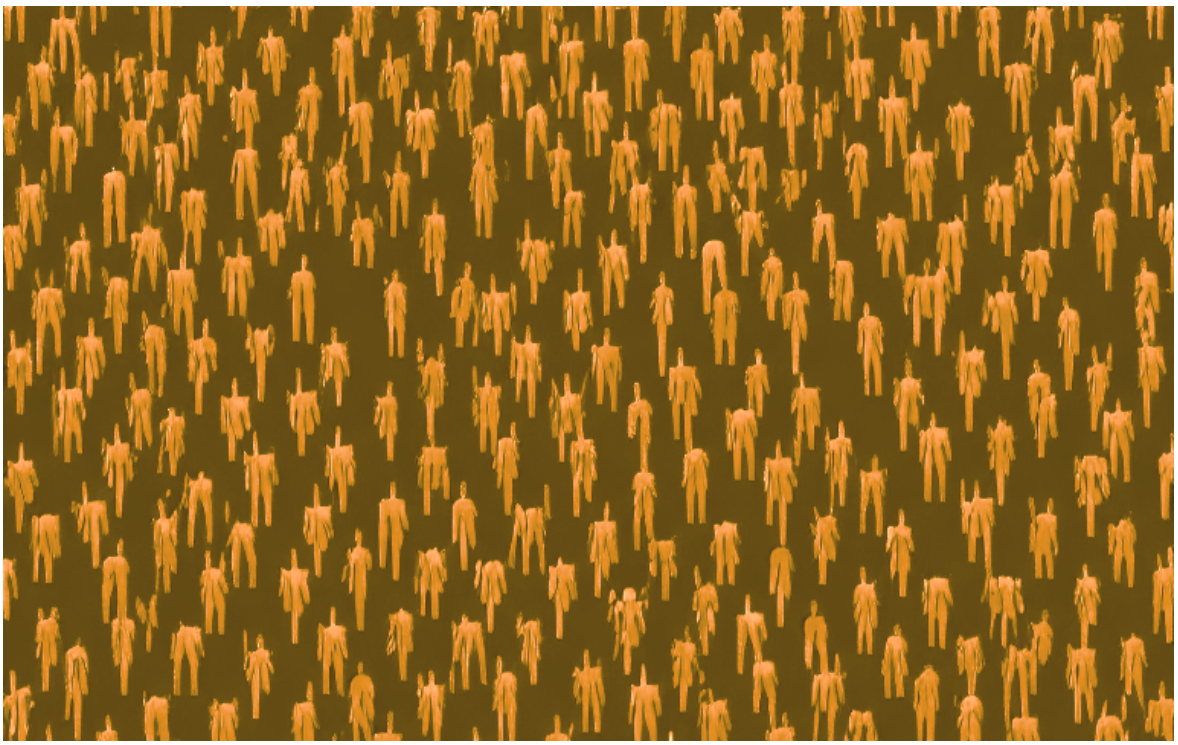
Future
Matters
Project

More Than Just Good Causes

A Framework For Understanding How Social Movements Contribute To Change



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Executive summary

While **social movements** are understood to be important **causal drivers of social change**, movement actors often lack the resources to develop a conceptual understanding of their impact before implementing their activities. This report offers a **conceptual framework on social movements' contribution to change** that may serve movement actors as a **mental model**. Thus, it may enable movement actors to more systematically understand their impact and other factors influencing their intended outcomes. Also, it may be the basis for more comprehensive **strategy development** taking into account those factors.

The **scientific evidence** on social movements as causal drivers of social change is **mixed**. Mainly, it is argued that it is difficult to indisputably show that social movements' activities cause change, given the various social and political contexts they function within and the long, complex processes that lead to change.

This is a challenge for two reasons: First, it makes it difficult for social movements to **plan and carry out** effective activities, given they cannot draw on convincing evidence to support their decisions. Second, it makes it difficult for funders to know where best to allocate limited **resources**.

The solution we offer here is to move away from evidencing how social movements cause change, and to instead think about how they **contribute** to it. To this end, we outline a **contribution model** of change, and demonstrate how this framework is **applied to three types of movement outcomes**: policy change, business change and change in public opinion. The applied models build on insights from case studies and literature reviews of different case studies.

Among others, the first applied model works out how **policy change** can also be achieved by addressing institutional and corporate actors who oppose the changes that the movements advocate for. On **business change**, the applied model highlights that the outcomes of movement activities depend more on the characteristics of the targeted businesses than on the specifics of the movement activities. It also stresses that monitoring mechanisms need to be established to maintain social changes. The model on **public opinion change** emphasises that linkages between new ideas and existing mindsets are a crucial condition for altering public opinion. In addition, it presents the collective memory of society as an important monitoring mechanism for social change.

After all, the shift to prioritising contribution is **empowering** for social movements and funders, as it encourages a different understanding of the activities social movements undertake and how those can be assessed and reflected upon. The conceptual framework also enables Future Matters Project (FMP) to offer social movements a mental model that can **underpin their strategy development** and campaign planning and help them **take into account crucial context factors**, **barriers to change and monitoring mechanisms**, for instance.

Future Matters Project

Future Matters Project creates an evidence-to-action pipeline for knowledge on how to make change happen. We support advocates, movements, think-tanks and other change actors – with strategy advice, coaching and training – to achieve breakthroughs in the most important problems of our time.

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Introduction

The Civil Rights Movement, the Indian Independence Movement and the Women's Rights Movements: The world looks different today because these **movements succeeded** in achieving some of their goals. However, this did not happen by chance. Many successful movements followed **strategies** and used **mechanisms** that we can study and learn from.

When working with contemporary social movement organisations (SMOs), FMP has observed that many movement actors are inspired by those successful historical movements. Yet the work of social movements is shaped by a high degree of urgency, dynamically changing conditions and great uncertainty. Therefore, they focus their limited capacities on quickly responding to arising needs and opportunities. But they often **lack the resources to develop a conceptual understanding** of their impact and a long-term strategy that underpins their actions. This may lead them to set unrealistic expectations or neglect context factors that are crucial for social change. Then, unmet expectations may evoke frustration and compromise the momentum they created.

This research project aims to develop a more realistic **conceptual understanding on how social movements contribute to change**. This conceptual framework should be based on empirical evidence and be useful in strategy development of movement actors. In order to do this, we conduct an in-depth **literature review** covering **case studies** and models relevant to social movements' outcomes. The case studies and models are used to develop a framework that helps movement actors get a more comprehensive picture of other contributory factors and the context they operate in. This shall allow FMP and movement actors to derive strategy recommendations that increase the effectiveness of social movements in achieving their goals.

However, methodological questions arise from the purpose of this research project:

- What do we mean by 'successful movements'? Not all outcomes are tangible and it is challenging to clearly attribute them to movements.
- How useful are individual case studies as evidence for the development of general conclusions? There are context specifics to each case.
- How can causal links between actions and outcomes be reasonably evidenced? What other factors contribute to those outcomes, and how can these be assessed?

In response to these questions, we have developed a model of the relationships between social movements and change, which – rather than focussing on causal relationships – instead proposes **contribution** as a more productive and evidence-based approach to the topic. This **contribution model** enables us to explore and apply case studies with a framework that reduces – though does not completely overcome – the methodological problems outlined above.

In this report, we outline the approach taken, present the template for the model, and then apply the model to a series of case studies.

Approach and method

a) Specifying 'successful movements' and 'social change'

Categorising a movement as 'successful' requires developing criteria that can be applied in all cases. However, such criteria are difficult to rigorously develop. A key aspect here is **outcomes**: in some cases outcomes are highly tangible – as with the suffragettes movement and their achievement of the right to vote for women in Britain in 1918, or the Civil Rights Movement in the United States which ended the Jim Crow system of formal racial segregation. However, for other cases, the question is harder to answer. For instance, in the case of contemporary movements: is Black Lives Matter a successful movement? Or Fridays for Future? By what criteria can such a question be legitimately answered?

We argue that a movement is not in itself successful, but that it can **contribute** to successful results through its actions. This leads to a similar, consequent question: what is 'a successful result'? We define it as **a change in society that aligns with the goals of the movement and that the movement has contributed to**. This leads us to defining the notion of 'change'. **What is meant by 'change'?** Thinking about this requires acknowledgement of the multiple ways in which change can be understood:

Entities affected by change

It is important to differentiate between personal and collective changes. The former refers to events such as "marriage, childbirth, divorce, death in the family, purchase of a new house, losing a job, retirement"[1] which are not shared together with others. Collective events of change, on the other hand, are "common and accepted practice[s]"[2] within entities that affect significant numbers of people. This can be at the community or organisational level, but also at macro-structural levels, such as nationally or globally[3]. In this research, **we focus on collective types of changes; in particular, changes in social organisation or in culture** (as opposed to collective changes on a biological level of the population, such as in a medical or an epidemiological dimension)[4].

Timing of change

The timing at which change happens is also important to consider. We can assess the type of change by the amount of time it takes to implement: it can be anywhere on a spectrum between slow, incremental and organic change, to fast, radical change which involves "a complete break with the past"[5]. In this research, we focus largely on changes through a **short- to medium-term** lens. This is not because longer-term changes are not worth studying; it is instead because analysing such changes is extremely difficult. Our focus on contemporary social movements makes it difficult to assess longer-term impacts. The focus on short- to medium-term change is thus a **pragmatic methodological** one, arising from the available materials and examples.

[1] Sztompka (2004): 4.
[2] Ho, Clarke and Dougherty (2015): 55.
[3] Cable and Degutis (1997).
[4] Sztompka (2004).
[5] de la Sablonnière (2017): 7.

Kind of change

When defining which type of change a social movement seeks, we focus on two broad types. One is **institutional change**, which focuses on the rules and processes that govern relationships between organisations and the public, and between different organisations[6]. Within this area of change, we also focus on **political change**, which consists in the political outcomes of social movements. These are related to the state and changes in its policies, politics, and polity, as well as the consequences of these changes for society at large[7]. We also focus on **normative change**; that is, social movements' transformation of legal norms[8]. The second broader area of change we examine is **cultural change**, understood as "changes in ideas, norms, and behaviors of a group of people (or changes in the contents or themes of their products reflecting such changes)"[9].

b) The issue of transferability

When narrowing down and specifying what is meant by 'social change' we encounter other methodological issues. One relates to transferability of our findings: how certain can we be that the findings from a case study in one country can be transferred to a social movement in a different country? Similarly, how can we account for the differences in historical moments, such as the differences between a case study from 20 years ago and a movement that is currently operating?

i) Transferability across political contexts

An intuitive answer to the above-mentioned questions could be that findings are not transferable between countries with **different political contexts**, that is, with different **political systems and/or regimes**. As factors that contribute to change are highly **context-dependent**, it will be difficult to assert that one action or mechanism successfully deployed by a social movement in one country would function comparably for other movements in different countries.

To overcome this, we narrow down our **universe of analysis**. The FMP has thus far worked with social movements operating in **liberal democracies** in the **Western European context**. Hence, the FMP's experience and expertise is at least partly dependent on that context and cannot be easily transferred to very different political contexts. Therefore, we limit this research to cases from countries with political contexts and regimes that are comparable to the Western European contexts.

Various global analyses and **indexes** enable comparisons of countries' **political regimes**. By drawing on a number of these, we triangulate their findings to establish a group of countries that are broadly comparable. The tools we use are:

1. the Democracy Index collated by the Economist Intelligence Unit;
2. the Regimes of the World Index based on the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project and Our World in Data's expansion of this analysis;

[6] North (1990).
[7] Kolb (2007).
[8] Sztompka (2004).
[9] Varnum and Grossmann (2017): 2.

3. the Freedom in the World Index outlined by Freedom House.

All three indexes evaluate multiple variables to delineate aspects of democracy. They all assess and evaluate categories of: **political participation and pluralism**, which relates to how social movements are able to operate; the **electoral dimension**, such as electoral process, the functioning of government, and the rule of law; and the **liberal** nature of a society, including political culture, civil liberties, freedom of expression and belief, associational and organisational rights, and individual rights.

We have **excluded from our analysis** 'hybrid or authoritarian regimes' (as per the Democracy Index), 'electoral or closed autocracies' (as classified by the Regimes of the World Index), and 'partly free' and 'not free' regimes (as defined by Freedom in the World's index). These indexes indicate that countries classified under those labels are too dissimilar to countries in the Western European political context. We also had to take a **pragmatic approach** to this selection process, given that only allowing countries categorised by these indexes as being at the highest level of democracy would exclude some which would be valuable to include because of the wealth of literature and case studies they offer. For example, the Democracy Index categorises the USA and France as 'flawed democracies', but excluding them from this analysis would be counterproductive. Therefore, we included both **full and partial democratic regimes**, to have a broader sample that still adhered to common parameters that would allow our universe of analysis to have worthwhile similarities. The resulting sample includes **59 countries**[10].

It is important to highlight that with this selection it is not intended to suggest that experiences of social movements from countries we have excluded may not be useful for our work or for other social movements. But we consider it is **methodologically more rigorous** at the outset to establish a similar-enough set of political contexts, so that evidence from the literature can be more convincingly transferred from one to another, and general principles can be developed. However, we acknowledge that the political context is not the only contextual factor - albeit a particularly important and an easily comparable one - that limits the transferability of the results. Moreover, there are specific particularities of each country and political context that remain **barriers to straightforward transferability** also among the countries included in the sample.

ii) Transferability in time

While it might be reasonable to apply insights from a case study from *contemporary* France to *contemporary* Germany, is it legitimate to transfer findings from a *historical* case study from France to *contemporary* Germany? Similarly, is it legitimate to apply insights from a *historical* case study from Germany to *contemporary* Germany? We thus explored adopting a **cut-off point in history**, before which it is reasonable to assume that contexts were so different that examples from that time would be of relatively **little explanatory value** for planning for the present and future.

[10] The sample includes the following countries: Argentina; Australia; Austria; Barbados; Belgium; Botswana; Brazil; Bulgaria; Canada; Chile; Costa Rica; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Ghana; Greece; Guyana; Iceland; Ireland; Israel; Italy; Jamaica; Japan; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Mauritius; Mongolia; Namibia; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Panama; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Seychelles; Slovakia; Slovenia; Solomon Islands; South Africa; South Korea; Spain; Suriname; Sweden; Switzerland; Taiwan; Timor-Leste; Trinidad and Tobago; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay; Vanuatu.

An important contemporary context for social movements is the **internet**, such that "networked protests of the twenty-first century differ in important ways from movements of the past"[11]. **Social media** has enabled "protesters engaged in citizen journalism [to carry out] practices that allowed them to communicate with broader publics of potential allies and sympathisers bypassing mainstream journalists"[12]. The internet is seen as enabling individuals and **groups previously marginalised** by social movements, such as indigenous peoples and people with disabilities,[13] and has made possible social movements that are **looser and more spontaneous**, such as '#MeToo' and the 'Facebook Revolution' of the 'Arab Spring'[14].

Yet, the internet also poses **problems for social movements**, often precisely because of its looseness and spontaneity. So while Occupy's global reach was enabled by the internet, its failure to transform this into a sustainable movement has blunted its long-term impact[15]. And digital technology can also empower those resisting the goals of social movements, given that "governments use some of these tools to concentrate power, such as mass surveillance and databases of social media activity"[16]. There remains a **digital divide of access** not only between countries but also within them, resulting in a "digital activism gap"[17].

With this in mind, we applied a cut-off point to our case studies that aimed to account for this context. Tim Berners-Lee proposed the idea of the World Wide Web in 1989, and this was a significant shift from the internet as a tool predominantly used by "scientific communities to [one offered to] the world (people)"[18]. There is some evidence that it was in the 1990s that governments and the mass media began to reshape their relationships with their citizens in response to the existence of the internet and the World Wide Web[19]. Adopting 1989 as a cut-off point thus has a logic that coincides with a significant moment in the history of the internet, while also capturing those tentative changes that took place in the 1990s.

It is important to note that this cut-off point does *not* imply that contemporary social movements do not **continue** to perform in many ways comparable to the period prior to this date. Many movements **continue** to employ 'traditional' methods, and have existed since before this cut-off date. We are aware that adopting such a historical cut-off point renders many social movements often understood as vital case studies – such as the US Civil Rights movement – as out of the bounds of our current research project. However, the intention motivating having a cut-off point is to **reduce the amount of work necessary in translating historical case studies to contemporary contexts**, thereby strengthening the work we do with social movements.

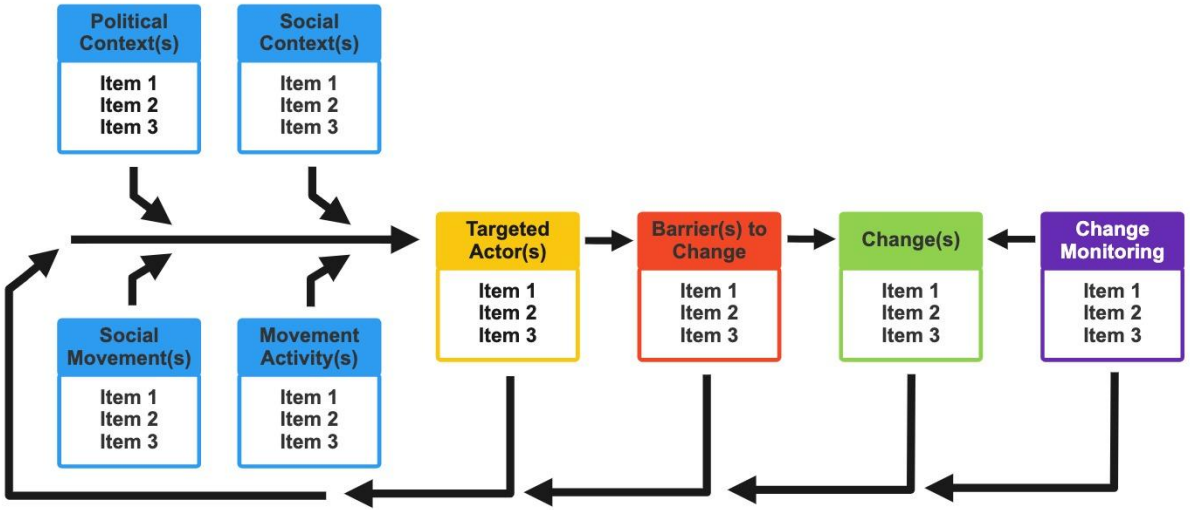
[11] Tufekci (2017): *xxiii*.
[12] Mattoni and Teune (2014): 881.
[13] Carlson and Berglund (2021); Pearson and Trevisan (2015); Trevisan (2022).
[14] Leopold, Lambert, Ogunyomi and Bell (2019); Karolak (2013).
[15] Gitlin (2013); Tufekci (2014).
[16] Beer (2021): 19.
[17] Schradie (2018).
[18] Bory, Benecchi and Balbi (2016): 1083.
[19] Rössler (2001), Hösl (2019); Grosse (2021).

c) Proposed framework

After defining more precisely the concepts in our research question, proposing a conceptual framework to address causal relations, and at the same time narrowing down the scope of our analysis both geographically and temporarily, in the next section we present how a general contribution model for social movements and their outcomes could look. We then exemplify different types of contributory relationships by using case studies from our literature review.

The contribution model

b) Template



c) Discussion

The model indicates the **relationships** between social change, and the variety of factors that may contribute to that change. This template indicates these relationships in **general** terms; it thus indicates key categories (such as 'social contexts' and 'targeted actors') but lists only the placeholder terms 'item 1' and so on, which are to be replaced by specific items for particular applications of the model to specific kinds of change. How this works in practice can be seen later in this report, where **specific applications of the model** are presented.

The categories in the model are:

- **political context(s)** – the political factors relevant to change (for example, the nature and formulation of a country's democratic processes)
- **social context(s)** – other social factors that impact upon the possibility for change (for example, public opinion)
- **social movement(s)** – the relevant factors describing a social movement (for example, its available resources, or its size)

- **movement activity(s)** – the activities a social movement carries out (for example, legal action, a protest, or a petition)
- **targeted actor(s)** – the people and/or organisations who can enact change, and thus are often targeted by social movements (for example, policymakers)
- **barrier(s) to change** – the people and/or organisations and/or contexts that, actively or otherwise, serve to resist change or make it more difficult (see below for further discussion of this factor)
- **change(s)** – the kind of change being sought by the social movement (for example, policy change, or a change in public opinion
- **change monitoring** – the processes necessary to ensure an intended change actually occurs and is maintained (see below for further discussion of this factor)

d) 'Contribution' rather than 'causation'

It is widely accepted in the literature that, in virtually all cases, it is **impossible to definitively evidence causal relationships**. This is partly because evidencing direct causal relationships is difficult[20], but also because any change is likely to be the outcome of multiple factors, and not just the single act of an individual social movement[21]. Despite this, evidencing causation remains a goal of much research, particularly given its value for social movements. Our approach instead acknowledges and accepts this impossibility, and therefore asks: given evidencing causation is nigh-impossible, **what can instead be reasonably asserted about the relationships between social movements' activities and social change?**

As an analytical approach, **contribution analysis**[22] enables acknowledgement of relevant contexts and factors (such as the political system within which activities take place, public opinion, luck, social norms, the activities of other movements or individuals) while also enabling reasonable assertions of social movements' **contributions to change**. The model therefore makes the case for understanding change as an **outcome of multiple contributions** – some of which may be made by social movements, some of which may not.

Many models of change are inevitably intended as graphical simplifications of complex processes for the purposes of clarity. Hence, they are based around linear arrows from social movement activities directly to things they are purported to affect. However, the literature does not support such straightforward, causally-linked relationships between actions and behaviour. Indeed, a recurring theme of relevant studies is that "it is often **difficult to tell whether activism makes a difference**"[23]. And where it may be the case that it is possible to establish such links for specific case studies, it is **difficult to extrapolate** from these to general principles that can be of use to social movements in terms of planning. The model we propose here therefore avoids indicating causal links, and

[20] Goodwin, and Jasper (2015a).
[21] Crutchfield (2018), Meyer (2015); Amenta and Polletta (2019).
[22] Ebrahim (2019).
[23] Meyer (2015): 387 (emphasis added).

instead indicates the **multiple contributions that coalesce in order for change to happen**.

An example: A social movement, campaigning for better animal welfare in factory farms in a particular country, starts an online petition. That petition is successful, being shared widely and attracting hundreds of thousands of signatures. A year or so later, there is a policy change that aligns with the social movement's goals. How are we to assess to what extent – if at all – that petition (or any single signature on it) contributed to change? For this change to have occurred, multiple other factors are relevant; public opinion, the nation's political structures, business interests, and so on. It is very difficult to assert that this petition *caused* change. Or, indeed, that it caused any changes that led to that change, for example, that it changed public opinion, which in turn changed pressure on elected representatives, legislators and businesses, which in turn changed policy. However, it is reasonable to assert that this petition *contributed* to change; that is, that it was one of the factors that – in combination with many others – resulted in the policy change.

The significance of that contribution is hard to assess. Indeed, it is hard to know whether any single contribution is **necessary or supplementary**; that is, whether the change would have occurred *without* this specific factor. Working towards frameworks for delineating necessary and supplementary contributions would be a useful step for research in this area.

To this end, the **arrows** in our model do not represent straightforward cause-effect relationships, but instead indicate the coming together of multiple factors that lead to change. The horizontal arrow to the left does not have its origin in any single factor; it is instead an **accumulation of multiple factors** arising from multiple sources. These impact upon the **targeted actors**, who themselves encounter **barriers to change** (barriers which may be powerful enough to entirely block change). Should those barriers be overcome, then **change occurs**. However, please note that there is no direct link between any specific factor(s) and that change. Following this, how change is **monitored** may similarly contribute to the particularities of that change. And all of this feeds back into the horizontal arrow that is an accumulation of factors for change (see the 'feedback loop' section below). Note, there is **no specific entry point** into this process of change; it is instead a conglomeration of factors. Also note that **no arrow is given more weight** than any other; this is because it is difficult to ascertain both in specific cases and as a general rule which factors are more important than others.

Social movements' understanding of the work they do as contributing to change, rather than causing it, is a useful shift for **strategising**. Rather than asking the question, 'How can we make change happen?', the question asked can instead be, '**How can we contribute to making change more likely?**'. Understanding activities as contributory also encourages **alliance-building**, as more actors enable more contributions to be made. Finally, this approach impacts upon **post-change reflection**. Where social movements may struggle to situate their work as evidentially causing change, it is the case that it would likely be reasonable to evidence contribution to change, indicating the importance of work which, in other frameworks seeking to evidence causal contributions, would likely be categorised as of little value.

e) Innovations in the model

In this subchapter, we illustrate in what regard **our model departs from existing models of change** and introduces **innovative approaches and elements** that provide additional value to social movements as users and beneficiaries of the model.

i) 'Contribution' rather than 'causation'

Suggesting that different factors, including social movements and their activities, **contribute to rather than cause change** is a key innovation in the model; see the discussion and elaboration outlined above.

ii) Barriers to change

Most theories of change, or models of change, outline only those processes or components that enable change to happen[24]. However, a key problem that any kind of social movement encounters is **barriers to change**; that is, the people, processes, norms and beliefs that resist the change that is being proposed. Without barriers to change, enacting change would be a simple process; indeed, change would be a norm, rather than an exception.

Barriers to change are likely some of the **most powerful forces in most societies**. Most societies are structured precisely to limit the possibilities for change; this is not necessarily a bad thing, as social stability rests on consistency and certainty[25]. However, this does result in "hegemony, which writes off alternative visions of politics"[26], situating **change as an aberration**. Most societies have long and complex legislative processes involving multiple individuals and groups that must be negotiated for change to be an outcome. As such, any model of change must acknowledge relevant barriers.

Barriers to change are a **set of contexts and/or factors** that social movements need to identify, and thus take into account, when **planning campaigns** for change. Different kinds of barriers are relevant depending on the kind of change being sought, and so different kinds of barriers likely require different kinds of strategies. This means identifying likely barriers enables **better strategising**, and thus placing barriers to change as a **key component of any model of change** is essential.

iii) Change monitoring

In most models of change, change itself is the endpoint. However, no change is of any use unless there is **certainty that it is enacted**, and change is not the end point of the change process. It can be the case that when changes happen in the law there is no actual change in behaviour because of a **lack of rigorous oversight processes**; there is evidence, for example, that improvements in animal welfare laws are not always enacted to their fullest by farmers[27]. Conversely, changes can **later be rescinded**. A recent example would be the overturning of Roe v Wade in the United States. Thus, change is of no value unless there is some mechanism by which it is **enforced and monitored**.

[24] Accountability Lab (2019); Fairtrade (2021); Fair Wear (2019).
[25] Goodwin and Jasper (2015b): 4-5.
[26] Kioupkiolis (2019): 116.
[27] Morton, Hebart and Whittaker (2020); Nalon and De Briyne (2019).

Such motoring and enforcement can happen in **multiple ways**: the police can oversee changes in the law; government regulators may oversee the enactment of legislative changes; where these fail, or are not active enough, social movements may monitor the implementation of a change; and consequent changes in public opinion can serve as a societal context within which changes become norms.

Acknowledging the need for some **system of change monitoring** is important for social movements when planning their activities. A social movement may do lots of work to achieve change, but that change may have little **real-world effect** if the monitoring process is lacking or flawed. This component is included in this model, because not only is it an essential part of any change, but also because it is something social movements must take into account when developing strategies for change.

iv) Feedback loop

Many models of change function **linearly**, indicating the factors that lead to change, with that change being the **end point of the model**. However, change is a complex process, and any change that occurs impacts upon the very processes and contexts that affect the extent of change possible. Similarly, barriers to change impact upon the kinds of change that are possible. Therefore, "it is probably time we threw out the closed, linear format"[28] common to many conceptualisations. This model therefore includes a **feedback loop**, in which types of change, and barriers to change, contribute to, and impact upon, the **possibilities for change in the future**.

While the aim here is to illustrate this complex, ongoing process of change, the inclusion of the feedback loop is also intended to be of value for **social movement planning**. That is, some changes may only be possible (or more likely) if **other changes are enacted first**. For example, a large national policy change may be made more likely if local or regional versions of that policy are successfully fought for[29]. Similarly, wider changes in public opinion may be more likely if public opinion changes in one societal group first. Taking this into account encourages social movements to see change as an **ongoing process**, where achieving wide scale change can be strategised for via campaigning in the first place for **smaller, contributory changes**. This feedback loop also indicates the contributory – rather than causal – nature of change, and this approach is also of value for social movement strategy.

f) Limitations of the model

i) Simplification of relationships

The model – like all models – necessarily **simplifies the complex relationships** between its components. Indeed, it is possible to imagine a version of the model in which there are arrows drawn from every component to every component, given the complex ways in which all of the factors likely impact upon one another. The model is simplified precisely so that the **key contributory relationships** are foregrounded. This is partly in order to make the diagram **legible**; it is partly to indicate the relationships which we understand as the **most important**, and therefore must be in the model; but it is also to ensure the model is of **use**

[28] Ghate (2018): 5.
[29] Lewis and McGhee (2001); Bulkely and Kern (2006).

to social movements in terms of their planning, and thus the inclusion of certain arrows and exclusion of others is intended as a way to encourage social movements to focus on particular contributory relationships over others.

ii) Differences in importance of contributions

The model implies that all components contribute to change equally, given that all arrows are of equal size and all of those coming from particular components point towards the central, horizontal arrow equally. However, it is likely that some of these factors are **more important than others**. This may be generally true, but it may also have particular inflections in certain circumstances. For example, it can be argued that public opinion is a particularly important factor for change[30], and thus that arrow should be more prominent in the model. However, the **evidence to argue for this generally is mixed**. In addition, the particularities of specific cases mean that it is difficult to assert that any of the factors is more important than any others *in all cases*. The model thus represents a general approach to the matter of contributions to change. This is presented as a useful approach for social movements when strategising, as it encourages consideration of all relevant aspects, rather than routinely prioritising particular ones over others.

g) Luck

Absent from the model is reference to luck. By 'luck' we mean here, **'all the things that cannot be planned for by a social movement, but which may impact upon other factors'**. It refers to "**unpredictable actions** of other key actors"[31], such as a chance meeting, an unforeseeable change in the opinion of a key player, or a business taking some surprising organisational decision[32].

It is important to distinguish luck from other factors likely beyond the control of social movements, such as **events** which, while not precisely predictable, can **reasonably be expected to occur** such that planning for them would be an acceptable use of resources. An example of such '**critical junctures**' would be natural disasters which, though they cannot be accurately predicted, have a likelihood and prevalence such that "a well-prepared advocacy campaign can spot and respond to such moments, with striking results"[33].

Importantly, there is both **good luck** and **bad luck**. Good luck might be a factor that contributes to a social movement achieving its goals, or for those goals to be achieved more quickly, or for them to be achieved at a greater scale than expected. Conversely, bad luck might be the factor that fundamentally blocks a social movement achieving its goals, or slows those successes down, or reduces their impact. Bad luck could also mean **unforeseeable negative unintended outcomes** accompanying a social movement's success.

It is difficult to calculate the importance of luck, and its significance is likely to vary across cases. That said, it is difficult to conceive of luck playing *no* part in social change; it is "real"

[30] Burstein (2003); Burstein and Linton (2002).
[31] Harris (2019): np (emphasis added).
[32] Muehlhauser (2017); Vaughan (2016); Mauricio (2020).
[33] Green (2016): 226.

and it is "consequential"[34]. The **problem of accounting for luck** may be the primary factor that renders accurately delineating causal relationships as difficult to achieve.

Given luck cannot be planned for, its **usefulness for social movement strategy** is limited. This is the reason it is **absent in the model diagram**, given it is primarily intended as a tool for planning. However, any process employed by a social movement to **reflect upon the success** or otherwise of a strategy must necessarily incorporate **evaluation of the role luck played**. Indeed, it might be through more detailed analysis of the significance of luck that more useful models of social movements' contribution to change can be formulated.

Applied contribution models

In this section, we apply the contribution model template to a number of cases. To do this we select **three different types of change** – change in **policy,** in **business practice**, and in **public opinion** – and apply the model to case studies relevant to these. They have been chosen to illustrate different kinds of change. Thus, they demonstrate how the model can be applied to real-world cases and generate new analytical insights. Although much of the relevant literature refers to these kinds of changes, this is not to say that they are the most prevalent changes in the literature, or for which there is comparatively more evidence of social movements' contribution to them.

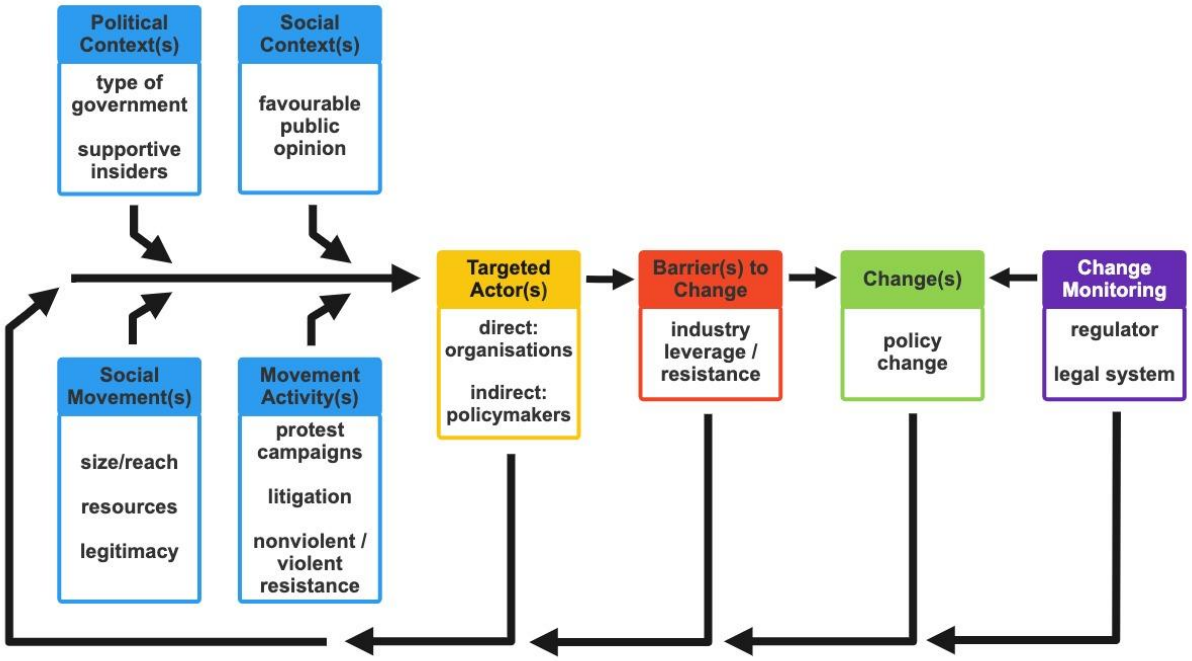
We have prioritised a selection of **literature which analyses multiple case studies**, or literature reviews of different case studies, so as to make the evidence base stronger. However, we recognise these cases may not be representative of all case studies that refer to each of these types of changes. These limitations will be addressed at the end of this section.

a) Model 1 – Policy change

Here, we illustrate a contribution model that has a **change in policy as its outcome**. We draw from a study that analyses **contemporary case studies of successful policy change** – the withdrawal of U.S. soldiers from Iraq in 2011, and the repeal of the U.S. military's 'don't ask, don't tell' policy in 2010 barring openly gay and lesbian soldiers – and **unsuccessful policy change** – the failure of environmental policy reforms in the first term of Obama's Administration **in the United States**[35]. Among other insights, these case studies highlight that policy change can also be achieved by **addressing institutional and corporate actors who oppose the changes that the movements advocate for**.

In this model, government actors are the intended target of social movements. Nevertheless, a key component of this model is that the success and failure in these cases was determined because the movements **first targeted economic or institutional corporations** (the military and/or large industries) **instead of the elected government officials** directly responsible for the policy reform. This was primarily because these organisations constitute the **main barriers to the change** being pursued.

[34] Sauder (2020): 194.
[35] Young and Schwartz (2014).



Source: Own elaboration based on Young and Schwartz (2014).

In these cases, the **social movements** were characterised by: their **size** (their ability to perform large-scale acts with a broad reach); their **resources** (both financial and know-how); and their **legitimacy** (these were movements with an existing public profile). The **activities** that they undertook were **protest campaigns**, **constitutional litigation**, and also some forms of **violent and non-violent resistance**.

There were two important factors within the **political context**: the **type of government** involving a division of power which allows for the judiciary to determine policy processes; and the presence of **insiders within the government** supporting these intended changes. As for the **social context**, **public opinion** favourable to the changes that were being sought also acted as a **contributing factor** in these change processes.

What was being sought in these cases was a change in policies that were **military, environmental, or LGBTQI+** related. What is also crucial in this model is that all policy changes considered here represented **progressive types of reforms** "that advance the interests of subordinate groups vis-à-vis institutional elites, usually **reducing inequality** in the distribution of resources"[36]. Although not stated in the literature, we can assume that the tools necessary to monitor the implementation of those changes are either the policy regulation within the state, and the legal system.

For the **relationships**, this model shows that one of the most significant arrows indicating a contribution to policy change is that from **movement activities to targeted actors**. However, we do recognize that there are other factors that contribute to the change process. The **political and social contexts** enable those activities to be effective in targeting actors and overcoming existing barriers of change. In addition, the **characteristics of the intervening movement/s** were important for these activities to be

[36] Young and Schwartz (2014): 240 (emphasis added).

effective, and therefore for policy change to happen. We can also ascertain that the **existing barriers** to the change sought moulded how the political context, the social context, and the movements' characteristics contributed to the change process. For instance, **industry and/or business barriers structured support** from both the public and insiders, while the **resources** that the movement put into the struggle or the **number of people** it mobilised responded to the existing barriers that threatened to block their goals. As in all forms of policy change, a **process of monitoring** is critical to ensure the change is enacted, and the existence of this process feeds back into subsequent change processes.

Young and Schwartz (2014): A Neglected Mechanism of Social Movement Political Influence: The Role of Anticorporate and Anti-Institutional Protest in Changing Government Policy.

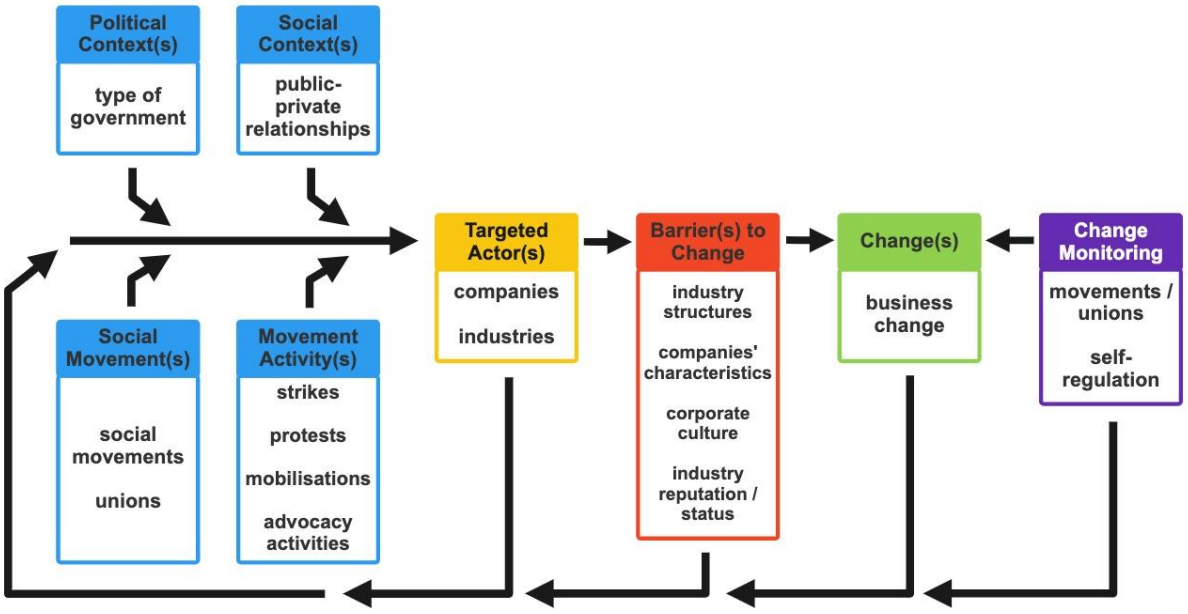
"Studies of the impact of social movements on government policy usually assume that the most effective strategy to win a reform is to directly pressure the elected politicians responsible for its legislation and implementation. [Young and Schwartz] highlight an alternative, less intuitive way in which movements can exert political influence: by **targeting the corporate and institutional adversaries of their proposed reforms**. Such targeting can **undermine their adversaries' ability or commitment to oppose the changes**, thus relaxing the contrary pressure applied to politicians and reducing the resistance within government to progressive reform. [They] support this proposition by highlighting five instances in which mass pressure applied to institutional adversaries contributed to government policy change. [Their] analysis demonstrates that **mass protest targeting large institutions whose leaders are not elected can be an effective and even primary strategy for compelling elected officials to enact and implement progressive policy change.**"[37]

b) Model 2 – Business change

This model draws from a comprehensive review of the literature on the **influence of firms and markets on social movements' processes** from one of the most influential and contemporary works on social movements studies[38] and on a rigorous comparative analysis of the **impact upon businesses of 35 labour strikes** in the United States[39]. The applied model underscores that the **characteristics of the targeted businesses** strongly determine the outcomes of movement activities and hence matter in the selection of target actors. Also, the model emphasises that **monitoring mechanisms** are crucial to maintain the changes achieved.

Here, the contribution of the **barriers of change** to the process is significant. These barriers arise from the particularities of the businesses that will be affected if change occurs. The barriers consist of: wider **industry structures** (such as regulatory norms and competitive dynamics in the sector); the **characteristics of particular companies** (their size, their history, and the particularities of the CEO or board of governance); the industry's **reputation or status** (that is, how it is perceived by public opinion and by government); and **corporate culture** (for example, how receptive such a sector is to activism)[40].

[37] Young and Schwartz (2014): 239 (emphasis added).
[38] Soule and King (2015).
[39] Martin, Dixon and Nau (2017).
[40] Soule and King (2015): 3-5.



Source: Own elaboration based on Martin et al. (2007) and Soule and King (2015).

There is a **synergy** in this model between the **barriers of change** and the **targeted actors**, as the former derive from the latter. The **targeted actors** in this case are **firms/companies, corporations and/or industries**, which can be a **more effective route** for social movements to target than the state[41].

The **changes** sought by social movements here are **within businesses**, at an **institutionalised** level (for example, the businesses' policies and norms), but also in **less institutionalised** ways (such as their informal practices, behaviours, and norms). Alongside organisations external to those industries, such as social movements, there are also **internal organisations** that often seek change, such as **unions**[42]. **Activities** common for organisations seeking business change include **strikes**[43], **protests**, **mobilisations**, and **advocacy** activities[44]. Notable is that the literature indicates that individual **firms' characteristics** may be **more correlated with successful outcomes** than the activities that social movements undertake. This suggests it might be more fruitful for social movements to target **small or more vulnerable firms** in order to achieve change than to target those with a history of resistance to change[45]. Moreover, firms can have a **positive influence on movements' outcomes**: "Businesses can affect major change by altering their employee policies; raising their influential voices in public debates; and leveraging their innovation capabilities, as well as their brands and customer loyalty, for causes."[46]

As in all iterations of the model, **political and social contexts** are contributory factors. What plays an important role within the political context is the **type of government**; whereas significant within the social context are **public-private relationships**. The latter

[41] King (2011); McDonnell and Cobb (2020).
[42] Diani (2018).
[43] Martin, Dixon and Nau (2017).
[44] Soule and King (2015).
[45] Martin, Dixon and Nau (2017): 335.
[46] Crutchfield (2018): 13-14.

refers to the relations of the public sector and/or political actors with firms, companies, corporations, and/or industries.

As for the **relationships**, key is the **congruence of contributions** that impact upon targeted actors, given those actors (companies and industries) are the ones that shall enact the change sought. This means the actions of those targeted actors, and the **barriers to change** they erect, impact upon the kinds of social movements that exist and the activities they carry out. **Markets and firms** impact upon social movements and their activities at the same time that movements aim to impact markets and firms[47]. However, these processes may not be equal. The evidence suggests that the **characteristics of companies and industries are more significant** in achieving change than the types of movement actions[48]. The interaction between movements and companies depends on the **industry opportunity structure** – the factors that facilitate and/or constrain movements and their effects in a particular industry; and the **corporate opportunity structure** – the factors that facilitate and/or constrain movements and their effects on a particular firm[49]. Then again, political and social contexts' contribution to change may not be as decisive.

As both firms, corporations and industries as well as movements have a central role in generating change, we recognise that in order to **maintain the changes** achieved both actors have to **monitor their compliance**. The importance of monitoring by social movements may be especially important for business change. In some cases, those changes are monitored through **systems of private regulation**, without the government's involvement[50]. However, industries can also be slow or lax in implementing changes they have asserted they are committed to. Here, **change monitoring is a highly important contributor to change[51]**. Without it, change – even if intended – may not actually occur in practice.

Soule and King (2015): Markets, Business, and Social Movements.

"[Soule and King review] the literature on how changes in corporations, firms, and markets influence the dynamics of social movements. It describes the concepts of **corporate and industry opportunity structure**, and looks at the way in which many scholars have set out to measure these concepts in various empirical settings. It also describes a number of **recent trends in markets and business, which promise to impact the relationship between movements and the corporate and industry opportunity structures** in which they are embedded. We conclude that future research ought to focus more on the interplay between political, industry, and corporate opportunity structures."[52]

[47] Soule and King (2015): 1.
[48] Martin, Dixon and Nau (2017): 335.
[49] Soule and King (2015): 697-698.
[50] Bartley (2003).
[51] Seidman (2003).
[52] Soule and King (2015): 1 (emphasis added).

Martin, Dixon and Nau (2017): Leveraging corporate influence.

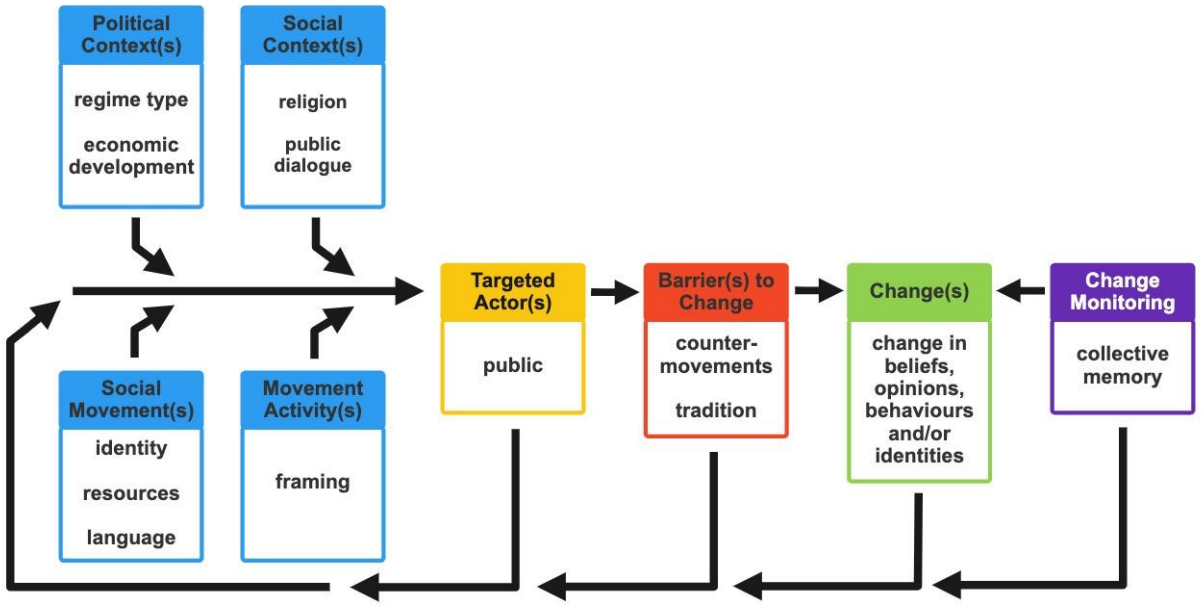
"Movement scholars have become increasingly interested in the way in which social movement actors target non-state entities, particularly corporations. The reason for this is quite simple: globalization, neoliberal policies adopted by the state, and new legal protections via court rulings have allowed businesses to exert considerable influence across all facets of society. In light of these changes, **movements have found targeting the state less effective than directly pressuring business interests. Scholarship suggests that one of the most effective ways to ensure that corporations attend to movement concerns is through market pressures**. While negatively impacting stock returns is perhaps the most effective means of achieving such pressure, there is surprisingly little empirical research linking stock price outcomes to movement success. [Martin, Dixon and Nau] use Qualitative Comparative Analysis and examine 35 labor strikes to determine if the ability of the union to negatively impact stock price affected their ability to win new gains for members (or, to prevent concessions). [Their] findings reveal that **it is the characteristics of the targeted firm, not the actions of the unions themselves, that is most closely associated with success**."[53]

c) Model 3 – Public opinion change

Here, we illustrate the processes of contribution where public opinion is the change sought by social movements. This model draws from a recent literature review of multiple case studies examining the **sociocultural impacts of social movements** and how these were achieved[54]. This model highlights that for **new ideas** to be adopted by public opinion, the public needs to be able to **link them to existing mindsets**. A change in public opinion can then be incorporated into the **collective memory** that then informally **monitors** social change processes.

Key public opinion changes explored here – mostly based on case studies **from the U.S.** – include: the decline in support for the **death penalty** from the 1990s[55]; the impact of **immigration** protests in 2006 on the salience of migration among the Latino population[56]; the change in public understanding of the **marriage equality** movement and the **living wage** movement between 1994 and 2004[57]; political mobilisation to influence ideas and concerns about **climate change** between 2002 and 2010[58]; how U.S. citizens' memories of the **civil rights** movement influence their **racial attitudes** and racial policy preferences[59]; how consumers' views on the relationship between their behaviour and the **environment** can be impacted[60]; the construction, diffusion and endurance of **contentious language** within nationalist and racial movements[61]; North Americans' conceptualisations of **family** and **same-sex relationships**; and an analysis of cross-national variations in public opinion about **homosexuality**[62]. The findings from these case studies are expressed in this model.

[53] Martin, Dixon and Nau (2017): 323 (emphasis added).
[54] Amenta and Polletta (2019).
[55] Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun (2008).
[56] Cary, Branton and Martinez-Eberz (2014).
[57] Woodly (2015).
[58] Brulle, Carmichael and Jenkins (2012).
[59] Griffin and Bollen (2009).
[60] Cornelissen, Pandelaere, Warlop and Dewitte (2008).
[61] Tarrow (2013).
[62] Adamczyk (2017).



Source: Own elaboration based on Amenta and Polletta (2019).

One of the differences between this model and those presented above concerns the **formulation** of relevant social movements. Their **contribution to changes in public opinion** result from: their creation of **movement identities**, thereby altering individuals' self-perceptions and thus their behaviours[63]; their creation of new **terms** and forms of **language** which alter how key social concepts are understood[64]; their access to **resources** which can enable new ideas to have a broader reach. However, all such impacts are dependent upon whether such new ideas can be relatively easily **incorporated** by the public or not **into existing ways of thinking**[65].

This model also differs from the previous ones in that the activities that movements can undertake in order to contribute to change are largely related to **framing** and **information diffusion**. Movements may contribute to **changes in individuals' opinions** about certain issues[66], but if they fail to do so, they may nevertheless help to raise an issue's **salience**[67]. In this model – in contrast to the two previous iterations – **protest is not a crucial movement activity**, as there is evidence such tactics may not effectively change public opinion[68]. Movements may also generate significant public opinion changes through **successful policy or legal changes**, which create new norms that in turn affect public opinion.

Contextual factors – such as **regime type**, **economic development**, and **religion** – typically play a crucial role in this model, as they can contribute to public opinion changes to a greater extent than the activities of social movements. Those people living in **democracies** tend to report higher levels of happiness and well-being than those in

[63] Cornelissen, Pandelaere, Warlop and Dewitte (2008).
[64] Tarrow (2013).
[65] Haltom and McCann (2004).
[66] Baumgartner, De Boef and Boydstun. (2008).
[67] Cary, Branton and Martinez-Eberz (2014).
[68] Bartels (2016).

undemocratic regimes[69], and there is a relationship between countries becoming democratic and the **social attitudes** held by their population[70]. There is evidence of relationships between **religious belief** and opinions about topics such as **LGBTQI+ rights**[71]. Another societal factor that can contribute to movements' outcomes in this model is the pre-existing level of salience, the degree of **public dialogue** around an issue[72]. All these contextual factors influence the feasibility of desired changes in public opinion.

While these factors can combine to change public opinion, crucial here is also the presence of **counter-movements** that can act as **barriers** to desired changes[73]. While in the other models the monitoring process is carried out by formal routes such as legal process or social movement activity, here a form of '**collective memory**' normalises changes, resulting in a much more informal – though more widespread – process of monitoring[74].

As for the relationships illustrated in this model, there is an equally important level of contribution to the change process from **movements' activities** and their **characteristics**, and **political and social contexts**. Indeed, they are **interdependent**: the structure and activities of movements respond to social and political contexts, while those contexts similarly are in part constituted by the existence and activities of those movements. Further, the '**collective memory**' as a mechanism to monitor change inevitably **reshapes the contexts** within which movements operate, and the formulation and activities of those movements.

Amenta and Polletta (2019): The Cultural Impacts of Social Movements.

"The most important impacts of social movements are often cultural, but the sheer variety of potential cultural impacts — from shifts in public opinion to new portrayals of a group on television to the metrics guiding funding in a federal agency — presents unique challenges to scholars. **Rather than treating culture as a social sphere separate from politics and the economy**, [Amenta and Polletta] conceptualize it as the **ideas, values, and assumptions underpinning policies and practices in all spheres**. [They] review recent research on movements' impacts on public opinion and everyday behavior; the media and popular culture; nonpolitical institutions such as science, medicine, and education; and politics. [They] focus on **cultural impacts that have mattered for movements' constituencies** and address why movements have had those impacts."[75]

d) Limitations

There are a number of limitations inherent in the model as a template, and in the applications of it to the case studies as outlined above.

First, the template and the models are based on a **limited number of case studies**. This means that they cannot acknowledge all possible factors that contributed to the type of changes that they focus on. Indeed, given these models arise from the available literature, we can only include in the case studies factors which are themselves acknowledged in that literature.

[69] Loubser and Steenekamp (2017).
[70] Siemienska (2002).
[71] Adamczyk (2017).
[72] Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist and Steelman (2010).
[73] Brulle, Carmichael and Jenkins (2012).
[74] Griffin and Bollen (2009).
[75] Amenta and Polletta (2019): 79 (emphasis added).

Second, given the limited nature of the literature used to develop the models, it is hard to be sure to what extent these case studies are **transferable** to similar kinds of change. It may be the case that these specific case studies are particular in specific ways, rendering them of little use as general models.

Third, the applied models only refer to three specific kinds of change, and it is unclear to what extent this template is therefore useful for thinking about **other kinds of change**. Moreover, it is also unclear to what extent they represent a **general model of change**.

Future areas of research

While the template and the applied models draw from a significant amount of literature, fruitful future research would take into account a **wider array of research** and literature, in order to **test the validity** of the arguments presented here, and refine the template and the models.

As noted at the outset, a limited universe of literature and case studies was adopted in this analysis, in order to **reduce the complexity** resulting from an overly wide set of relevant parameters, and with the goal of **increasing the transferability** of the findings. It is suggested that, in the first instance, these **boundaries** remain. However, in the longer-term, it would be productive to examine to what extent the template and the models are **transferable outside of these boundaries**. This would help indicate the extent to which there are 'universal' truths about social movements' contribution to change, or instead provide evidence on the importance of the contextual factors used to delimit the material examined.

Given the FMP's key activities involve working with social movements in order to enable them to be more effective, it would also be productive to examine the extent to which the template and the models can be used for **social movement strategising**. The template encourages social movements to situate their activities as contributions alongside others from a variety of sources. This may enable forms of strategising, and reflection, productive for social movements, and therefore for social change.

Conclusion

This research has explored a pathway to link social movement activities and the achievement of their objectives. As has been shown, this is a challenging task: firstly, because evidencing **relationships of cause and effect** is difficult, and secondly because of the **complex array of factors** relevant to processes of change that condition what social movements do. Thus, notions of causation have been replaced here by the **concept of contribution**. This shift enables a more productive understanding of the roles social movements play in social change, and necessitates acknowledgment of other relevant actors and contexts. In addition, the focus on movements' actions changed towards a focus on **processes of change**, as a way of acknowledging the **intervening factors and actors** present in change processes.

Acknowledging the complexities and uncertainties of social change, this report presents a **conceptual framework** that enables FMP and movement actors to **systematically map**

factors influencing social change and to draw strategic conclusions. The model offers an **understanding of social change processes** as **processes of contribution** that is drawn from a wide array of literature and case studies.

As with all models, this remains a **simplified version of real-world processes**. However, this simplicity also enables it to be more **transferable**, and therefore **of more use** for social movements and organisations who work with them. Besides, the three applied models demonstrate how this template can be used in **specific, real-world cases**. Among others, this application illustrates how the model can work out the influential role of **context factors**, **barriers to change** and **monitoring mechanisms**. Thus, this conceptual framework allows FMP and movement actors to better integrate those factors into their analyses and strategy making.

It is likely this model will continue to **evolve**, in response to further research, engagement with a wider array of literature, and its application to more cases. This is to be encouraged, as it means that the work to better understand the **roles social movements play in social change** can be enabled; and, as a consequence, social movements themselves can more effectively contribute to social change.

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