

Theories of social change: the basis of activist strategy

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What are the drivers of social change?

- Innovation, markets, profits, investment
- Science and technology
- Planned policy driven change
- Environmental change
- Invasion
- Migration
- Revolution
- Others?

What are the levers of change (that I/we have access to)?

- Activities
 - Voting
 - Petitioning and advocacy
 - Demonstrating
 - Mobilising, organising
 - Alliances
 - Armed struggle
 - What else?
- What are the theories of social change which underly these different strategies?

What are the theories of social change which inform our practice?

- Reflect on episodes from our own practice
 - tell one story from your own practice
- What were your assumptions
 - about people, power, structures?
 - about the links between micro action and macro change?
 - about how change happens?

Can we read the theories of social change from other people's stories of practice?

- Infer theories of change from stories of practice, episodes of change
 - the Indian Right to Health campaign
 - the South African Treatment Action Campaign
 - the Cochabamba Water Wars
 - the passage of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
 - others?
- What were the dynamics of change; why did change happen?
- What were the theories of change of the activists involved?

Studying case histories

- Studying episodes, movements, campaigns, traditions
- Framework of analysis
 - tell the story: context, preparation, organisation, action, reaction, consequences
 - what was happening at different levels: personal, community, national, global?
 - how does the picture vary across term: short, medium and long term?
 - what insights from different disciplines: political economy, gender and race?
- Talking theory
 - what was their (the activists') theory?
 - how shall we understand/interpret this story?

To what extent are we drawing from pre-existing theories?

- What are the theories of social change we are drawing from when we interpret these stories:
 - Marxism, anarchism, feminism, religions, non-violent protest, personal change, institutional reform, cabalism?
 - others?
 - which theories of change are you most familiar with? and which least?

Planning for change

- Campaign planning
 - eg policy change, service development, institutional reform, what else?
- Organisational development (our organisation)
 - eg funding, participation, access to information, strategic coherence, links with core constituencies, analytic capacity, organisational culture, levers of change, what else?
- Movement building
 - eg building stronger links with grass roots constituencies, links across issues, links from local/micro to global/macro, wider solidarity
 - communicating our analysis more effectively

Stories about causation

- Tracing 'root causes'
 - why, why, why?
- Comparing and reconciling different perspectives
 - different stakeholders, different disciplines
- Systems perspectives
 - how are these wrongs maintained and reproduced?
(‘governance’ analysis)
- Recognising uncertainties in our analysis
 - needs for research?
- Theories (assumptions) about the dynamics of social change

Stories of future change

- Options for action
- Scenarios of change: what would happen if we did?
- How would the different players react?
- What are our assumptions (theories) about the dynamics of change?
- Implications for strategy?

Primary health care (A-A,1978)

- *“... requires and promotes maximum community and individual self-reliance and participation in the planning, organization, operation and control of primary health care, making fullest use of local, national and other available resources; and to this end develops through appropriate education the ability of communities to participate”*
- What is the theory of change here?

Alma-Ata

- How does PHC develop the ability of communities to participate?
- What are the scenarios of change you can read into this quote?
- How does community participation affect health?