



MOVEMENT
STRATEGY
CENTER

THE PRACTICES OF **TRANSFORMATIVE** MOVEMENTS



The Practices of Transformative Movement Building

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Now is a time of great transition and change. Around the globe we see unprecedented climate disruption, and upheaval across economic, political and cultural systems. We see people—entire populations—facing this great, unknowable landscape and seeking paths to a future they can believe in.

In this time there is also a calling, an invitation, a possibility beyond what we can presently see.

We have the capacity to answer this call. We have the capacity to bring forth a future that is kicking to be born. We have the capacity to be that future, to be the power and strength of our vision, our purpose, and our relationships.

The movements of today are calling us to make a courageous commitment to love, generative power, and our undeniable interdependence. Leading with bold vision and purpose, they are moving beyond the question of “what do we need to do?” to “who do we need to be to bring forth the transformation we seek?” In this way, movements are learning the art of time travel -- starting at the end of the story, they are accelerating change by embodying and manifesting the values they seek in the world right here and now. They are not asking people to believe another world is possible, they are asking us to generate and experience it through transformative practice and strategy.



Transformative movements recognize that we are whole people, our communities are whole, and because the issues and problems are interconnected our systemic solutions and movements must be as well. It recognizes that for society to change we need our movements to mirror and prefigure that transformation with as much—or greater—depth. Through deep collective practice, movement makers are transforming themselves, their movements, their strategies and their relationships so they can be this change. They are identifying the unconscious habits and patterns of behavior that limit our communities' ability to recognize our full power and potential. And they are developing new practices and strategies to do what was previously impossible. Fundamentally, it is helping us to accelerate our big transition from a world where the few live at the expense of the many, to a world where the many govern for the benefit of all.

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A NEW WAY: FOUR ELEMENTS OF TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS



A vibrant network of leaders is rising up to embrace the unknown with courage, love and innovation. The emergence of these leaders represents a new theory and practice of social transformation.

Like many kindred movement makers, Movement Strategy Center believes incremental change strategies are increasingly inadequate in the face of rapidly accelerating climate disruption and growing inequality. Incremental change strategies cannot keep pace. Because the scale and nature of the problems we face are exponential, our change strategies need to be exponential as well. We need transformative strategies to generate exponential change.

But how do we accomplish this? How do we achieve transformation – the exponential shift of reality? Movement Strategy Center defines four elements at the core of transformative movement building: leading with audacious vision and bold purpose; deeply embodying the values at the heart of the vision; building radical and deep community around the vision; and using all of that – vision, embodiment, and connection – to strategically navigate toward the future.



1.

LEADING WITH AUDACIOUS **VISION** & BOLD **PURPOSE**

When the Movement Strategy Center started our work, we encountered change efforts that were isolated, fragmented, and often unaligned. We learned to ask questions to help develop a broader vision. What are we fighting for? How are our various efforts related? What are the deeper structures underlying the problems we're working on? Who else shares our affinity and purpose? What visions and purposes do we share?

Transformative movement builders are guided by a vision that is audacious and bold enough to unite diverse movements in building the world we actually need. This vision is not utopic, not a blind yearning for the impossible. Nor is it nostalgic, harkening back to something that never existed. Transformative movement builders imagine the path forward to possible futures we cannot yet see. We lead others to share in this vision and contribute to a larger purpose. Our dreams are rooted in the wisdom of the past, with awareness of the present, and hope for the future.

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Photo by Arthur Marante



DEEP EMBODIMENT



Photo by OUR Walmart

patterns of injustice are maintained through repeated day to day actions; taking on injustice requires new forms of culture and new modes of relating to ourselves and each other.

Believing another world is possible is different from practicing another world in our daily lives. Transformative movement builders step into the future, generating and experiencing a new world here and now by practicing and embodying a new set of values. Transformative movement builders recognize that patterns of injustice are maintained through repeated day to day actions; taking on injustice requires new forms of culture and new modes of relating to ourselves and each other. These practices emphasize mutual interdependence and care between individuals and groups, communities, and the planet. Beyond working against injustice, transformative movement builders work for liberation. We must do this by developing creative, innovative practices of liberation, from the micro to the macro levels. We must commit to cultivating new ways of being, defined by joy, humor, and humility; we must step into the fullness of our responsibility to ourselves and each other, with love. We must recognize that the secret is to be the future now.



Photo by Forward Together



3.

RADICAL CONNECTION AND **COMMUNITY**

Transformative movements recognize that everything gets done through relationships and nothing gets done without them. This fundamental truth reflects an ecosystem approach that is based in interdependence and interconnectedness. Movements are about people and cultures, our relationships to each other and to the planet. Bringing movements into alignment with each other is not about making others fall into line, or replacing one vision with another. It is about cultivating a bigger sense of “movement,” recognizing and acting on connections that already exist. It is about co-creating a story of the future and inviting others to engage in advancing it. It is about resonating and connecting with one another. It is about healing and generating new life-affirming possibilities together. Through deep listening, breakthrough conversations, and the cultivation of radical connections, movements can make leaps that were previously unthinkable.



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STRATEGIC NAVIGATION



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With audacious vision, deep embodiment, and radical connection, transformative movement builders can strategically adapt to and navigate rapidly changing environments. Strategic navigation requires new forms of leadership that transcend traditional modes of domination. From whatever position we hold, transformative movement builders must be leaders for the whole, bringing people together with a bigger purpose in mind. We must cultivate a thorough understanding of systems and forces in motion –the general operating conditions of our movements –and forge paths that get us where we need to go. Transformative movement builders foster collaborative action that is nonlinear, synergistic, and highly networked, finding multiple paths that are strategically differentiated but headed to the same mountain top. They have an understanding of the physics of movement building – kinetic and potential energy, resonance, critical mass, exponential scaling. They align different approaches into collective strategies that leverage everyone’s strengths. This is what allows transformative movements to make big leaps towards a new society, even as they dismantle old systems that no longer serve us. From a position of collective power, strategic navigation guides us toward an emergent future.

CONCLUSION: PRACTICING THE FUTURE NOW

Transformational movements connect us with ourselves, each other, and with the whole—the whole of our communities, the whole of humanity. Transformational movements affect all levels of our experience: the way we think, our structures and systems, the way we live, and even who we are.

Through the practices of leading with vision, deep embodiment, radical connection, and strategic navigation, movement makers transform ourselves, our movements, our strategies, our relationships and our world. We can identify the unconscious habits and patterns of behavior that limit our communities' ability to recognize our full power and potential. And, we can develop new practices and strategies to do what was previously impossible. Together we can transition from a world where the few live at the expense of the many, to a world where the many govern for the benefit of all. As many movements are saying, we need all of us to change everything.

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Photo: 2014 People's Climate March in New York City. By South Bend Voice via Flickr, CC BY-SA



WHAT ARE THE PRACTICES OF TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENTS

That Generate Connection, Community, & Transformational Resilience?

Strategic Navigation is the capacity to generate collective direction and action in complexity and uncertainty. Strategic Navigation becomes possible when we have audacious vision & commitment, deep embodiment, and radical connection.

AUDACIOUS VISION	EMBODIMENT: WHOLE PERSON / PROACTIVE STANCE	RADICAL CONNECTION	STRATEGIC NAVIGATION
<p>Transition practice recognizes that the future can guide us and that we are not constrained to the present or the past.</p> <p><i>Q: What do we want and how deeply do we want it?</i></p> <p>VISION & COMMITMENT PRACTICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core purpose • Wholeness • Courageous responsibility • Possibility • Future narrative • The long view 	<p>Transition practice recognizes that embodiment is crucial to ensure that we have access to all the capacities we need.</p> <p><i>Q: Who do we need to be to bring about the world we want and need? What do we need to consciously practice to be the people who reflect the vision?</i></p> <p>EMBODIMENT PRACTICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad awareness • Proactive stance • Generate and move energy • Agility • Rhythm • Relational Power • Creativity and play • Interrupting habits and redirecting towards a path forward 	<p>Transition practice recognizes that everything gets done through relationships and nothing gets done without them.</p> <p><i>Q: How are we connected? How do we honor our connections? What is the "We"?</i></p> <p>RELATIONSHIP PRACTICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Margins to Center: Recognizing and reversing exclusion, isolation, and marginalization. • Radical connection and Love • Build the "Bigger We" and move with those who are ready (small teams) • Recognition of interdependence • Recognition of / making space to heal from harm 	<p>Commitment to practice & action! The three foundational transition practices make strategic navigation possible.</p> <p><i>Q: How do we make choices that bring our whole selves, whole communities forward within changing and unpredictable conditions?</i></p> <p>NAVIGATION PRACTICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Paths up the Mountain • Big Leaps • Networked Action • Setting & re-setting; learning as we go and adapting as we learn • Decisiveness • Stories of navigation • Leadership for the whole • Translating values into technical implementation

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About Movement Strategy Center

MSC is dedicated to transformative movement building: helping individuals, organizations, and alliances build their capacity to be strategic, collaborative, and sustainable. MSC works with over 300 partner grassroots organizations, alliances, and networks that operate at local, regional, and national levels. MSC works across sectors and within sectors. MSC supports local alliances that bring people in one place together across issues and constituencies, and supports national alliances that unite groups working on common issues.

A Short Video on the 4 Practices

For another glimpse of the ideas and practices outlined here you can see a short video from a dialogue at the Ford Foundation on Movement Building. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ye00UGYF5QI>

The Transitions Community & Initiative

The purpose of MSC's Transitions Initiative is: To nurture whole people and whole communities to transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world of regeneration, resilience, and interdependence.

The Transitions Community is a growing network of people deepening the practices of love, care and community that will bring about the great transition from a world of domination and extraction to a world organized around resilience, regeneration and interdependence.

The Transitions Initiative deepens the practices of community through sharpening individual and collective shared purpose and vision, building and deepening relationships, identifying and embodying the qualities we need to cultivate transition, and generating the pivots, leaps, and strategies needed to transform our world.

MSC's **Transitions Labs** are spaces where the Transitions Community brings forth transformative capacities, relationships, and strategies for exponential impact. The Transitions Labs till the fertile soil that, if cared for with love, will nurture the seeds and sprouts of a hopeful future to take root, grow, evolve and spread. MSC's Transitions Labs ground people in their purpose, inspire them to believe in their vision, and offer them space to practice navigating toward an achievable horizon of Transformation.

