Momentum-Driven Organising

Presentation at By 2020 We Rise Up European meeting, 4-8 March 2020
TWO DOMINANT TRADITIONS
Structure Based Organising & Mass Protest
Saul Alinsky

Structure Based Organising

Ella Baker
Key Features of Structure Tradition

- Deep Leadership Development and 1on1s

- Concrete, winnable demands targeted at decision makers

- Strong organisations → organised people and organised money
Mass Protest
Key Features of Mass Protest

- Grows through moments of the whirlwind, and sometimes also fizzes quickly
- Broad demands that speak to high ideals that are not necessarily “winnable”
- Mass escalating, nonviolent direct action
Two Views of Power

Monolithic Power

Social Power
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURE</th>
<th>MASS PROTEST</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory of Change</strong></td>
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<td>By engaging in mass disruption to the status quo, we create a crisis and change the political weather.</td>
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<td><strong>Tactics + Demands</strong></td>
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<td>Lower risk, gradual escalation (if any); focused on building leadership and capacity; <strong>Demands</strong>: Specific &amp; actionable</td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Mass trainings &amp; anyone who is compelled can join -- as many people as possible should take action!</td>
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<td>1-on-1 relationships; leadership comes from within the community</td>
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<td><strong>Measuring Success</strong></td>
<td>Large shifts in public opinion.</td>
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<td>Incremental reforms that bring concrete improvement in people's lives.</td>
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Momentum Driven Organising
By integrating the best of structure-based organising and mass protest we can build movements that can scale up and win big!
Cycle of Momentum

ACTIVE POPULAR SUPPORT
Popular demand that targets the public

ESCALATION
Non-violent action

ABSORPTION
Strong movement organization
Active Popular Support

**ACTIVE POPULAR SUPPORT**
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The Spectrum of Support

- The Movement
- Active Allies
- Passive Supporters
- Neutrals
- Passive Opponents
- Active Opponents
- The Opposition
Case Study: Same Sex Marriage (US)

1996

2010

2017
Target the Public
Which side are you on?

Nashville, 1960
"Outcomes of over 300 nonviolent and violent campaigns worldwide from 1900-2006, none of the cases failed after achieving the active and sustained participation of just 3.5 percent of the population -- and some of them succeeded with far less than that." - Erica Chenoweth

Based on movements against dictatorships, for secession or against occupation

=> Few from “democratic” regimes more capable of coopting opposition
Two Essential Elements of Popular Support

Win the **support & sympathy of the majority of the public.**

Passive

Sustained participation in the movement.

Active
Movement across this spectrum isn’t always the result of conscious decision making.

Often, people shift because an effective action reframes the basic moral questions behind an issue that is otherwise seen as too abstract or complex. It makes people emotionally connect to the issue and choose sides.
Polarisation is how you target the public

Keys to polarisation:

1. Make it simple
2. Make it matter
“Activists assume that because something is true, it will be meaningful to the people we’re trying to reach. But in fact, the opposite is often the case: *if something is meaningful, people believe it to be true*”

- Center for Story-Based Strategy
**Instrumental demands:** What is *winnable* with the leverage we have? Can we force a concession? What is deeply felt only by our members? Is there a clear solution?

**Symbolic demands:** What are the most *popular* issues around our movement? What is deeply felt by our active+passive supporters? What will *polarise* the public and *dramatise a social problem*?
Why symbolic demands?

- Open up room for instrumental wins
- Create wiggle room for experimenting with different solutions
- Give people a standard they can measure proposals against
- Reach more people
**Escalation**

- **Active Popular Support**: Popular demand that targets the public
- **Escalation**: Non-violent action
- **Absorption**: Strong movement organization
DIFFERENT SCALES OF ESCALATION:

1. Small actions
   a. Dilemma & symbolic actions
   b. Replicable distributed actions
2. Trigger events
3. Moments of the whirlwind
**Trigger event**: a highly publicised incident that dramatically reveals a critical social problem to the public in a vivid way.

It focuses the public’s attention on the issue in a way that enables polarisation.

Can be external to the movement or created by the movement.
1. Active Popular Support

2. Escalation

3. Absorption
Absorption

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Popular demand that targets the public

ESCALATION
Non-violent action

ABSORPTION
Strong movement organization
Giving people a next thing to do.
Mass Training
BRINGING PEOPLE IN AT SCALE

- Mass Training
- SWARM → Role allocation
- Email lists/social media/Messaging apps
- And others...
MAJOR KEYS FOR ABSORPTION

- Have as few layers to your structure as possible
- Enable people to take action as quickly as possible
- Have DNA- principles
Note on Structure
1. Everybody has a role and you need to hold your role
2. Your role is flexible
3. All roles are about support
Centralised vs. Decentralised Structure

Decision-making and communication are top-down

Centralised vs. Decentralised Mass Protest

Coordinated by shared strategy, not top leadership
Spectrum of Decentralization

Decentralized

- Occupy General Assemblies
- Otpor, Extinction Rebellion
- Decentralized Organization with Weak Principles

Centralized

- Obama Campaign Teams
- Union Worker Committee
- Centralized Command with Decentralized Components
- Centralized Command with Centralized Components
- Centralized, Ultra Rigid

Decentralized Extinction Rebellion

Decentralized Organization with Strong Principles
Relational Culture
“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”
**OUR PRINCIPLES AND VALUES**

All are welcome who want to adhere to our principles and values

1. **WE HAVE A SHARED VISION OF CHANGE**
   Creating a world that is fit for generations to come.

2. **WE SET OUR MISSION ON WHAT IS NECESSARY**
   Mobilising 3.5% of the population to achieve system change - using ideas such as “Momentum-driven organising” to achieve this.

3. **WE NEED A REGENERATIVE CULTURE**
   Creating a culture which is healthy, resilient and adaptable.

4. **WE OPENLY CHALLENGE OURSELVES AND OUR TOXIC SYSTEM**
   Leaving our comfort zones to take action for change.

5. **WE VALUE REFLECTING AND LEARNING**
   Following a cycle of action, reflection, learning, and planning for more action. Learning from other movements and contexts as well as our own experiences.

6. **WE WELCOME EVERYONE AND EVERY PART OF EVERYONE**
   Working actively to create safer and more accessible spaces.

7. **WE ACTIVELY MITIGATE FOR POWER**
   Breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation.

8. **WE AVOID BLAMING AND SHAMING**
   We live in a toxic system, but no one individual is to blame.

9. **WE ARE A NON-VIOLENT NETWORK**
   Using non-violent strategy and tactics as the most effective way to bring about change.

10. **WE ARE BASED ON AUTONOMY AND DECENTRALISATION**
    We collectively create the structures we need to challenge power. Anyone who follows these core principles and values can take action in the name of Extinction Rebellion.
Cosecha: Principles

14 Principles of Cosecha

- We are all a family
- There is no cover for this party
- We don't dance with political parties
- Our weapon is non-cooperation
- Our shield is non-violence
- The soil of our harvest is: respect & reciprocity
- Our seeds come from the tree of sacrifice
- All we need is already within our community now
- You can use our colors as long as you follow our principles
- WE ARE ONE OF MANY FRUITS
- WE ARE ONE OF MANY HARVESTS
- An injustice somewhere is a threat to justice everywhere
- An injustice somewhere is a threat to justice everywhere

MOMENTUM
Absorption & Escalation
Cycle of Momentum

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