Social change, activist strategy and the practice of struggle

International People's Health University

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Questions for IPHU

- Dynamics of change?
  - how does social (local / global) change take place?
- Drivers of change?
  - emergent but unintentional pressures
  - deliberate action by individuals and groups
- Forms of action?
  - opportunities for individuals and groups to contribute to driving change
- Training needs (curriculum) – skills, knowledges and perspectives?
- Learning activism?
- Researching our practice?

Dynamics of change: learning from history

- What happened to Easter Island and why?
- What drove the collapse of the Soviet Union?
- How was slavery abolished (where it has)?
- What drove the 'sanitary revolution'?
- Whence come various fundamentalisms?
- Under what conditions does desperate poverty energise progressive social change?
- Why is it so hard to replicate the beacon projects of primary health care?

Dynamics of change

- Technological innovation and opportunity
  - eg agricultural revolution, steam and petrol engines, computers, etc
- Institutional innovation
  - eg emergence of capitalism
- Rise and fall of political ideologies
  - eg liberalism, modernism, socialism, communism, Islamism, neoliberalism
- Conflict and power
  - over access to resources
  - invasion and imperialism
  - liberation and self-determination (eg decolonisation)
- Environmental opportunities and limits
  - desertification, soil degradation, water
- Population and migration

Drivers of change

- Investment driven change
  - new technologies
  - new sources of supply
  - new markets
- Policy driven change
  - laws, declarations, conventions
  - taxation and public spending
    - infrastructure development
    - science and technology
    - development assistance
  - institutional reform and service development
  - projection of power: war, sanctions, imperialism, etc
- Social movements
  - abolitionist, environmental, women, Islamist
  - people's health movement
- Revolution, invasion, occupation
  - China, Cuba, Iran, Iraq …

- Communications
  - meetings (eg WEF, PHA)
  - books, journals, news media
  - internet
- Cultural production
  - research and development
  - drama, film, writing
  - ideas (universities, think tanks, journals)
- Education
  - schools, universities
  - access to, control over
- Leadership
  - political
  - spiritual
  - cultural
  - institutional
  - intellectual

Social Movement Theory

- Political and market power wielded by governments and corporations
- But governments and corporations are also sensitive to social movements
- Social movements
  - shared analysis, direction and strategy
  - shared consciousness / identity
  - loose organisational structure; many autonomous organisations and networks
  - shared repertoire (forms of action)
- Levers of social movements
  - projecting a vision
  - delegitimation
  - linking the personal and the political, the local and the global

Global health and the dance of legitimation

- WTO established 1994
  - includes TRIPS Agreement extends patents and excludes process-only patents
- Seattle 1999
  - growing opposition to WTO including TRIPS
- South African big pharma case 1997-2001
  - civil society, international solidarity, street action, high level policy analysis (websites)
- Doha 2001. Statement on Public Health. Opening up compulsory licensing
- 2001-2003 US resistance to practicable protocols for implementation of Doha Statement
- 1999-2000 Rise of Global Fund for ATM (with Gates support). Discounted drugs. Generic drug procurement
- 2007. WHA adopts (cautious) policy on IPRs

PHC as a strategy of social change (as per Alma-Ata 1978)

- Sector of service delivery
  - first contact, continuing, comprehensive, multi-disciplinary
- Policy model (including principles of service delivery)
  - sick care and prevention
  - addressing individual and social determinants
  - community involvement (accountability, planning, prevention)
  - mutually supportive referral systems
  - intersectoral collaboration (in particular, to address the social and environmental determinants)
  - appropriate multi-disciplinary workforce working as a team
  - appropriate technologies
- PHC as a theory of social change!
  - the vision of Health for All, linked to vision of a NIEO
  - PHC practitioners as promotors of social change for health gain
  - popular mobilisation towards health development **with and through** political sovereignty and self-directed economic development

Forms of action (the repertoire of people's health movements)

- Information strategies, including research, through which the forces for change may be emboldened and the dominant ideologies delegitimised
- Cultural action which throws new light on the familiar and helps to articulate alternatives
- Networking and dialogue leading to stronger alliances and more coherent action; for example, alliances between the health movement and the environment movement
- Community engagement, such as right to health initiatives, through which people and communities gain new confidence in their power to change
- Policy critique and advocacy
- Service development reforms, creating health systems that address the structural determinants of health as well as the biomedical
- Institutional reform, creating institutions that are accountable and responsive and which clear the path for progressive change
- Personal behaviour change (eg away from patriarchy, away from materialism); changes which are both individual and collective; changes which are both personal and political
- Movement building

Curriculum for activism

- Political economy of health
  - political and economic environment which shapes health care and the determinants of health
  - trade policy and population health
- Health systems policy (and politics)
  - debates, evidence, experience and politics
  - principles for health system development
  - campaigns around health care policy
- Action on the determinants of health
  - tracing the causes of the causes
  - forms of action and principles
- Right to health
  - legal structures
  - struggle to enshrine new rights
- Working across difference (gender, class, caste, race, etc)
- Activist engagement

Activist engagement

- Channelling your passion (distress, anger)
- Tracing the causes of the causes
- Working across difference
- Working with communities
- Effective communication
- Scenarios of (theories of) change
- Forms of action
- Meaning and spirit

Learning activism

- Sharing experiences (problems, causes, strategies, practices)
- Accessing and trying out new knowledges, theories, forms of practice, perspectives
- Experimenting with different interpretations and projecting different forms of action
- Visions, stories and friendships which inspire

Researching our activist practice

- What am I trying to achieve? Why?
  - how do I review and reflect upon where I put my efforts?

- What strategies am I using? Why?
  - how to I review and reflect upon my strategies?

- Can I improve my practice? How?
  - how can I see what I am doing and see if I could do it better?