



# Process Guide | Theories of Change

## Objective

Facilitate political analysis, reflection and dialogue.

## Resources needed

Butchers paper, marker pens, small coloured stickers or post-it notes.

## Time needed

Two to three hours

## How it's done

### Step 1

Introductions

### Step 2

Introduce the workshop's objectives.

Why start with a theory of change? How do we generally engage with theory?

Distinguish between theory and Theory. (We're not asking people to be academics!) This is just about being clear about our own and each other's assumptions.

### Step 3

Closed eye meditation.

Suggested prompts are included below. Be sure to allow lots of time and don't rush!

### Step 4

Paired listening.

People pair up with another member of the group and listen actively to each other for 5-10 minutes each. Then facilitate a sharing. Each participant to share insights they heard from their partner.

### Step 5

Introduce the mechanisms of change handout. Two version are included with this process guide. An interactive and kinaesthetic way to introduce this information is to print each theory or mechanism of change on a separate poster and display them on the wall like a gallery. Participants can circulate in silence, reading and considering each option before being encouraged to gravitate to the option that most closely approximates the mechanism of change they consider will be important to resolve the issue they're working on.

### Step 6

Sharing, comparing and valuing.

Facilitate a semi-structured discussion. One option here is to ask participants to sit with others who are drawn to the same mechanism of change and to discuss then share with the larger group:

- The strength/power of my mechanism of change

- Doubts I have about this mechanism of change
- My appreciation of the work that others are doing – people subscribing to the other mechanisms of change.

## Step 7

Evaluation and close

**Source:** developed by James Whelan (the Change Agency) and Tanya Newman (Kotare Social Change Education and Research Trust, Aotearoa) at Climate Camp 2010.

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## Closed eye mediation

*Start by describing the context and focus for the exercise. If participants are working together on a specific campaign, describe the problem they are working to overcome. Be sure that participants have selected one part of a larger problem – an issue that is specific enough that they can realistically expect to bring about meaningful change within one or two years through concerted and focused effort.*

Make yourself comfortable.

Place your feet on the ground. Relax into your chair.

Listen to the sounds. Feel the earth.

Now, think about the issue you are focused on.

Think about the impacts. Who is impacted upon? How?

Who benefits? How? (Prompt people to think about the employment that may be generated, the profits and power.)

How was this problem created? What decisions were made? By whom?

What maintains the status quo? How is this problem maintained?

How is power created and maintained?

Think of consent and authority?

Think of the power held by government... Industry... the community...

How is it created? Maintained?

What would it take to change power relations?

Think of this in as much clarity and precision as possible.

## Theories of change Version #1

- Becoming the power holder / decision makers
- Influencing the powers that be to make better decisions
- Confronting the powers that be and pressuring/forcing them to do what you want
- Education of decision makers and/or citizens
- Meeting the immediate needs of the crisis
- Social change through personal change
- Building alternative institutions
- Other

## Theories of change Version #2

**1. THE INDIVIDUAL CHANGE THEORY:** A better world will come through transformative change of a critical mass of individuals, their consciousness, attitudes, behaviours, and skills. [Methods: investment in individual change through training, personal transformation/ consciousness-raising workshops or processes; dialogues and encounter groups.]

**2. THE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS THEORY:** A better world emerges out of a process of breaking down isolation, polarisation, division, prejudice and stereotypes between/among groups. Strong relationships are a necessary ingredient for a better world. [Methods: processes of dialogue; networking; relationship-building processes; joint efforts and practical programs on substantive problems.]

**3. THE WITHDRAWAL OF RESOURCES THEORY:** Some social problems require vast amounts of material and human capital. If we can interrupt the supply of people and goods to the system that maintains the problem, it will collapse and our vision will be realised. [Methods: campaigns to cut off funds/national budgets; conscientious objection and/or resistance; embargoes and boycotts.]

**4. THE REDUCTION OF VIOLENCE THEORY:** Peace will result as we reduce the levels of violence perpetrated by combatants or their representatives. [Methods: cease-fires, creation of zones of peace, withdrawal or retreat from direct engagement, introduction of peacekeeping forces/interposition, observation missions, accompaniment efforts, promotion of nonviolent methods for achieving political/social/economic ends.]

**5. THE ROOT CAUSES/JUSTICE THEORY:** We can achieve our social change vision by addressing the underlying issues of injustice, oppression/exploitation, threats to identity and security, and people's sense of injury/victimisation. [Methods: long-term campaigns for social and structural change, truth and reconciliation; changes in social institutions, laws, regulations, and economic systems.]

**6. THE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY:** Our vision will be secured by establishing stable and reliable social institutions that guarantee democracy, equity, justice, and fair allocation of resources. [Methods: new constitutional and governance arrangements/entities; development of human rights, rule of law, anti-corruption; establishment of democratic/equitable economic structures; economic development; democratisation.]

**7. THE POLITICAL ELITES THEORY:** Our vision will be achieved when it is in the interest of political (and other) leaders to take the necessary steps. Our efforts must change the political calculus of key leaders and groups. [Methods: raise the costs and reduce the benefits for political elites of maintaining the problem while increasing the incentives for the vision or solution; engage active and influential constituencies in favour of our vision; withdraw international support/ funding.]

**8. THE GRASSROOTS MOBILISATION THEORY:** “When the people lead, the leaders will follow.” If we mobilise enough opposition to this problem, political leaders will have to pay attention. [Methods: mobilise grassroots groups to either oppose war or to advocate for positive action; nonviolent direct action campaigns; use of the media; education/mobilisation efforts; organise advocacy groups; dramatic events to raise consciousness.]

**9. THE ECONOMICS THEORY:** As a politician once said, “It’s the economy, stupid!” People make personal decisions and decision makers make policy decisions based on a system of rewards/incentives and punishments/sanctions that are essentially economic in nature. If we can change the economies associated with the problem, we can bring about change. [Methods: use of government or financial institutions to change supply and demand dynamics; control incentive and reward systems; boycotts.]

**10. THE PUBLIC ATTITUDES THEORY:** Many social injustices are partly motivated by prejudice, misperceptions, and intolerance of difference. We can promote our visions for a better world by using the media (television and radio) to change public attitudes and build greater tolerance in society. [Methods: TV and radio programs that promote tolerance; modeling preferred behaviour; symbolic acts of solidarity/unity; dialogues among groups in conflict with subsequent publicity.]

**11. ADD YOUR OWN**