of regimes to the level of niches, working in spaces of radical experimentation “where the seeds of the new system emerge”, and to the level of culture, to shift the dominant discourses, values and worldviews. This is where the real work lies.

As culture (“what matters to us as humans?”) shifts it supports the emergence of new economic and political forms, from experimental niches, to replace declining and unsustainable forms of economy.

Below, we will see how these two “windows” can be merged to provide a powerful map to the future. But before that, let us look at “how” we may move forward.

2. The quest for a “great transition” – new work for civil society

The world is in danger. This requires us to act, to move towards a better place, to a vision of what we can become. But there is no final destination to envision because as humanity we will always be on a series of journeys into the future. Paul Raskin (2002) and others have called the journey we are now on the “great transition”, a transformation of our economic system based on the well-being of people and planet rather than profit, consumerism and competition, as well as a cultural shift that reshapes our social relations and systems of governance for the benefit of all, including the planet itself. In many ways it has already begun.

The “great transition” is a global act requiring global connection and cooperation. Already there is a huge acceleration of global interconnectivity, both positive and negative, through the globalising economy, the internet and other media. People are connected as never before and with this emerges the very real conditions for a global citizens’ movement that could shape this great transition. We are connected, but how can we cooperate?


What characterises this “great transition” we are in? What are the paradigms or ways of seeing and thinking that we must let go of and which ones might we adopt to lead us through the “great transition”? Below are a few that we find interesting and helpful.

Transformational change: Crisis and turning point

Global transformations cannot be planned, predicted or understood before they happen: processes leading to transformation make sense only when we look back at them as historians. At a “turning point” or “crisis moment” the old truths lose significance: the old thinking patterns, values, frames and certitudes do not deliver meaning anymore. This crisis moment, when the old is fading, is characterised by irritation, fear, confusion, depression and conflict.

The crisis is made worse by the fact that the emerging new system cannot be predicted or controlled. Our addiction to certainty and control must be abandoned as we walk into an unknown future. This does not mean that we are helpless but it is an invitation to approach life differently.

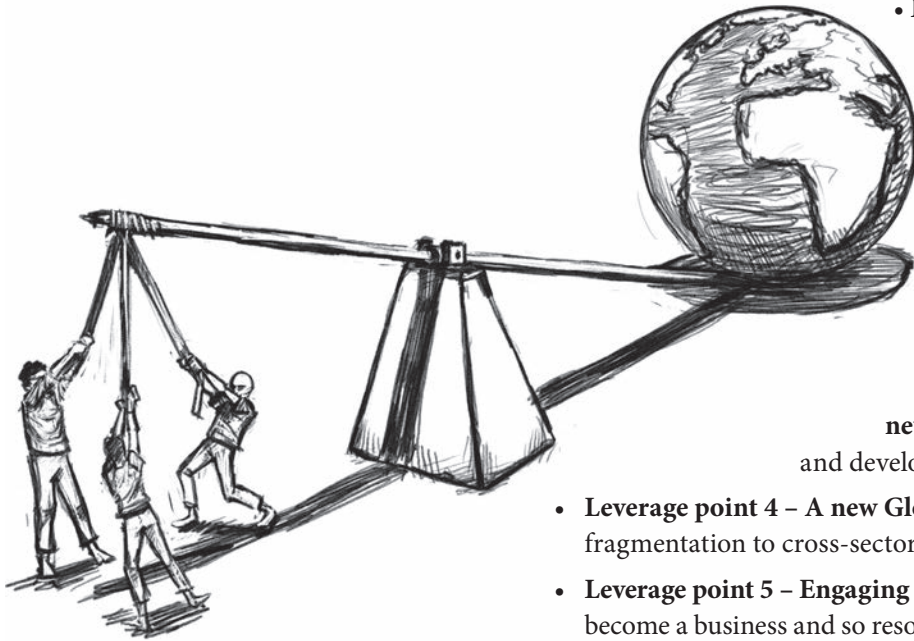
So what needs to change? The Smart CSO initiative (Narberhaus et.al. 2011) has put forward a vision and 5 Leverage Points (ways to influence change):



People are connected as never before and with this emerges the very real conditions for a global citizens’ movement that could shape this great transition.

The Five leverage Points of the Smart CSO Initiative

Vision – an idea of the future, not an idealised fixed picture but a set of values and principles by which to live and co-exist. The Earth Charter, described above, is perhaps the most developed and inclusive contemporary vision to have been developed.



- **Leverage point 1 – Systems**

thinking: new understandings of complexity in an increasingly globalised, interconnected world

- **Leverage point 2 – A new narrative:** working with cultural values, how people make sense of their lives and what matters to them

- **Leverage point 3 – Developing new models:** experimenting with and developing the seeds of a new economy

- **Leverage point 4 – A new Global Citizens' Movement:** from fragmentation to cross-sectoral and global collaboration

- **Leverage point 5 – Engaging funders:** social change cannot become a business and so resourcing the new initiatives in other ways is critical







It is possible that our greatest and most urgent task is to learn how to ride the storm of change.

Instead of seeking to plan and steer the “great transition”, we have to work with what is happening, strengthening and supporting where possible and contributing to an enabling environment for positive change, e.g. through intellectual openness towards different worldviews, non-dogmatic spirituality, experimentation with alternatives and “gentle dissidence” or strategic activism that does not strengthen the very forces it seeks to undermine. These elements are not only closely connected to models for transformational change, but also crucial to a certain approach to global learning and global citizenship education.

All of the above sound rational and sensible but we usually underestimate the effects of crisis points and find it hard to deal with the feeling states of change; the confusion, fear and doubt. It is possible that our greatest and most urgent task is to learn how to ride the storm of change. What do we look to when the waters rise and our rational and sensible systems begin to look inadequate and downright silly. Where do we look to for help, rescue and encouragement? Is it only then that we will look to each other or can we begin now?

Let us look at what the shift is that is required at each point:

The Five leverage Points of the Smart CSO Initiative

	Approaches of many current CSOs and why strategies are failing to tackle systemic problems	Strategic leverage points for CSOs to become strong change agents
<p>Vision</p> 	<p>Too much faith in market solutions to tackle environmental and social problems. Believe that deployment of existing and new technology will mitigate most environmental impact, and that we can tackle the global crisis with specific policies without a need to fundamentally question current cultural values, economic structures and life styles.</p>	<p>The market and current politics cannot solve the systemic global crises. We need to redesign the economy with a shift away from the current growth paradigm to maximizing wellbeing within ecological limits. This will only be possible with a new consciousness and a shift in societal values from self-interest to the common good.</p>
<p>Leverage point 1: Systems thinking</p> 	<p>Single issues focus, lack of acknowledgement of the feedback loops in the system and the interconnectedness of today's global crises.</p>	<p>Systems thinking is a discipline that can help organizations to understand complexity in systems and work more successfully with highly interconnected global issues.</p>
<p>Leverage point 2: A new narrative</p> 	<p>Focus on natural sciences – Too much belief in the power of the rational argument. Need to better understand how to influence social, political and human systems.</p>	<p>Insights from cognitive science, psychology and sociology can help us understand how we can work towards a shift in societal values.</p>
<p>Leverage point 3: developing new models</p> 	<p>Too much focus on incremental change through advocacy work. Policy processes are locked in the current economic growth paradigm and often fail to result in effective policies.</p>	<p>Systemic change requires more focus on socio-technical innovation and bottom up approaches. CSOs can support change agents and the seeds of the new economy in a variety of ways.</p>
<p>Leverage point 4: A new global movement</p> 	<p>CSOs regularly fail to see the opportunities of cross-sectoral collaboration, partly because they focus on narrow technical proposals and also because CSOs tend to compete with each other. In addition, CSOs haven't focused on the potential of a global citizen movement.</p>	<p>The inclusive nature of the Great Transition offers an opportunity to build large platforms for collaboration. CSOs can learn how to apply successful models of collaboration and support the creation of a new global movement for the Great Transition.</p>
<p>Leverage point 5: Engaging funders</p> 	<p>There is not much funding available currently for strategies on systemic change. Funding schemes are encouraging focus on short-term, proveable outputs, technical policy work and competition among CSOs.</p>	<p>Funders need to be engaged to develop new strategies for the Great Transition and they need to adapt funding and monitoring and evaluation to the requirements of strategies for systemic change (long term, more risky etc.).</p>

The 'great transition' calls for a multi-layered, amorphous and organic movement, based on inclusiveness, radical democracy and multiple interfaces.

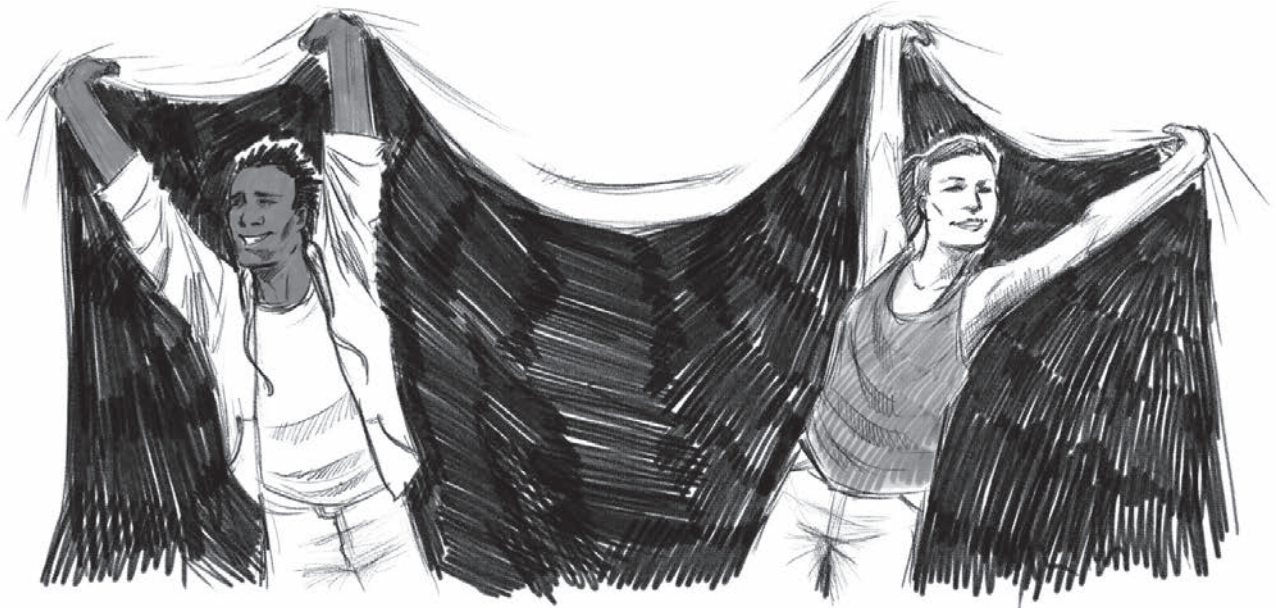
3. The Global Citizens Movement

The Global Citizens Movement is one of five “leverage points” to advance systemic change, to overcome the fragmentation of civil society and to rise above the current politics of oppositionist activism to something more creative. Many civil society organisations, notably International NGOs, evolved from participatory, democratic grassroots communities into highly professionalised and hierarchical organisations, often embracing very much the same principles of growth, markets and competition in their institutional strategies as corporate actors in globalised capitalism. Furthermore, in the eyes of grassroots movements NGOs became co-opted by the very system they intended to change.

Connecting NGO practice and ambition with social movements around a transformational change agenda is a key factor to facilitate the emergence of a global citizens movement for systemic change.

From social movements to a global citizens movement

The many seeds of a Global Citizens' Movement are there, in the millions of civil society organisations, movements, campaigns and networks working locally and globally, pushing in many corners for many new futures against unworkable systems, coalescing here and fragmenting there.



The nature of the emergent movement. The form of organisation of such a global movement needs careful consideration so that it might be formed to meet its own diversity and the complexity it faces without falling back on the stuck hierarchies that it seeks to replace. A Global Citizens' Movement cannot become a centralised, command-control style organisation with an institutional structure or central administration. We are seeing the limits of that approach. Such a movement cannot and should not be controlled or managed. The 'great transition' calls for a multi-layered, amorphous and organic movement, based on inclusiveness, radical democracy and multiple interfaces. Encouraged by the examples of the American civil rights movement and the environmental movement, Robert Paehlke argues that a multitude of approaches and actors make a Global Citizens' Movement “more decentralized, more unplanned, more possible, and less threatening” (Paehlke 2014:3).

Active citizenship is evolving, and even if the multiple popular uprisings and mobilisations often have different starting points, the issues they tackle are of global concern and are mirrored in uprisings elsewhere on the planet. The identification of individuals as “global citizens” who believe that many local struggles have a global dimension, and that global challenges require global answers has never been higher.

the issues they tackle are of global concern and are mirrored in uprisings elsewhere on the planet.

4. Cultivating a Global Citizens Movement

A movement cannot be constructed, but can be cultivated, over time. What might the elements of a radically inclusive and adaptive Global Citizens’ Movement look like?

- a) **Participatory revolution:** A global citizens’ movement would be world-wide, cross-sectoral and cross-topical, connecting local struggles. We would call this the “participatory revolution”. The work here would be to create links between local and national initiatives and mobilisations across borders through horizontal exchanges and sharing, as well as mutual support. Citizens from different provinces and countries need to meet each other, learn from each other and build the trust they need to begin to work together.



- b) **Connected Causes:** Local, citizen-led mobilisations and spontaneous, often informal social movements and networks, with increased emphasis on the aspect of changes in culture, discourses and worldviews. Defining joint objectives and strategies towards political change, systems thinking, identification of common values and culture. New, joint narratives that can create a feeling of global belonging, that creates connectivity across causes with the aim of direct impact on policy processes at national, regional or global level, for example through the UN system. We can call this “**connected causes**”.

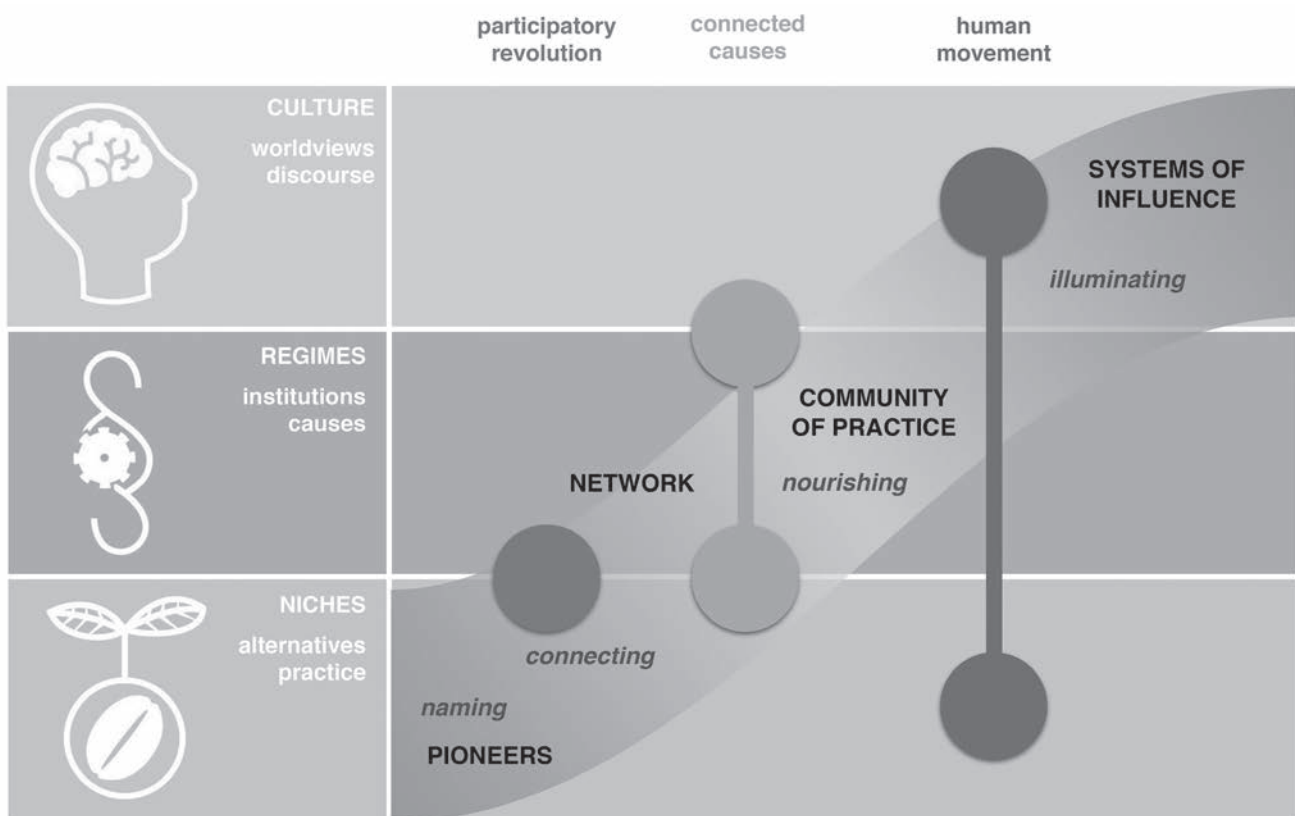
- c) **Human movement:** The third, most radical view of a global citizens movement is less concerned with the dimension of policy work and engagement with formal political processes, either because of demonstrated ineffectiveness and danger of co-optation, or because a new world cannot be built with the modes of thinking and mechanisms of the old one. This is what we call the “**human movement**” approach to a global citizens movement. This includes experimentation with new practices at local and global movement level, and emphasises the need for new thinking and a shift in paradigms.



... dive deeply into the exploration of a new culture, new ways of thinking, knowing, and acting.

These three elements already exist – but we need them to be practised more widely. Let us now cross-link the scheme with the Berkana change model on “networks”, “communities of practice” and “systems of influence”, as well as with the four steps leading to change, which are *name-connect-nourish-illuminate*.




The diagram below shows how the “participatory revolution” vision of a global citizens movement corresponds with the connected networks of pioneers, experimenting in their niches or topical mobilisations, and linked mainly by curiosity and self-interest. “Nourished”, they might become a more cohesive international or global “community of practice” around common and “connected causes” and joint commitment to an alternative worldview (“culture”), but still with an aspiration to achieve change through formal political mechanisms or processes, which are part of the old and failing system. Finally, a “human movement” would leave the sphere of regimes, would emancipate itself from an externally defined agenda and dive deeply into the exploration of a new culture, new ways of thinking, knowing, and acting. This movement will create practical alternatives, becoming a “system of influence” that eventually builds up to alternative “regimes” – a new system.



Typology of approaches to a global citizens movement in relation to Smart CSOs (Narberhaus 2014) and Berkana (Wheatley and Frieze 2006) change models

Core Elements of a Global Citizens Movement

This table sums up the three core elements of a global citizens movement, in relation to the Smart CSOs and Berkana change models:

	Main points	Smart CSOs	Berkana
Participatory revolution 	Creating links between local / national, topical mobilisations: Sharing & learning Mutual support Concrete political outcome	Focus on local/national mobilisation and experimentation (<i>niches</i>) and consequently change at <i>regimes</i> level	<i>Naming and connecting pioneers through networks</i>
Connected causes 	Connections across local / national, topical mobilisations, defining joint objectives & strategies towards political change Systems thinking, identification of joint, common values & culture	Experimentation / mobilisation in <i>niches</i> & <i>culture</i> change should have results on regimes level	<i>Towards a Community of practice through nourishing the networks</i>
Human movement 	Experimentation with new practices at local & global movement level Paradigm shift New epistemologies Concrete political outcome is not planned and not primary focus (it will follow)	Focus on local experiments & alternatives with strong connection to creating a paradigm shift, less focus on outcome at regimes level	<i>New paradigms reach out into society (illuminating), Systems of influence create transformation</i>

Towards a World Citizens Movement

An example of these three types of a global citizens movement happening and reinforcing each other is the process “Towards a World Citizens Movement” initiated by DEEEP. Through a cycle of three global conferences a world-wide community of practitioners engaged in transformational practices in NGOs and social movements opened a discourse space to address joint questions. The 500 people involved in this initiative is too small a group to actually figure as a “World Citizens’ Movement”, but the elements of the encounters include linking local struggles and mutual support (participatory revolution), reflections on joint values and political campaigning (connected causes), for example through the global Action/2015 campaign³, and deep questioning and radical experimentation (human movement). The emerging community of practice aims to connect transformational initiatives worldwide to a meta-movement that can become a system of influence.

(See <http://deEEP.org/global-movement> and www.action2015.org)

5. Stepping towards a global citizens movement

The work of building a global citizens' movement can be crystallised around a number of challenges:

- acknowledging the need for radical and systemic change
- the need to experiment with new forms of leadership and organisation to assure inclusion, and
- the profound shift in culture and values that is necessary for new paradigms to emerge.

1. Acknowledge the need for a “great transition”

There is acknowledgement of the need for a “great transition” but living in this world makes it hard to see the new one.

Cultivation of mental freedom, gentle dissidence and living alternatives as proposed by Krause (2014) can be approaches to nourish the emergence of systems of influence in order to advance a transformation of paradigms. Spreading this idea in civil society, business, politics and the world at large is essential for the creation of a global citizens' movement.

“I don't think we are very far from that. I think confronted with the social and economic and ecological crisis, a lot of people who tend to be cynical or who are not very politicised, in the back of their minds they are very aware that the system we have now cannot hold, that something fundamental has to change. It can either change in a very grim and scary way, or it can change in a hopeful way. And we have to work for that hopeful and democratic way. In the absence of a democratic global citizens' movement, we are going to have a right wing global citizens' movement.”

– Mark Randazzo



2. A new role for NGOs

Many NGOs, particularly those that are larger and more international, are criticised for dominating local initiatives and movements, using their resources and organisation to soften the status quo and frustrate the emergence of real alternatives. Limited, single-issue, measurable projects, rather like the system of short-term quarterly returns of corporate business, prevent people from asking the bigger questions of change. Change is reduced to clever business models developed in the North and exported to the South.

This needs to be turned on its side. Movement building must be rooted locally. The challenge is to build on local mobilisations and translate that to power at the national and global level. As Mark Randazzo put it: NGOs would need to “zoom out” from “our silos of philanthropy, our specific campaigns” in order “to see the bigger picture”. The role of NGOs should be that of facilitator, rather than shaping the agenda:

“The role of professional organisers and institutions is to help to create the spaces for interactions and sharing and learning and exchanges, to help to provide the connectivity between all of them, so people can learn from each other and be inspired by each other. And hopefully build a bigger and deeper movement together.”

Paehlke (2014:11) argues that “a movement committed to expanded democracy, equity, and human rights must itself, in practice, be inclusive, equitable, and scrupulously democratic. The movement must be a model of democracy and inclusiveness to demonstrate the possibility of such democracy on a global scale.” This can only be achieved if organised civil society moves from having a programme or strategy-implementation role to a facilitation role that contributes to and nourishes the feeling and practice of citizenship (Osler & Starkey 2005).

A re-connection of NGOs with local and global movements through a global, systemic perspective that encourages learning from the grassroots, is an alternative to sectoral, policy focused, top-down campaigning. It will consider the universal character of the challenges humanity is facing, and, we hope, deliver alternative models of co-existence between people and planet.

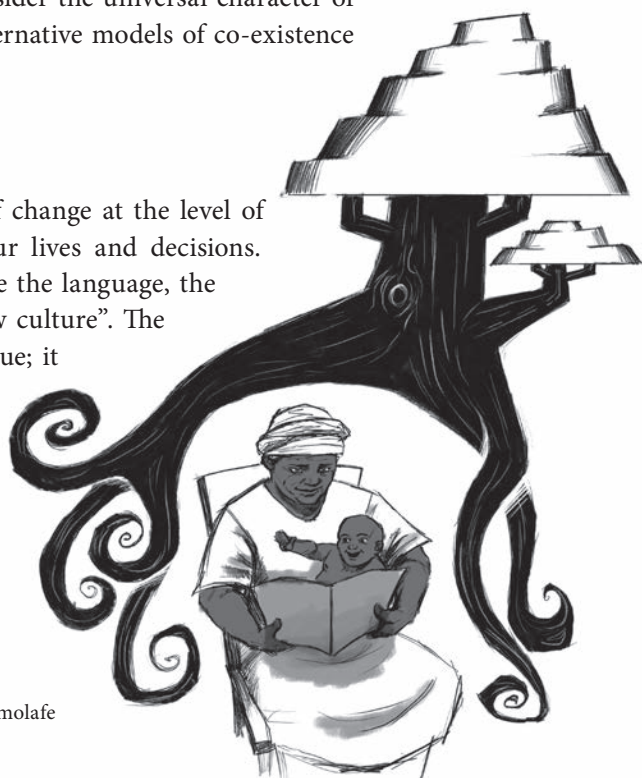
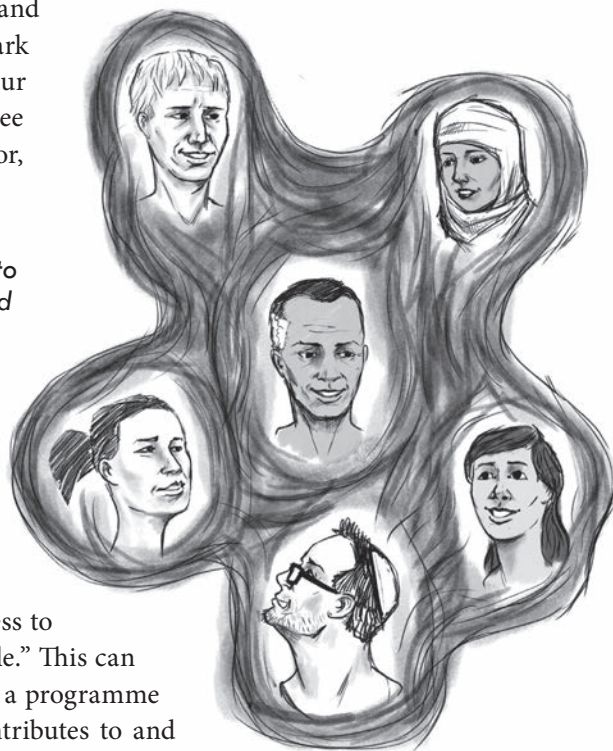
3. Addressing cultural transformation

The Smart CSOs model underlines the fundamental role of change at the level of culture – the discourses, values and frames that shape our lives and decisions. The problem with this change agenda is that we do not have the language, the references and the thinking mode to conceptualise the “new culture”. The established institutions cannot provide space for this dialogue; it must come from the people themselves:

“What is critical about a global citizens’ movement is that the agenda is totally outside the conversation, outside the realm of nation states and parties. It’s about people. For once in the history of modern civilisation, we are beginning to shift the conversation from governments and corporations to the people themselves: The agenda is you and me, it’s our grandmothers, it’s our small children.”

– Bayo Akomolafe

The role of creating community and joint identification in the emergence of a global citizens’ movement is central. Linking people, their struggles and beliefs and facilitating the emergence of new cultural references by creating a joint language and identification, is a pre-condition for joint action.



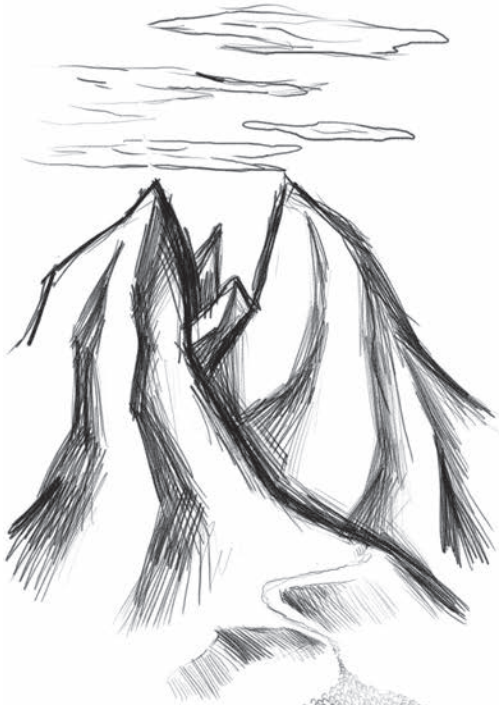
And so...

The acknowledgement of the need for a great transition, a changing role for institutionalised civil society from policy actors and social service implementers to movement facilitators, and a deep shift in the cultural values and frames, are key ingredients for a global citizens movement to emerge and to bring about transformational change.

The emergence of new worldviews is an open and dialogical process, based on mutuality, the creation of trust and radical inclusiveness. Emancipatory learning, including a re-radicalisation of development education, can facilitate this process. This implies a change in focus from strategy formulation to shaping new kinds of questions and conversations between people, from resourcing aspired policy change to nurturing radical experimentation and niches, and away from working through hierarchical organisations to weaving wider and more participative networks that can evolve into communities of practice and systems of influence.

Can these processes grow and multiply sufficiently to bring about a “great transition”? This is only possible by connecting grassroots mobilisation with re-invented global civil society organisations to incubate an inclusive, democratic and multi-layered global citizens movement for transformational change.

This chapter is based on the Development Education Masters dissertation by Tobias Troll “Another World is happening – Towards a Great Transition through a Global Citizens Movement” (2014), Institute of Education, University of London.



This is only possible by connecting grassroots mobilisation with re-invented global civil society organisations ...

Working with Questions:

Who is Participating in whose Process?

As development workers from government or NGOs or even as activists many of us imagine that because we have the skills and confidence, we are best placed to lead change programmes, to be in charge, to ensure that nothing goes wrong. And so a school may get built or a law changed. But the people have not been empowered, only used by us, and when the need comes for change again they still feel helpless and need us to come. This is what lack of sustainability means.

Often donor or government funding insists on a whole sophisticated plan being developed up front (by next week!) and so the usual procedure is for “experts” to do some research and put together a plan and then try to sell it to the community, hoping they will “take ownership”. But they don’t.

Essentially they are participating in someone else’s plans and process.

Or local government sets up a series of committees and consultations where the community is invited to comment on new policies or initiatives or even participate in the development of solutions to problems. Hoping they will take ownership, but they don’t.

We now know, however, that it is possible and far more productive to turn this process upside-down.

People and communities can develop their own initiatives and call their own planning processes, like meetings inside the community run by local leaders, where we can support them, if needed, by participating in their processes. We need to be keeping our hands off the steering wheel.

Here is a last story of a practice that understands this principle:

Indigenous people behind the camera:

Valuing local knowledge and building resilience, horizontal linkages and global voice

This is the story of how indigenous farmers in India, Peru and other countries are using video technologies to document and revive local knowledge, to enable and facilitate their own form of knowledge-sharing and solidarities, and strengthen resilience for the future.

Millet is a staple food crop first grown by our earliest ancestors. Millet is valued for its nutritional value and ability to endure long periods of storage (it remains fresh for 30 years or more). However, the Green Revolution in India has resulted in subsidised rice flooding local markets, and making it less financially viable to grow millet, altering diets in the process. In North East India, it is undergoing a revival with the help of community video processes: young people from the Khasi Hills documented the know-how from their local elder, on video, and engaged the younger generation in learning how to harvest the elder’s small plot of millet. This small act has led to a striking revival of millet-growing in the village and from only two families growing millet, every household now cultivates this crop.



People and communities can develop their own initiatives and call their own planning processes...

Working with Questions:

Who is Participating in whose Process?

Growing millet isn't just culturally symbolic, it enables local farmers to challenge the dominance of industrial-scale mono-culture, re-take control of the local food system, and provide food security for their families. Millet is grown through Jhum cultivation. This is the traditional rotational agriculture practiced in the region which communities believe regenerates the forest and enables farmers to grow up to fifty crop varieties in one field. Millet provides many of the proteins, vitamins and minerals lacking in rice. As a slow burning carbohydrate, it provides a more filling meal for hard working farmers and unlike rice, which requires up to 3000 litres of water per kilo produced, millet has the ability to flourish in drought prone areas without irrigation, and without the need of fertilizers.

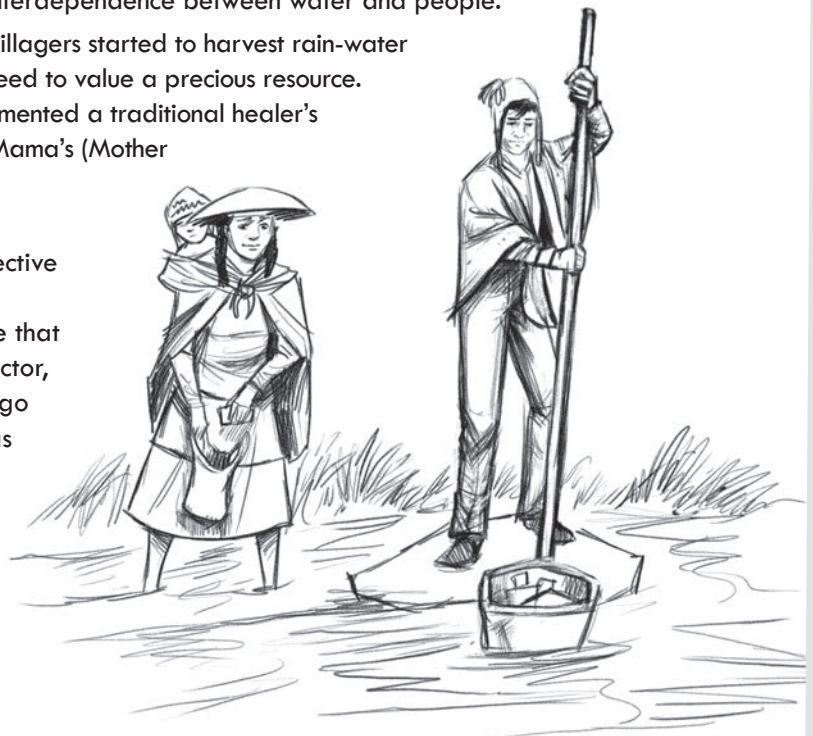
Our approach, known as participatory video, is based on Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed and focuses on supporting individuals to grow in critical consciousness to act in the world around them. In the case of the Khasi Hills, the video project has led to a programme, funded by the Indian government, to promote traditional agricultural practices across the North East region; supporting the training of indigenous youth in participatory video to enable them to document and share knowledge on food and culture.

In Cusco, Peru, Andean communities are facing increased seasonal drought: the glaciers, their main source of water, are melting at rapid speed due to global warming. When the springs dry up at these altitudes, there is no alternative but to leave the village and migrate down to the towns and cities. One of the responses to this was a participatory video project, initiated to highlight the importance of nurturing the village springs. This led to the revival of an important annual ritual to clean up and celebrate the springs, following a five year ban on such "pagan activities" ordered by the Mayor. At the ritual, village musicians play and sing to the springs, brightly woven clothes are worn by dancers to honour Mother Earth and the invasive water-sucking plants around the springs are removed and replaced with indigenous trees and local medicinal plants. Ritual has restored the interdependence between water and people.

As a direct result of the video project, villagers started to harvest rain-water from their roofs as they remembered the need to value a precious resource. Another video project followed which documented a traditional healer's plant knowledge, in celebration of Pacha Mama's (Mother Earth) healing power.

We have dozens more examples of participatory video as an open and collective process where people come together to engage in a conversation around an issue that is important to them. There is no one director, scriptwriter or producer. Everyone has a go at using the camera and contributes ideas to shape the video. The participatory process is built on these four cornerstones: participation, reflection, empowerment and action, and this is recognized and appreciated by the indigenous peoples we work with.

Local facilitators guide others through that process, and the process is as important as the video product, in many cases even more important. The focus on collective engagement is what generates the power to act. In Peru they call participatory video 'seeing beauty', because through it they are respecting and honoring Pacha Mama. Participatory video has been a process towards respecting and acknowledging their local knowledge, their ways of seeing.



Working with Questions:

Who is Participating in whose Process?

Global participatory video programmes have been designed to bring indigenous peoples together to learn and support each other across borders, to help them feel less isolated, and inspire them to value their knowledge. Through building resilience, traditional communities can choose to resist external, destructive forces, and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Many of our indigenous partners face the loss of culture and changes in traditional land use and traditional foods, disappearing knowledge, young people moving to the cities, health issues like diabetes, illegal logging and mining on their lands, violence and militarisation by the state, intolerance of traditional and spiritual beliefs.

Community screenings create safe spaces to witness diverse perspectives, reflect upon the possible solutions, and galvanise collective action. Participatory video promotes locally-led change since it reveals and amplifies local solutions.

Video screenings and dialogue events are attended by groups of all generations drawn from across the surrounding areas. The local team organises events that integrate participatory dialogue, video screenings, and group discussions, concluding with commitments to respond and take action in their respective communities.

In the Philippines, communities expressed their amazement at learning about other indigenous peoples from around the world. They expressed how video technology has created spaces for 'meeting' other indigenous peoples with common issues such as climate change, and common challenges such as safeguarding the land, culture and resources.

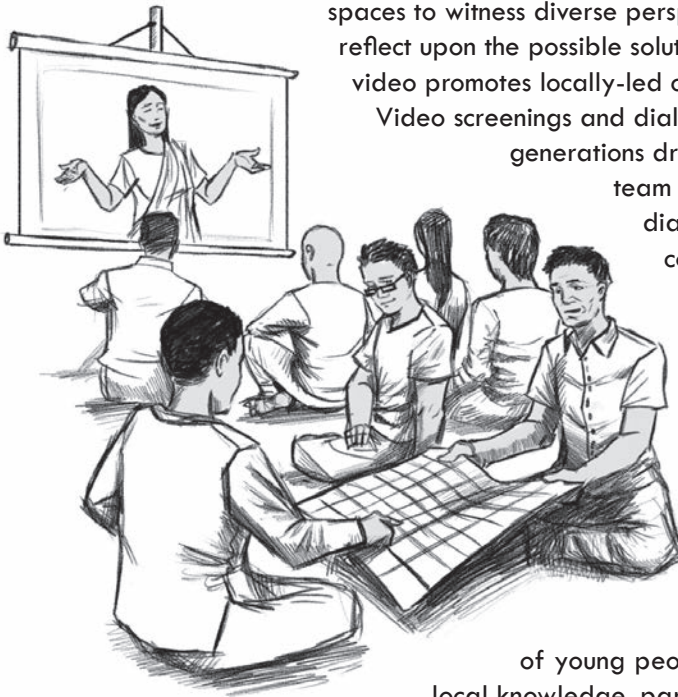
This has made a big impact in the numbers of young people they have managed to mobilise. By valuing local knowledge, participants' sense of identity and power has grown, they feel strengthened and empowered to make a difference at community level; which in turn leads to these stories being documented and shared in international arenas, where they also have an impact.

Community members, trained as participatory video facilitators, travel afar to train others. Irma, a local herbalist and gourd carver journeyed from her village in Peru to facilitate video projects for the Kuna in Panama; and Raymundo, an alpaca herder from the high Andes, facilitated projects with the Comcaac in northern Mexico. Jemimah, a young Maasai from Kenya, helped women from neighbouring pastoralist tribes articulate the issues facing them as a result of climate change.

Our practice is 'each one teach one', and we support trainees to pass on what they have learned to other indigenous groups: to bring people together to share solutions and to build mutual support and solidarity. Participatory video is enabling the surfacing, strengthening and expression of indigenous voices. These communities are empowered to make a difference locally, and be heard globally.

Written by Nick Lunch, co-founder and Director of InsightShare, a UK based organization.
Find out more: www.insightshare.org

By valuing local knowledge, participants' sense of identity and power has grown they feel strengthened...



A last thought...

As we look for better questions and answers in deeper conversations, we have to recognise that in the sheer complexity of being human and working with change, so much remains that is unknown and even more that is unknowable. Relying on the power of the wealthy and the knowledge of experts can no longer meet this reality of change. We have argued in this book for diverse, participative and collaborative, learning-based approaches to change that can meet the complex and learning-based nature of change.

Social transformation can happen in a conversation that leads to a change of heart. Or it can take decades of strife and hardship. The difference lies in the ability of people to access their human qualities of questioning, observing, reflecting, learning, relating and conversing amongst the diverse roleplayers, held by facilitative leadership. Up to a point several of these qualities can be consciously acquired, and a few even taught, but not without the human trust and commitment required to carry and sustain them. How can these less tangible qualities be seen, unblocked and cultivated amongst us all?

This change process comes from within, an inside-out freeing of ourselves from the constraints to good practice, liberation from unnecessary fear, self-doubt and harmful ways of seeing each other that hold us all captive. How can we learn to see ourselves more clearly and honestly?

How can we learn to see ourselves more clearly and honestly?



Change also comes from between, from person to person, between communities and organisations and between citizens who are determined not to let others determine their fate, but to take responsibility and make their voices heard and contributions felt. How can we bring so many people together in new ways that multiply what they offer?

If we can work from these question so many possibilities for social change open up to us. What do you think?

The Real Work

Starts with a whisper, ends with a shout,
Keeps turning up every week, never lets others down.
Carefully mends each broken promise, resolves each misunderstanding,
Removes the stones that trip us up, sweeps away the dust
Of mistrust that has settled over the years.
Scrubs the mosaic floor until it shines, replaces
Missing tesserae, cleans the grout, polishes the windows,
Oils the stiff hinges on the doors then flings them wide
And welcomes everybody inside.

Stands at the cloakroom counter to divest us of
our prejudiced hats and impermeable coats,
the scarves that have been strangling our voices,
offers us spectacles that let us see
something familiar in everyone we meet.
And soon the space, that from outside seemed so small,
expands to fit us all and still there's room for dancing.
We start to laugh and sing and ask each other
'Why did it take so long?'

Tracey Martin

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