

3. Frameworks for Social Change

Introduction

Three Stages

Five Stages

Six Stage Campaign Planning Framework

Five Stage Revolutionary Movement' Framework

Eight Stage Reform Social Movement Framework

Introduction

These frameworks can help us to understand how campaigns and movements change over time, and enable us to conceptualise our day-to-day work. Understanding the stages of development can also ensure that we are not disheartened or de-motivated at certain stages.

Three Stages

The great social reformer, John Stuart Mill provided this simple analysis of the stages of social movements.

“Every great movement has to experience three stages: -

- Ridicule
- Discussion
- Adoption.”

Five Stages

Personal comments from Kim Stallwood, Director of the US-based Institute for Animals and Society, provided the following analysis.

There are five major stages in the growth of the movement: -

- Acceptance building (broad/softer education)
- Awareness/consensus building
- Legislation
- Action to embed legislation
- Functioning system of protection

Six Stage Campaign Planning Framework (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

For assisting the group to think ahead about what they'll need to be ready for as their campaign builds. In this case, the group begins by framing their issue, then goes into the following stages: -

- Gather information
- Do education and leadership development
- Negotiate with target
- Increase motivation and commitment for the struggle ahead
- Direct action
- Create new relationship with opponent, which reflects the new power reality

Five Stage Revolutionary Movement Framework (George Lakey)

Working with developmental sociology, this framework assumes that for revolutionary change a movement (or coalition of movements) needs to work on many levels at once and in a cyclical way. For simplicity, the five stages are presented in sequence that shows how each preceding stage builds capacity for the next stage. This framework assumes that polarisation strongly increases in society as the movement develops.

The five stages are: -

- Cultural preparation
- Organisation-building
- Confrontation
- Mass non-cooperation
- Parallel institutions that can carry out the legitimate functions formerly carried out by the Old Order (economic, maintaining infrastructure, decision-making, etc.)

Created by George Lakey, described in 'Globalise Liberation', edited by David Solnit.

Eight Stage Reform Social Movement Framework (Movement Action Plan, or MAP, by Bill Moyer)

Draws from social movements in liberal democratic societies, which have brought about important changes while often opening the way to new movements, as the civil rights movement opened political space for the women's movement, gay rights movement, and many other movements.

This framework emphasises the intimate relationship between movement development and public opinion and minimises polarisation; the regime typically reacts to very heavy build-up of momentum by granting a reform in order to stave off polarisation that might be dangerous to it. The framework gives direct action a prominent place and also explains the letdown, which typically occurs in successful social movements after the mass mobilisations force a political shift, which is largely hidden from activist view.

This framework was widely used by labour and community organisers in Taiwan while the dictatorship was fraying and space was opening up there.

Created by Bill Moyer and described in his last book, 'Doing Democracy', MAP is a useful framework, especially in understanding how to steer an organisation through the ups and downs of a cause.

Stage One: Business as Usual

Only a relatively few people care about the issue at this point, and they form small groups to support each other. Their objective: to get people thinking. They do their best to spread the word, often using education and broad awareness.

Stage Two: Failure of Established Channels

A major reason why most of the public does not inform itself and act on an injustice is that people think (or hope) that established structures are taking care of it. In this stage the small groups challenge the established channels. They often do research and investigations. They may sue governmental agencies, or use any opportunities to appeal that exist in the regulations. Usually the activists lose, at this stage, but it is very

important that they take these steps. This step is essential for change, since large-scale participation will not happen as long as people believe in the established channels.

Stage Three: Ripening Conditions/Education and Organising

Now the pace picks up considerably, when many people who earlier did not want to listen become interested. The movement creates many new groups who work on this issue, largely through education. They hold seminars, meetings and news conferences. Much of the content of what they say is refuting power holders' claims: This stage of constant outreach, through education and forming new groups is essential for the movement to take off.

Stage Four: Takeoff

This stage is usually initiated by a trigger event; a dramatic happening that puts a spotlight on the problem, sparking wide public attention and concern. Sometimes the movement creates the trigger event. In 1963 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., focussed on Birmingham, Alabama, in a direct action campaign that filled the jails and highlighted the evils of segregation with vivid pictures of police dogs and fire hoses. The Birmingham campaign triggered a national and international response, which resulted in the passage of major civil rights legislation.

Sometimes the trigger event just happens, like the near meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor in 1979. Three Mile Island (TMI) precipitated massive non-violent protest and propelled many new people into activity.

Because of the high media profile in this stage, many people associate social change with stage four. Often one or more large coalitions form at this time. Celebrities join the movement; the power holders are shocked by the new opposition and publicity and try to discredit the movement.

The objectives of stage four are to build and coordinate a new grassroots movement and to win over public opinion. Part of winning the public is connecting the demands of the movement with widely held values (like freedom, fairness, or democracy).

Stage Five: Perception of Failure

There's an old phrase: 'Two steps forward, one step back.' Stage five is the step back, in the perception of many activists. Numbers are down at demonstrations, the media pay less attention, and the policy changes have not yet been won. The power holders' official line is, 'The movement failed.' The media focuses on splits in the movement and especially on activities, which offend public sensibilities.

It is the excitement and lack of planning on stage four that create the sense of failure in stage five. By believing that success is at hand, activists can become disillusioned and despairing when they realise they aren't there yet. Hoping to recapture the excitement and confidence of stage four, some groups create Rambo-style actions of anger and violence or become a permanent counterculture sect that is isolated and ineffective.

Fortunately, a great many activists do not become discouraged, or if they do, accept it as part of the process. Smart strategists lay out strategic, achievable and measurable objectives, and smart movements celebrate them as they achieve them along the way. The power holders may try to crush the movement through repression at this point, even if they have felt constrained before by a civil liberties tradition.

Stage Six: Winning Over the Majority

In this stage the movement transforms. Protest in crisis gives way to long-term struggle with power holders. The goal is to win majority opinion. Many new groups, which include people who previously were not active, are formed. The new groups do grassroots education and action. The issue shows up in electoral campaigns, and some candidates get elected on this platform. Broader coalitions become possible, and mainstream institutions expand their own programs to include the issue.

Until stage six, much of the movement's energy was focussed on opposition. In stage six, sixty to seventy-five percent of the public agrees on a need for change. There is now a vast audience ready to think about alternatives to existing policies, and the smart movement offers some. Mainstream institutions can be helpful at this point. One example comes from the anti-Vietnam War movement: universities responded to stage four with peace studies courses and departments, and during stage six many of the scholars involved began thinking about alternatives to the war system.

The power holders are not passive. They try to discredit and disrupt the movement, insist there is no positive alternative, promote bogus reforms, and sometimes create crisis events to scare the public. The power holders themselves also become more split in this period.

The dangers of this stage are: national organisations and staff may dominate the movement and reduce grassroots energy; reformers may compromise too much or try to deliver the movement into the hands of politicians; a belief may spread that the movement is failing because it has not yet succeeded.

Stage Seven: Achieving Alternatives

Stages seven and eight could be called managing success. They are tricky, however, because the game isn't over until it's over. In stage seven, the goals are to recognise the movement's success (not as easy as it sounds!), then empower activists and their organisations to act effectively, to achieve a major objective or demand, and to achieve that demand within the framework of a paradigm shift - a new model or way of thinking about the issue.

Goals or demands need to be consistent with a different way of looking at things: a new framework or paradigm. If a civil rights movement simply demands some changes of personnel in government, industry, or schools, it will get more women, people of colour or lesbians and gays occupying functions that continue business as usual, including policies which oppress women, people of colour, and gays. Social movements are usually much more creative than that, and project new visions of how things can be.

Stage seven is a long process, not an event. The struggle shifts in this stage from opposing present policies to creating dialogue about which alternatives to adopt. The movement will have differences within itself about alternatives, and different groups will market different alternatives to the public. The central power holders will try their last gambits, including study commissions and bogus alternatives, and then be forced to change their policies, have their policies defeated, or lose office.

Stage Eight: Consolidation and Moving On

The movement leaders need to protect and extend the successes achieved. The movement also becomes midwife to other social movements. The long-term focus of stage eight is to achieve a paradigm shift, to change the cultural framework.

The paradigm shift the civil rights movement initiated is still a major part of the U.S. agenda thirty-five years later: diversity as a positive value. While the movement is consolidating its gains and dealing with backlash from those who never were persuaded, the power holders are adapting to new policies and conditions and often claiming the movement's success as their own. At the same time, they may fail to carry out agreements, fail to pass sufficient new legislation, or weaken the impact of new structures by appointing people who are resistant to the change. A major pitfall for activists in stage eight, therefore, is neglecting to make sure of institutional follow-through.

In this stage, the movement not only can celebrate the specific changes it has gained, but also can notice and celebrate the larger ripple effect it has in other aspects of society and even in other societies. The U.S. movement against nuclear movement was inspired by the mass occupations of construction sites by German environmentalists. On this shrinking planet, we get to learn from and inspire each other internationally.

Further Resources

🔗 Web Sites

Causes of Social Change

http://husky1.stmarys.ca/~evanderveen/wvdv/social_change/causes_of_social_change.htm

Social Movements Theories

http://husky1.stmarys.ca/~evanderveen/wvdv/social_change/social_movement_theories.htm

Theories of Social Movements

<http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/csacpub/russian/mamay.html>

Books

Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory

By: McCarthy, John D., and Mayer N. Zald. American Journal of Sociology 82 (1977):1212-41.

From Mobilization to Revolution

By: Tilly, Charles. Addison-Wesley, 1978, chs. 3-5.

Animal Rights: History and Scope of a Radical Social Movement

By: Harold D. Guither

Publisher: Southern Illinois University Press

ISBN: 0809321998

The Animal Revolution

By: Richard D. Ryder

Publisher: Blackwell Publishers

ISBN: 0631152393

The Animal Rights Crusade

By: James M. Jasper & Dorothy Nelkin

Publisher: The Free Press

ISBN: 0029161959