

WE MUST WRITE A BETTER ENDING

Using Strategic Foresight In Social Movement Organizing

By Karli Ferriolo

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Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Now, more than ever, social movements are organized with increased urgency to create societies that are more equitable, just, and sustainable. Arguably, social movements cannot change societies without envisioning new future societies that are more desirable. This research explores the intersection of social movements and futures studies to understand how social movements might use strategic foresight to re-frame and transform social, economic, and environmental challenges. A critical examination of existing literature, along with a convergence map, highlights possible relationships between social movements and futures studies. A popular media scan is used to examine current climate justice movements in North America. This research contributes to a growing field of inquiry related to social movements and futures studies. It offers a new perspective on the use of strategic foresight in social movement organizing. Areas for further research include testing the ideas with social movement organizers and futures studies professionals.

Keywords: social movements, futures studies, strategic foresight, climate justice

Someone who wants the
world to remain as it is
does not want the world to
remain at all.

Erich Fried



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This research was conducted in Tkaronto, on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. Tkaronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands. While this research offers only a snapshot of North American social movements, it is important to keep in mind that Indigenous communities across the continent have been organizing social movements and resisting colonialism for centuries.

To movement makers
& future generations.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Chapter 1

Throughout history, social movements of all shapes and sizes have arisen in every corner of the world. Individuals, communities, and nations have been organizing social movements in various ways to resist injustices and advocate for social, environmental, and economic change. Social movements have been a staple pattern in democracies for seemingly as long as democracy has existed. Ask any family member, friend, or colleague, and they will have likely had some experience with some kind of social movement. In my experience, I have participated in a number of social movements, but I have also had the privilege of studying social movements within the comforts of university classrooms. Over time, I began to notice a pattern and a concern, which is also prevalent in some social movements critiques.

Essentially, it can be distilled through the following cycle (Figure 1): initially, social movements gather massive amounts of support for a particular injustice, struggle, or grievance, then organize to resist said injustice, struggle, or grievance, and then awareness for the social movement appears to fizzle out, with most of the same systems and structures that caused the injustice, struggle, or grievance prevailing. The cycle then continues.

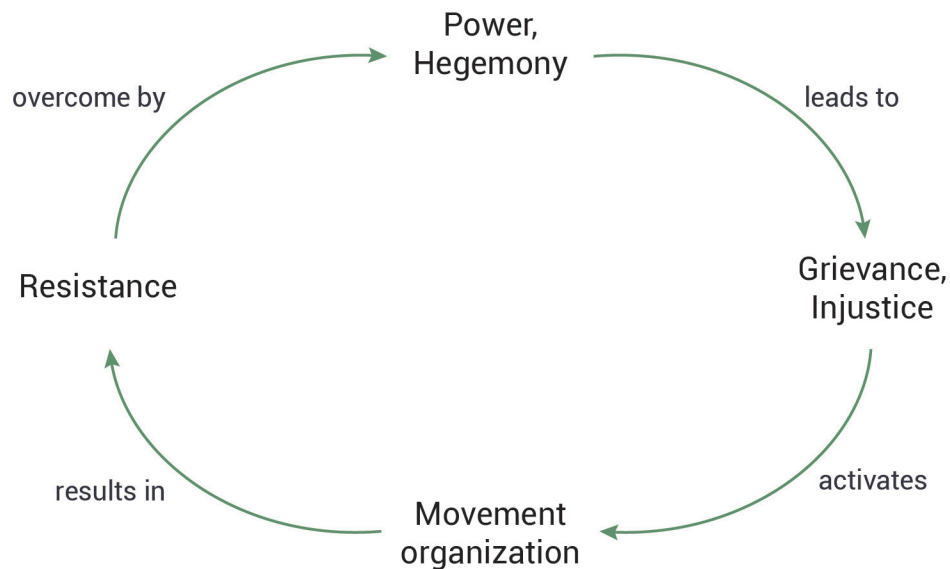


Figure 1: Social movement cycle.

This process is likely never this linear or simplistic and is not true of all social movements or efforts of collective action. However, it is a general observation of social movements that piqued my interest, which led to the topic of this Major Research Project. I thought that social movements were missing an element; there had to be something that could encourage social movements to do more than just resist. After studying foresight and experiential futures in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation program, I was increasingly intrigued by futures studies and its ability to exercise the envisioning of other possible and preferable futures.

I continued to wonder if futures studies could be used strategically by social movements to envision preferred futures, inspire transformative change, and create more equitable, sustainable, and just societies (Figure 2). This ideation led to the formation of my research question.

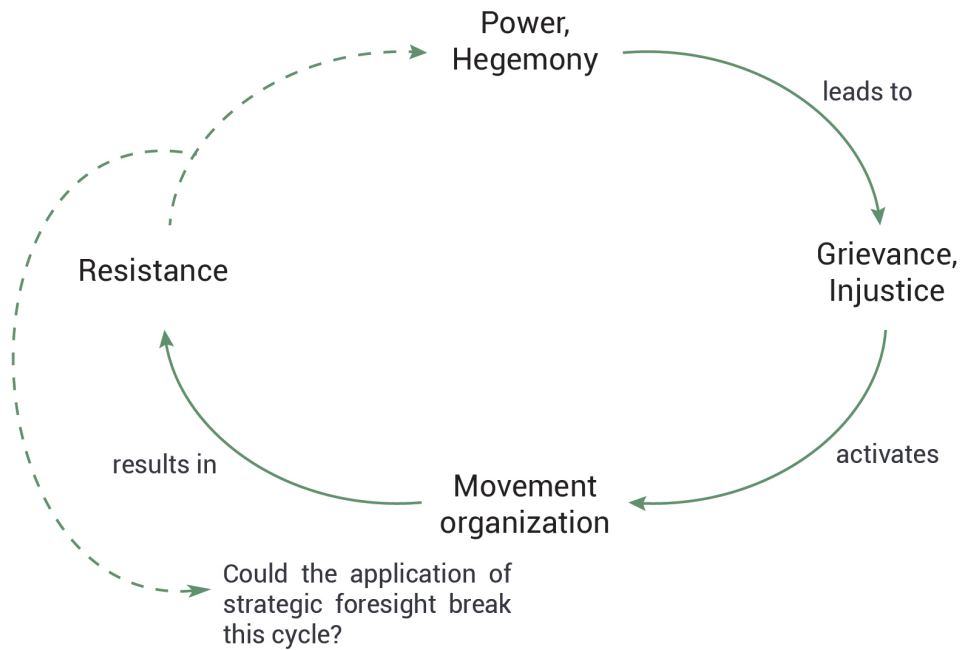


Figure 2: Social movement cycle, including the idea that strategic foresight could potentially break the recurring cycle.

Research Question

This research will explore the intersection of social movements and futures studies, and to understand: how might social movements use strategic foresight to envision and create futures that are more equitable, just, and sustainable?

Rationale

Climate science foresees a set of existential risks to civilization that may be irreversible. Today's world faces unprecedented social, environmental, and economic challenges. Now, more than ever, social movements are organized with increased urgency and pressure on government leaders to maintain accountability for their actions, as movements encourage the development of societies that are more equitable, just, and sustainable.

Social movements can have great power and influence, but are often criticized for failing to meet their goals and objectives (Jackson, Petersen, Bull, Monsen, & Richmond, 1960; White, 2016; White, 2017; Crutchfield, 2018). Although futures studies has traditionally been used by militaries and corporations (Cornish, 2004; Masini, 2006; Son, 2015), there have been efforts to make the practices more accessible and participatory.

The purpose of this research is not to overhaul how social movements are organized but rather, to offer a perspective on how social movements can apply strategic foresight tools to their organizing as a way to encourage action, support efforts of resistance, and collectively, actively envision more preferable futures.

This research will explore potential relationships and confluences between the fields of social movements and futures studies. This could be useful for activists and social movement organizers who are looking for insight as to how their mobilizations could be more strategic and futures-oriented. Additionally, this research could be applicable for futures proponents, such as individuals who are interested in participatory and inclusive futures, because it can create new opportunities for networking and collaboration between the fields of social movements and futures studies. This collaboration is important because strategic foresight's militaristic history has led to the corporatization of futures and a field that is exclusive to 'futures experts'. However, the future is something that we are all responsible for and should therefore have a hand in creating.

Social movements could be one of the ways in which strategic foresight becomes more inclusive, participatory, and encompassing of the needs of the most vulnerable in society today. This research contributes to the theoretical convergence of the two fields, as theories of social movements and futures studies are covered, first individually and then convergently, throughout the literature review.

Methodology

Throughout this research project, I have drawn upon my own experiences studying strategic foresight and social movements, while maintaining a critical perspective of both fields.

1. Literature Review:

- On the topic of social movements to understand social movement theories, why people join them, social movement goals, as well as an examination of current social movements;
- On the topic of futures studies to understand futures studies as a field, including foresight, scenarios, and design fiction;
- On the convergence of the two topics, social movements and futures studies, to examine the current role that social movements play in futures studies, and vice versa. This area was the least populous in terms of academic research.

2. Convergence Map:

- To map the convergence of the fields of social movements and futures studies to visualize overlapping themes inherent in the two fields, as well as possible areas of contention.

3. Popular Media Scan:

- To examine current trends and narratives, specifically surrounding the climate strikes that occurred across the world in September 2019, to understand how the media portrayed the movement, as well as how futures-oriented language was used by strike participants. This method provides pertinent examples of how social movements and futures studies may be converging, as well as diverging, particularly in regards to the climate justice movement.

These three research methods were used in conjunction with my own experience participating in the Toronto Climate Strike that occurred on September 27, 2019.

I chose to examine the climate justice movement as an example of a modern social movement. Since there are so many social movements to choose from, this was an intentional choice. The climate justice movement is relevant, timely, and applies to individuals of all backgrounds and identities. While the climate justice movement has existed for decades, its recent manifestations in the global climate strikes are particularly relevant to this research project because of how youth participants have framed the narrative of the movement, and subsequently how the media has decided to portray the movement.

The participants' intentional focus on their futures is a significant reason why I chose to examine this movement in the context of this research. With many social movements today, the media plays a considerable role, not only in how information about a movement is portrayed, but also what information is portrayed.

As detailed in Chapter 2, the youth participating in this movement have been able to use futures thinking language to create a sense of urgency for climate action. In some ways, this was the catalyst that led me to focus my research on social movements and futures studies.

Limitations

As with any research project, this MRP is not without its own limitations.

Time

The duration of this research project was very short and as a result, there was not enough time to consider all aspects of social movements or studies. While there are already vast amounts of theoretical research conducted on both social movements and futures studies, they are two very practical fields. Although the fields are practical, no primary research was conducted to test the theories outlined in this research. With more time, I would have been able to speak with social movement and futures studies experts to collect their perspectives on the topic. Additionally, more time would have allowed for the testing and application of the ideas outlined in this research through a collaborative or co-creative workshop.

Perspective

My own perspective as a white settler is a limitation since I do not have the lived experiences of many other individuals. Through this research, I aimed to ensure that I was not speaking for other individuals, but instead used my privilege to amplify the voices of those who are often marginalized in society today. An additional limitation is the fact that this research relies heavily on literature that is also from a Western perspective. The majority of scholarly research on the topics of social movements and futures studies is written by academics of European descent. There are likely many other cultural perspectives on these topics that were not covered because of structural limitations.

Assumptions

In conjunction with the fact that this research focuses on Western conceptions of both futures studies and social movements, the idea of democracy was heavily relied upon. This means that the social movements considered in this research are assumed to have been applied in democratic societies. There are many places in the world where government structures restrict the rights of individuals. In those cases, individuals risk their lives by protesting and organizing for social change. A major limitation of this research is the fact that not everyone has equal rights or opportunities to organize or participate in social movements.

CHAPTER 2

Social Movements & Futures Studies

Chapter 2

Social movements have existed for centuries, as they are a viable option for groups of people to resist injustices and inequities all over the world. Issues such as climate change, poverty, gender inequality, racial inequality, war, and access to food and clean drinking water are examples of issues that billions of people around the world are forced to live with daily. Throughout history, people who live with these inequalities have often taken matters into their own hands through organized protests and social movements to voice their concerns; to rally efforts to influence positive social, economic, or environmental change. Author and activist David McNally (2006/2017) states that “radical movements cannot change societies without a vision of a different society” (p. 64).

To build hope and support for a cause, most social movements use an element of futures studies to create visions of a new, future society that is more desirable. Studies of the future can be used to imagine futures that are radically different from the present. However, some futures studies, specifically strategic foresight, are often inaccessible and exclusive to corporate agendas.

With roots based in the military (Cornish, 2004), strategic foresight is likely not often practiced by grassroots and community organizations today. This review of current literature will broadly examine social movements of the twentieth and twenty-first century to understand how movements form, why people participate in them, why they are important, as well as social movement goals and successes. Numerous studies provide in-depth investigations of specific social movements, however, specific social movements will not be examined thoroughly here. Rather, through a popular media scan, this research will draw on and refer to the efforts of the climate justice movement from a North American context as an example of a modern social movement.

Additionally, a review of foresight and futures studies literature will be presented to understand its origins and current applications. Finally, I will look to the convergence of these two fields, social movements and foresight, to see how (or even if) social movements have applied foresight, if it was useful or successful, and if there are further opportunities for foresight application in the organization and dissemination of social movements as a way to inspire sustainable and transformative change. Each section will be summarized, with the main themes conveyed through a visual mapping to examine and compare similar and contentious ideas within the fields (Figures 3, 6, and 13).

Social Movements

Sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and other academic experts have dedicated their research to the examination of social movements. From social movement theory in general, to the particular aspects of individual social movements, there is no shortage of academic commentary on the subject. Hence, there is currently no consensus on a definition of social movements. Charles Tilly, a scholar known for his contributions on the field of social movements, provides a broad definition of social movements as contentious politics (Tilly, 2004, p. 3). Others might describe social movements as efforts of purposeful, organized groups striving toward a common goal of creating some kind of social change (Vyain et al., n.d., 647), or more specifically, "collective challenges to existing arrangements of power and distribution by people with common purpose and sustained solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998).

Social movements, along with their efforts and impacts, have been studied for decades. As our world is ongoingly afflicted by social, environmental, and economic inequities, social movements will continue to emerge. Most of the social movement literature examined for this research is limited to a North American and European context.

Analyses of political histories project that social movements became popularized throughout Western Europe and North America in the late eighteenth century (Tilly, 2004, p. 3). Social movements continue to be used as avenues for organizing efforts of collective action against oppressive powers today.

Social movements are often born out of a particular collective grievance among a group of interested individuals (p. 4). Other purveyors of social movements provide a deeper analysis of what constitutes a movement, and highlight the fact that while it is essential for social movements to have a "common purpose" and "solidarity", ongoing collective action is also necessary, as "isolated incidents of collective action are not social movements" (Klandermans, 2001, p. 269). Charles Tilly echoes this notion, as he states that not all popular action can or should be considered a social movement (Tilly, 2004, p. 7). According to Tilly, social movements require worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC). Put simply, Tilly offers the idea that a social movement that has worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment has a high chance at achieving its goals. It is the sustained interaction of these components that constitute a social movement (p. 3-4).

Tilly offers no framework for measuring these components, but mentions that they can look different across communities and movements. Experts believe that it is the sustained, collective efforts of social movements that play a key role in influencing change. Conversely, singular instances of popular action are unable to appeal to a collective grievance or deploy a collective identity, therefore falling short of the WUNC framework (Tilly, 1999, p. 262).

These elements are not exclusive to a particular movement; they are expected to fit movements of all sizes, efforts, and goals. The WUNC framework is highly regarded in social movement literature, but lacks depth and cohesiveness amongst other theories of social movements. The WUNC idea fits in theoretical frameworks on social movements that examine a movement once it has passed, and is not useful to apply to emerging social movements.

Wouters and Walgrave (2017) provide a critical examination of Tilly's WUNC framework, adding diversity to the beginning of the acronym (dWUNC). They found that "dWUNC as a theoretical framework may add weight to the claim that, by the kind of action they stage, movements...can be agents of their own success and can create their own opportunities to exert political influence, putting pressure on the broader structure of constraints" (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017, p. 13).

While some may suggest we are in an era of new social movements, or modern social movements, many of the basic grievances and principles on which social movements of the twenty-first century stand are very similar to social movements that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Calhoun, 1993, p. 386). However, Calhoun notes a blindspot in academic analyses of social movements past, wherein the vast majority of social movement literature from the early nineteenth century lacks, or explicitly ignores, questions of culture and identity (p. 388). Historical social movement scholarship focused almost entirely on economic and political aspects of movements.

This means that aspects of movements that included "values, norms, language, identities, and collective understandings", including the participants involved in those movements themselves, were often left unacknowledged (p. 388). Although critical examinations of social movements from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries put forth the idea that modern social movements "have been crucially focused on identity politics" (Aronowitz, 1992), this does not mean that those types of movements did not exist in the past.

Arguably, it is almost impossible to remove identity from economic and political movements, especially because people make up society, the economy, and politics. This concept was amplified through feminist movements, which challenged patriarchy with the slogan “the personal is political” (Calhoun, 1993, p. 416). However, especially in a North American context, an increase in industrialization and strong state mechanics created a system which “brought certain movement concerns permanently into the political arena while leaving others out” (p. 417).

It should not go unnoticed that historical movements that were focused on identity politics were often not examined by social movement scholars at the time. Therefore, the social movements that did focus on identity, such as feminist movements, were more likely to be shelved or categorized as popular action instead of social movements. The movements focused on identity and culture were likely in direct resistance to the hegemonic structures that studied and examined social movements, their goals, successes, and failures. While most analyses that focus on the lack of identity politics were written about historically, this is something that still occurs today.

The climate justice movement is one that is very active today, and has been for many years. According to Roberts and Parks (2009), the climate justice movement was sparked during a Conference of the Parties-6 in 2000. It was at this time when the 'Rising Tide' coalition for climate justice came into being. At that time, they were:

An international network of groups and individuals committed to a grassroots approach to fighting for climate justice. [They] believe that the Kyoto protocol will fail to combat the climate change crisis. Instead the protocol promotes the self-interest of corporations and industrialized nations and marginalizes issues of global equity and the environment. (Roberts & Parks, 2009, p. 394)

Climate justice proponents have criticized contemporary environmentalism, especially in the United States. The United States has a reputation of focusing on the habits of individual consumers, which was well incorporated into the country's obsession with "individual consumer choices, the erosion of commitment to the common good, and the belief that the free market is the most natural expression of human relations" (Thomson, 2014). The significance of the climate justice movement is that, historically and today, it aims to "bring together environmental activists with those who most likely suffer first and worst from climate change" (Roberts & Parks, 2009, p. 394). Anthropogenic climate change impacts everyone but "those who are marginalized or oppressed are experiencing [the impacts] to an even greater extent, creating climate injustice" (International Federation of Social Workers, 2019). The Ecology Action Centre, based in Nova Scotia believes that:

Inequality, injustice, vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, the power to protect yourself, your family or community from its damaging effects, and the power to influence policies to mitigate its effects are not separate issues, but deeply connected, and must be addressed together. This is what it means to work for climate justice. (Ecology Action Centre, 2019)

The concept of justice is central in this fight for change because, while it focuses on environmental issues, it also incorporates social, political, and economic issues and how they are related to climate change. The only way we can bring forth equitable solutions to climate change is through efforts of climate justice.

Intersectionality in Social Movement Studies

A noteworthy observation is that the majority of social movement scholarship, both modern and historical, is presented by experts in academia, while most, if not all, social movement execution is done at the level of grassroots or community organizing. While many social movements aim to reject traditional hierarchies and institutions of power (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. 6), these structures are often reinforced through academic scholarship.

Additionally, much of the historical contributions of social movement theory are dominated by men of European descent. The fact that the history of social movements is predominantly written by Western male scholars can contribute to a lack of critical discourse surrounding the history of social movements, which can potentially perpetuate bias and other blindspots in how social movement theory is understood today. Some even state that social movement studies has become depoliticized, and must re-centre activist work in the discourse (Broad, 2017, p. 50).

More recent studies, of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, begin to provide an intersectional approach to understanding social movements (Ernst, 2010; Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013; Terriguez, 2015; Broad, 2017). Intersectionality can be defined as “the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (Davis, 2008, p. 68). something that still occurs today.

Founded in Black feminist scholarship in the late 1980s, intersectionality is particularly important to consider when discussing social movements, since it aims to create space for an understanding of interlocking forms of oppression and the diverse identities of individuals involved in social movements.

Intersectionality can serve an important role in resisting and transforming social problems; those who have the lived experience of oppression can come together with others in support and solidarity. Intersectionality in social movements can help to overturn systems that perpetuate oppression for many living in society today.

Social movement studies often speak of collective identity as an essential piece of recruiting participants for social movements. While collective identity is an important part of social movement discourse, this aspect, as it is portrayed in social movement literature, is overly simplistic. While identity can be a source of strength and community, when social movements aim to create a universal unity among participants and members, it can consequently ignore differences within groups. For example, in feminist and anti-racist efforts, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) asserts that “feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and anti-racist efforts to politicize experiences of people of colour have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains” (1242), when in fact, individuals often have membership in both groups.

Reducing individuals to choose only parts of their identities, consequently creating an either/or position, can force those with membership in both, or sometimes multiple, groups to pick and choose parts of their identities for the sake of the movement.

People are complex, not homogeneous, with multiple facets to their identity. Intersectionality, therefore, is crucial to understanding social movements because it “seek[s] unity without uniformity and mobilizes identities without demanding that people be identical” (Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013, p. 924).

With regard to the climate justice movement, intersectionality can allow for a critical understanding of structural inequities and how some groups of people are at greater risk in the climate crisis, and should therefore be included in the conversation and mobilization of climate justice efforts. Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) provide an intersectional understanding of climate change. Through their research, they found that:

Although studies and political initiatives that focus on one single variable (such as place, gender, or economic status) are valuable for illuminating power relations in the face of climate change, they often fail to consider how this base for inequality is intertwined with and even reinforced by other structures of domination. (p. 420-421)

Intersectionality is crucial when planning and mobilizing efforts of climate justice. Kaijser and Kronsell state that there has been a significant lack of research and action on applying an intersectional analysis to studies focused on the issue of climate change (p. 421). Their research offers ideas on how to bring intersectionality into the climate justice conversation, such as by examining power structures and norms that aim to serve only privileged populations (p. 428).

Since the fight for climate justice is increasingly diverse, complex, and oftentimes context-specific, “it is not feasible to provide a common intersectional methodology; the methods always need to be adapted to the specific context or case under study” (p. 429). Over the past five years, there has been a concerted effort to analyze climate justice through a lens of intersectionality (Thompson-Hall, et. al, 2016; Gonda, 2017; Kings, 2017; Malin & Ryder, 2018).

Why Do People Join Social Movements?

The topic of social movement development has long been contested in various academic circles. Theories of relative deprivation (Gurney & Tierney, 1982), resource mobilization, (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), and political opportunity (Meyer, 2004) are examples of approaches that have been used to analyze social movements, their emergence, and debated successes. These theories explore psycho-sociological, as well as political and economic motivations for why social movements come into being, as well as why people choose to participate in them. While all of these theories have unique qualities, it is difficult to choose one theory as the most correct, as there are aspects from all of them that are sensible and applicable in the context of social movements today.

Before delving into ideas on why people join social movements, we must first take a closer look at why social movements come into being. Klandermans (2001) provides three basic reasons for why social movements come into being: people are aggrieved, people have the resources to mobilize, and people seize the political opportunity. The reasons Klandermans presents here are a combination of relative deprivation, resource mobilization, and political opportunity theories. Although Klandermans' points competently depict why social movements come into being, his analysis lacks an exploration of how structures of power influence social movements today.

Present in some social movement literature are ideas of power and resistance. Michel Foucault provides a useful approach to understanding systems of power, which is necessary when examining the role of social movements in society today. Foucault (1978) states that "where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95). Social movements "are often imagined as standing apart from, and in direct confrontation with, the power they oppose" (Death, 2010, p. 237). However, "power cannot easily be located" (Baumgarten & Ullrich, 2012, p. 1), and is not always clearly distinct; power can often be messy and complex.

Power permeates so many different aspects of society, including within social movements, that it cannot simply be removed, ignored, or overcome. Therefore, it is insufficient to assume a binary between power and social movements. Although some social movements aim to resist or overcome certain systems of power at play in society, power is still present within social movements. Some may assume that the presence of power in social movements means the movement has failed or will not be successful. For example, videos from Seattle's 'anti-globalization' protests show protesters defacing a Nike sign whilst wearing Nike shoes (Death, 2010, p. 238; Amoore & Langley, 2004). Although this may appear to be ironic, it reflects the "inevitable interrelationship between relations of power and resistance in rhizomatic global politics" (Death, 2010, p. 238).

It is also true that social movements are able to mobilize a unique form of power. Today, social movements are "no longer perceived as an unequivocally negative force, a symptom of social disintegration that ought to be quashed, but instead as one of the key sources of power, an unruly and vital phenomenon that ought to be harnessed" (White, 2019).

People are a foundational component of social movements, and there can be many different reasons why an individual decides to become involved in a particular social movement. As social, economic, environmental, and political grievances continue to prevail in modern society, it would appear that people have more reasons than ever to participate in social movements.

Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema (1987) take into consideration the different theories of social movement motivation and provide an overview of individual mobilization in social movements. Three basic ideas as to why people join social movements are: 1) the desire to change circumstances (instrumentality), 2) the desire to belong to some group (identity), and 3) the desire to give meaning to one's life (meaning) (Klandermans, 2001, p. 277). Some may think that meaning is the most important reason why people join social movements.

However, it is crucial to consider how all three reasons play a role in an individual's decision to join a social movement. Further suggestions indicate that individuals will only become involved in social movements if there are low barriers to participation, or if they are the specific target of mobilization efforts (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987, p. 519).

But, barriers for participation in social movements can often be high. For example, people may not have the adequate and necessary resources needed to participate in social movements (Martin, 2008; Ganz, 2010), whereas others may feel that participating in social movements could jeopardize their individual safety (Hannah Jones, 2008; Oppenheim, 2018; Padden, 2019).

Individuals can easily lose motivation when they are not the target of a mobilization effort, as well as when there is a lack of structural foundations in place that encourage someone to participate (Klandermans, & Oegema, 1987, p. 520; Klandermans, 2001, p. 270).

People's participation is an essential component in social movements; without people, there would be no social movements. An additional barrier to participation is the adoption of a negative mindset, specifically that of a self-fulfilling prophecy. This means that "if people believe that only a few will participate [in a social movement] they will not be motivated to participate, and will thus make their own expectation true" (p. 280).

While it is true that individuals can often face a number of barriers to participating in social movements, there are some individuals who might not see participation as only optional, but as essential. This could be because their livelihood, or even existence, is at risk and they must resist oppressive powers through efforts of social movements.

Today's climate justice movement is one that calls on governments, as well as industries, and individuals, to recognize that our world's climate is rapidly changing, nearing the point of no return ("World nearing 'critical'", 2018). However, often missing from the conversation on the topic of climate justice is the disproportionate inequities Indigenous people face around the world, especially in the times of a climate crisis. There are many ways in which climate change disproportionately affects Indigenous peoples, including that fact that Indigenous peoples often "live in geographical locations that are particularly prone to the impacts of climate change, [depend] on lands and environmental resources for basic needs and economic security, and [experience] economic deprivation as well as social and political marginalization" (Jones, 2019, p. 75).

When governments propose climate action, they often do not work together with Indigenous communities and as a result, Indigenous peoples continue to face injustices and inequities. As a result, there have been many Indigenous, grassroots efforts focused on climate justice that are in direct resistance to colonial developments. Indigenous advocacy groups, such as the Indigenous Environmental Network, are dedicated to putting forth efforts of climate action that focuses on justice for the environment, as well as for Indigenous communities.

During global climate strikes, people were reintroduced to Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner, Autumn Peltier. Autumn spoke on the global stage at United Nations conferences about her experience as an Indigenous youth living in Canada, where many Indigenous communities do not have access to safe and clean water. Autumn's message is clear: "We can't eat money or drink oil" ("Canadian Indigenous water activist", 2019). She is dedicated to protecting freshwater and ensuring all Indigenous peoples have access to safe and clean water. She uses her traditional knowledge of the sacredness of water and shares the importance of it with others. She says that, "Maybe, we need to have more elders and youth together sitting at the decision table when people make decisions about our lands and waters" ("Canadian Indigenous water activist", 2019). As Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner, her efforts are to ensure that her great grandchildren have a future ("Autumn Peltier appointed", 2019). For Autumn, her participation in resistance goes beyond the frameworks academics propose for participation in social movements; it is part of her genealogy.

Over time, social movements have changed in their emergence and organization, especially with technological advancements. Specifically, the internet and social media have allowed activists, social movements leaders, and participants to connect and interact in new ways. It is important to consider how social media has contributed or changed social movement participation in the context of the twenty-first century.

The majority of academic discourse on the topic of participation in social movements was written decades before smartphones, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat even existed. There are some who believe that social media does more to harm rather than help social movements, predominantly focusing on the idea of “slacktivism”. Slacktivism can be defined as a “low-risk, low-cost activity via social media, whose sole purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity” (Rotman, et. al, 2011, p. 821). However, the idea has been tested to see if those who participate in slacktivism are more or less likely to participate in activism offline. The majority of studies found that participation in online forms of activism, does lead to offline participation in activism and social movements (Kwak, et. al, 2018; Lane & Dal Cin, 2018; Smith, et. al, 2019).

Put simply, “those who use and depend on social media more were identified as having higher levels of both intention to participate and actual participation in social movements” (Hwang & Kim, 2015, p. 486). While it is clear that social media can play an important role in social movement participation, not everyone is active on social media, which means that it should not be the sole tool for social movement engagement and participation.

Today's Movement Society

While social movements have existed for centuries, it appears as if their frequency has increased globally in this decade alone. Social media, along with the constant cycle of news from around the world, allows us to see events, like social movements, as they happen, almost instantly. Donatella della Porta, an Italian political scientist, points out that the intensity of social movements has fluctuated over the past seven decades, but suggests we may now be living in a "movement society" (della Porta, 2006, p. 2). The idea of a movement society has existed for over twenty years, and many social movement scholars have debated this idea. According to Meyer & Tarrow (1998), they offer that the idea of a movement society assumes the following:

1. Social protest has moved from being a sporadic, if recurring feature of democratic politics, to become a perpetual element in modern life,
2. Protest behaviour is employed with greater frequency, by more diverse constituencies, and is used to represent a wider range of claims than ever before, and
3. Professionalization and institutionalization may be changing the major vehicle of contentious politics – the social movement – into an instrument within the realm of conventional politics. (p. 4)

On the surface, these three points are not inherently negative, but rather observations from possible realities of living in a movement society. However, when considering the ramifications of the reality of a movement society, there could be potentially harmful impacts on social movement efforts.

Social movements come into being for a variety of important reasons; to protest unfair working conditions, to demand justice for marginalized groups, or to call on governments to declare a climate emergency for example. In reference to the three aforementioned points above, a movement society could diminish a social movement's goals and successes when they are seen as common, or as a regular part of politics. This is especially true in the context of North American and European countries, where relatively well-developed economies and democratic political systems allow for citizens to organize and mobilize social movements freely (Meyer & Pullum, 2015, p. 23).

For some, living in a movement society could be seen as positive; perhaps it could be a way to garner more support and awareness for movements. On the contrary, the reality of a social movement society often comes with a heightened police presence, which has “resulted in militarized policing strategies against...contentious protesters” (Wood, 2015, p. 139). This has led to a new form of protest policing, which “has limited the space for dissent for those unwilling or unable to cooperate with state authorities” (p. 139). The normalization of social movements could lead to the desensitization of contentious politics.

This could be problematic when it comes to social movements trying to achieve certain goals. The element of professionalization and institutionalization can also be complicated for social movements, particularly for movements whose aims and goals are to dismantle or resist those very elements.

The Fridays for Future movement group has garnered support from over thirty countries around the world. Efforts put forth by Fridays for Future constituencies culminated with global climate strikes that occurred in the month of September 2019. The Fridays for Future group originated because of a lack of action on the global climate crisis (“About #FridaysForFuture”, 2019). Greta Thunberg, the founder of the Fridays for Future movement, has been vocal in her dissent of global leaders’ inaction when it comes to the climate crisis. In Canada specifically, hundreds of thousands of individuals of all ages participated in the climate strikes. The climate strike that occurred on September 27, 2019 undoubtedly meet Charles Tilly’s WUNC framework for social movement classification.

Interestingly, though, was who chose to participate in this protest, specifically, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. While Justin Trudeau has campaigned on promises of tackling climate change, some of the decisions he made as the federal leader do not demonstrate the urgency needed in the times of a climate crisis (Illyckyj, 2017; Murphy, 2019; Randwanski, 2019). The fact that Justin Trudeau, and other government leaders, were participating in the climate strike speaks directly to the harmful ramifications of living in a movement society. The main purpose of the Fridays for Future protests rebuke global leaders’ inaction, and having a federal leader participate in one of the largest protests in Canada’s history seems nothing short of contradictory. His participation in the strike appears as if he is protesting against himself.

When social movements become normalized and institutionalized, they risk becoming depoliticized, as was clear through Justin Trudeau’s participation in Canada’s climate strike. While a movement society can be positive for some reasons, it is crucial to remember why social movements exist in the first place. The inherent political roots of social movements are a key component in advocating for change.

It may be increasingly apparent that we are living in a movement society, which means that social movements and their organizers are going to have to live with this reality and the implications it could have on social movement mobilization. A movement society could mean that some social movements need to put extra effort into motivating participants, gathering support, mobilizing resources, and building awareness because movements have become so common.

As the landscape on which social movements stand begins to shift, it is no doubt that social movement leadership has changed over time as well, especially as we begin to recognize that we live in a movement society. Historically, social movements have been marked by charismatic and memorable leaders, the majority of whom have been men. Research suggests that women played secondary leadership roles, which included networking and supporting formal leaders, while performing “the bulk of a movement’s emotional work” (Morris & Staggenborg, 2004, p. 177).

More recently, however, since so many social movements aim to reject, disrupt, or dismantle traditional hierarchies, some would suggest that “social movements consistently and decisively reject traditional, centralized forms of political organization” (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. 6). Movement leadership that is strategically centralized, or horizontal, “forges a social movement community and mobilizes its resources, a primary source of social movement power” (Ganz, 2008). There is also an idea of leaderfull movements, coined by civil rights activist Ella Baker (Crutchfield, 2018, p. 151).

According to Crutchfield (2018):

Leaderfull movements empower local leaders to step forward. Leadership begins at the grassroots, and lots of power resides there. And while national campaign leaders like Lightner push for change from the grass-tops, they recognize that giving local organizations and individuals the resources, incentives, and platforms to work together in common cause is key to success. Second, a leaderfull movement centers on coalitions of like-minded allies and unusual suspects—and it's not led by a lone individual or organization calling the shots, always demanding center stage. Successful movement leaders bring diverse coalitions together under a "big tent." Third, a hallmark of leaderfull movements is the people with the lived experience of the problem—the individuals most directly affected by the cause—are empowered to speak and act on behalf of the organization. If some grassroots constituents don't initially have the innate ability to speak, grass-tops leaders groom them. Leaderfull movement leaders give the grassroots the tools and roadmaps to success—not commands or detailed instructions that must be followed. (p. 146)

One example of a social movement that does away with traditional leadership roles is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The BLM movement, started by three women, has rejected the idea of the charismatic leader often found in traditional social movement organizing, and instead is combining "horizontal organizational structures with policy demands...testing new ways to combine democratic organization with political effectiveness" (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. 11-12).

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004) further propose the idea of swarm intelligence, citing metaphors of bees pollinating and making honey in their hives to describe the ways that social movements organize and operate (p. 92). They offer that swarms are collectives, organizing and communicating in networked and cooperative ways, subsequently concluding that "we are more intelligent together than any one of us is alone" (pp. 92, 340).

These ideas of centralized, horizontal, and collective forms of power are actively resisting traditional hierarchical structures. Social movement organizers are recognizing that the ways in which things have always been done is no longer working. Therefore, they are able to mobilize and organize in hopes of creating a better world.

In terms of climate justice, it can be seen that there are inconsistencies with how the movements are covered in the media. It has been observed that a Canadian news media outlet, the National Post, has barely posted any coverage on the Canadian climate strikes that occurred on September 27, 2019, as part of the global Fridays for Future initiative (McMahon, 2019). In an event that saw hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country strike for the climate, it seems odd that a national news outlet posted barely any content from the strikes.

While the news media are not examining the movement from a scholarly standpoint, their power is still prevalent because they are able to choose which stories get shared with the public. The fact that they barely offer any insights into Canada's climate strikes feels akin to historical social movement analyses that did not examine movements focused on identity politics. This could indicate that structural institutions are reluctant to give in to the demands or resistance of a movement if it does not benefit them.

It is evident that social movements continue to grapple with many issues, and not merely just the issue(s) for which they are protesting. Longtime social movement scholar Michael Hardt (2017) states that, "some of the most important work of social movements today, in addition to protesting and resisting the injustices of the ruling powers, is to imagine that a new world is possible" (p. 231). Taking this into account, there could be a lot of stress placed on social movements to create a sort of revolution.

How can social movements balance the external issues, such as a saturated movement landscape, and internal issues, such as participant mobilization, that arise when organizing movements? Questions such as these can be accumulated by the following question: how can we develop the strategic capacities of the multitude? (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. 20). This question focuses specifically on the capacity of the multitude, which Hardt & Negri (2004) describe as "the many...different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires" (p. xiv). Overall, "the multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences" (p. xiv).

With that said, it is clear that social movements are comprised of multitudes, and one way to develop their capacities is through the application of strategic foresight in their organizing efforts to foster transformative social change.

Social Movements: In Summary

In summary, I have shared only a small piece of social movement history, noting that social movements have existed for centuries. Social movements can take many different shapes and sizes, and people choose to participate in social movements for a variety of reasons. Participation could be sparked by a particular grievance or injustice, and people can participate in movements online as well as in-person through protests, demonstrations, or other forms of collective action. Over time, social movement leadership has become more horizontal and networked since social movement organizers often take on a lot of responsibility and, therefore, cannot be handled by one person alone.

Social movements cannot be everything for everyone and there can often be barriers to participation, such as personal safety or a lack of resources. However, there are instances where some people do not have a choice, where an injustice is so grave and potentially life-threatening that the lives of people depend on mobilizing for action. In recent years, social movement scholars have observed that we are currently living in a social movement society. The reality of a social movement society comes with cause for concern, since it can lead to the normalization, depoliticization, and desensitization of social movements.

Key themes of social movements, as examined above, are highlighted in Figure 3. This visual representation is not an exhaustive list of social movement components. Social movements are the first main component and area of inquiry in this MRP. The following section provides a critical overview of futures studies literature.

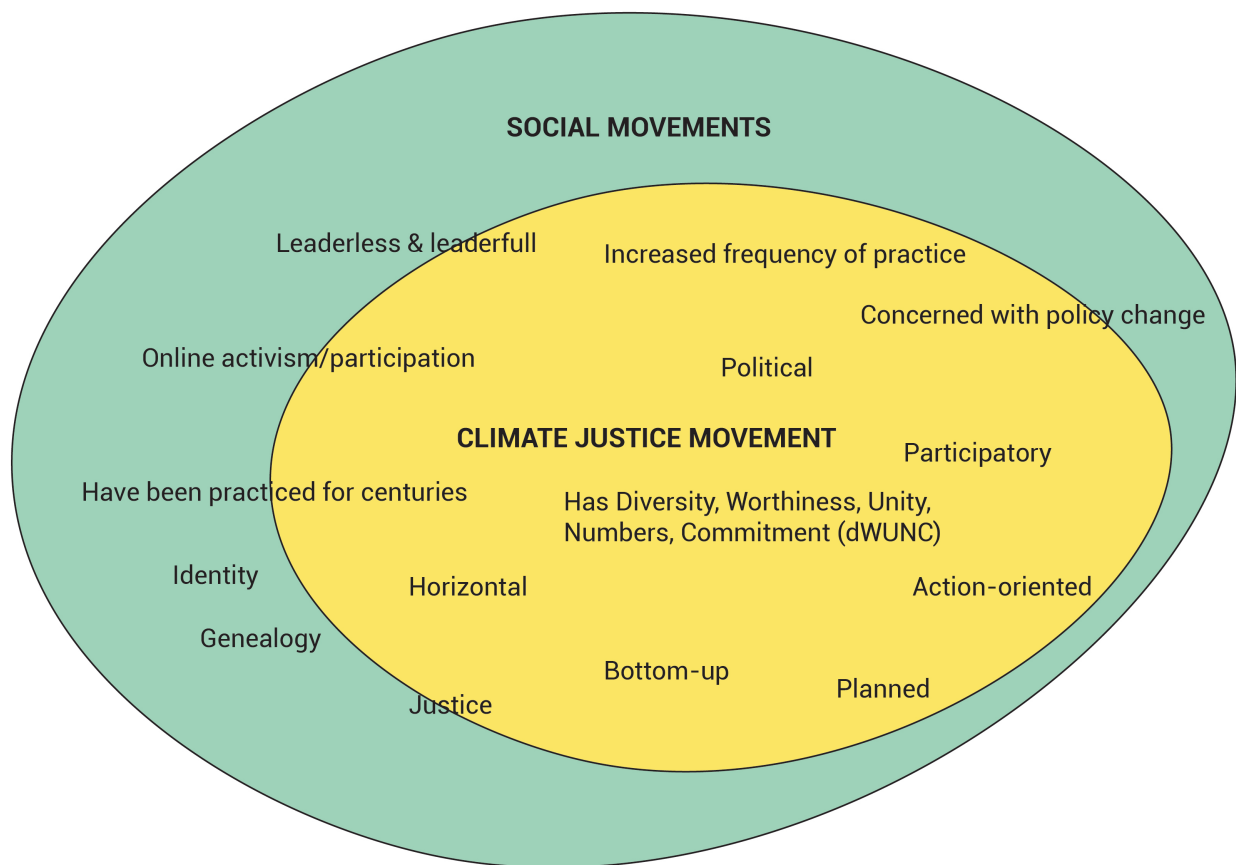


Figure 3: Social movement themes, including the climate justice movement.

Futures Studies

Nearly every human has the ability to think about the future; it can be considered an innate human capability. Starting your day by looking at the weather forecast and deciding to bring an umbrella is an example of how people are always thinking about and planning for the future. The formalized field of future studies is more complex than planning for a day's weather forecast. Evidence of futures studies can be found in numerous disciplines, including but not limited to science, technology, business, and political science.

Studies also indicate that the use of futures thinking can be traced back to ancient times through the dissemination of divination and religion (Son, 2015, p. 122), and religion still plays a large role in how people think about the future today. Most of the futures studies literature reviewed for the purposes of this research project is rooted in a North American perspective. This is somewhat limiting because although there is not a singular or most correct way to think about or study futures, different cultures often think about futures and histories differently. This is important to be mindful of when sharing ideas of futures studies; since not everyone thinks about the future in the same way, one should aim to be as inclusive and open as possible.

In general, futures studies can be described as an "evolving field that uses a variety of tools to consider the future more consciously and to create the future more effectively" (Bezold, 2019, p. 1). More specifically, futures studies aims to consider "the possibility of looking into the future at various levels in order to better understand the changing interrelations between [humans], society, and the environment" (Masini, 2006, p. 1162). It is difficult to pinpoint an exact time when futures studies became a formalized school of thought. Wendell Bell (2009) suggests that some of the first origins of futures studies was evident in an article published by the English writer H.G. Wells in the year 1901 (p. 7).

Bell indicates further that a few decades later, in the year 1932, H.G. Wells called for "a science of the future" during a talk radio show on the British Broadcasting Corporation, stating that "not only Professors of Foresight were needed, but entire Faculties and Departments of Foresight to anticipate and prepare for the coming future" (p. 7). One well known futurist, Alvin Toffler, coined the term "future shock" in the late 1960s to describe a phenomenon he was observing at the time. Toffler describes future shock as a psychological disruption, experienced by individuals and society alike, that is a "dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future" (Toffler, 1965, p. 451).

Toffler later went on to publish a book titled *Future Shock* in the year 1970, where he provides an in-depth exploration of how change and the idea of future shock affects, and will affect, individuals and societies. It was during this time that the field of futures studies was attracting more attention and being studied by academics of various disciplines.

A common misconception about futures studies is that the field tasks itself with predicting the future. However, that is not the case. Futurists often clearly ensure that they are not in the business of predicting the future. Roy Amara was the third President of the Institute for the Future and he proposed the following three principles for futures studies: 1.) the future is not predetermined, 2.) the future is not predictable, and 3.) future outcomes can be influenced by our choices in the present (Amara, 1981). These three principles remain foundational and crucial considerations for the field of futures studies to this day. It is important for futurists to keep these ideas in mind when studying possible futures because they provide boundaries for what can sometimes feel like a boundless field of inquiry; there are so many possible futures, and studying them can be overwhelming.

The Possible, Plausible, Probable, Preferable

One idea that all aspects of futures studies has in common is the fact that there is not one, inevitable, singular future, but instead, that multiple futures are possible. An important aspect that is relevant in the majority of futures studies literature is the cone of plausibility (Figure 4). Sometimes referred to as the futures cone, it is a useful resource in the broad field of futures studies. The cone was coined by futurists Clement Bezold and Trevor Hancock while they were working on a health futures project with the World Health Organization in the year 1993 (Hancock & Bezold, 1994). It shows the idea of four types of futures: the possible future, the plausible future, the probable future, and the preferable future. The details of each future is as follows:

- The possible future — what may happen — encompasses everything we can possibly imagine, no matter how unlikely, including “science fiction” futures that transgress presently accepted laws of science. The possible future includes “wildcards”...typically low-probability but high-impact events.
- The plausible future — what could happen — represents a narrower scope, emphasizing those possible futures that seem to make sense given what we know today. Plausible futures can be discrete forecasts of individual trends or a set of scenarios that each combine differing trends and together describe a range of alternative futures.
- The probable future — what will likely happen — is based on our examination of our present situation and our appraisal of likely trends and future developments. It is one of the plausible futures, sometimes referred to as “business as usual”.
- The preferable future — what we want to have happen — is sometimes called “prescriptive futurism”. Preferable futures are visions that generally begin by identifying and trying to create a future that does not yet exist. Vision moves reality beyond the present toward the best that can be. (p. 24-25).

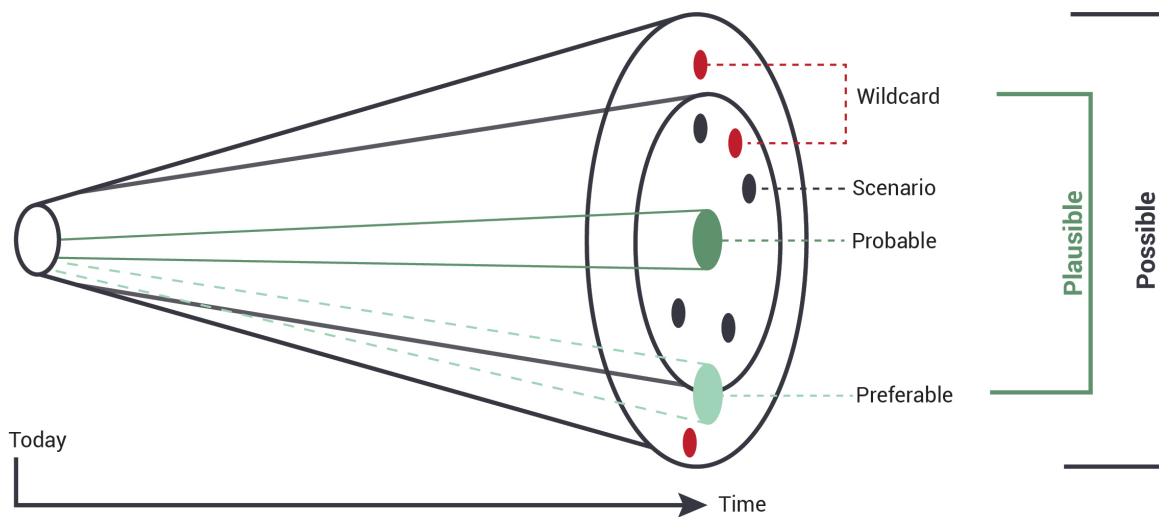


Figure 4: The cone of plausible futures.

The futures cone is a useful tool when working in the futures studies field because it outlines the different types of futures that are possible, which are all rooted in where one stands in the present. The futures cone also helps one to better understand that at any given moment in time, multiple paths forward are available. It is important to note that the possible, plausible, probable, and preferable are not absolute, but change depending on the position where one currently stands. It allows individuals to see beyond the probable and encourages individuals to step out of their comfort zone to envision preferable futures.

There are, however, some limitations that arise in reference to the futures cone. Most notably, is the fact that the futures cone appears to present a conception of time that is linear, and that possible futures are limited to existing within this metaphorical cone. Stuart Candy (2010) offers the idea that there is so much more that exists beyond the cone, and that what is possible is always shifting (p. 38). Candy presents an additional viewpoint of the futures cone (Figure 5) in which the preferable can sometimes lie beyond the possible. Here, Candy states that the lines of the futures cone are permeable, and that “we can see the permeable interface with the ‘outside’ of possibility as being one of the most interesting parts of the conceptual map” (p. 39). The idea that preferable futures can exist beyond what is possible is very valuable. It allows us to envision speculative futures beyond what we might think as possible.

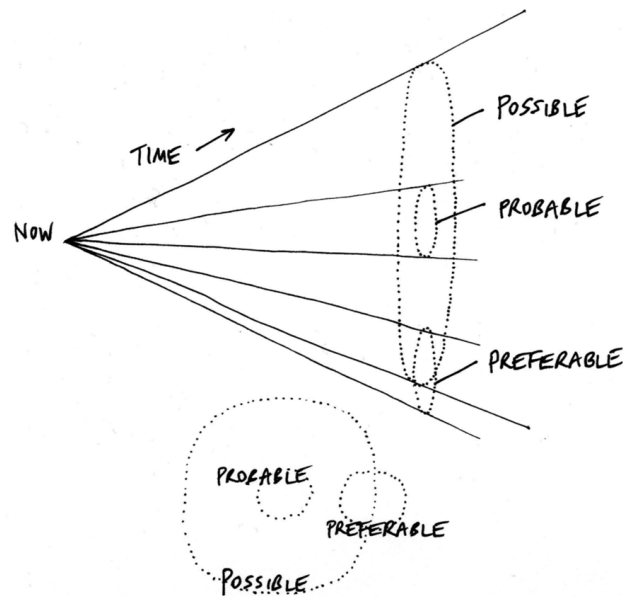


Figure 5: Possible, probable, preferable futures as subsets of possibility space.

Source: Candy, S. (2010). *The futures of everyday life: Politics and the design of experiential scenarios* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stuart_Candy/publication/305280378_The_Futures_of_Everyday_Life_Politics_and_the_Design_of_Experiential_Scenarios/links/5786809608ae36ad40a69523.pdf

Futurists are able to use experiences from the past, as well as the state of the present to envision possible, preferable, or desirable futures. Therein lies a problematic element that many critical futurists have brought to the forefront: "Desirable on what basis? On the basis of an individual's choices, or on the basis of choices by groups, culture, or ideologies?" (Masini, 2006, p. 1159). Furthermore, Alvin Toffler once asked, "how are preferable futures to be defined? And by whom? Who is to set goals for the future?" (Toffler, 1970, p. 406). Additionally, "who shapes the futures with what means, how and why?" (Schulz, 2016, p. 98).

These questions are still relevant in the landscape of today's increasingly complex social, economic, and environmental challenges. Some futures studies scholars have dedicated their research to exploring these critical intersections. As a result, there have been several new ideas developed that aim to make futures studies more inclusive, such as participatory futures (The Global Swarm, 2019; Gidley et al., 2009) and aspirational futures (Bezold, 2009; Bezold, 2019).

As a critical futurist, Sohail Inayatullah (1998) divides futures studies into three overlapping dimensions: empirical/predictive, cultural/interpretive, and poststructural/critical (p. 387). Futurists working within the empirical/predictive dimension rely mainly on data as a way to predict the future. This dimension is expert-minded and assumes that the future is something that can be known and predicted. The cultural/interpretive dimension goes beyond merely prediction and focuses on visions of the future with the hope of creating unity. In this dimension, aspects of identity, such as gender, class, race, or sexuality, play an important role in the visions of the future. Finally, the poststructural/critical dimension aims to “undefine the future” (p. 387) and to understand issues beyond their face value. Here, Inayatullah offers the idea that “the role of the state and other forms of power in creating authoritative discourses is central to understanding how a particular future has become hegemonic” (p. 387).

A successful and robust futures analysis would take all three dimensions into consideration. This is especially important when working to make futures studies more accessible, beyond the confines of corporations or governments. These ideas are based in sociological and philosophical analyses and are not limited to only political or economic facets. The philosophical application of these ideas is useful when thinking about how futures studies can be applied to fields beyond academia, corporations, or militaries.

However, there is a difference in studying futures and building futures. As Masini (2006) puts it, “Our future must not only be foreseen and dreamt of, but also chosen and built” (p. 1159). This is an essential component when working to create futures that are inclusive, participatory, and representative of the masses. Masini suggests that there are individuals who are often left out of the conversation of studying and building futures, and are “those who do not fit the existing social character in its totality...those who somehow are outside the logic of that specific system” (p. 1163). Masini proposes that women and children do not always fit within the confines of current hegemonic systems and are considered a vital resource that should be listened to when creating visions of possible futures. This is an example of why intersectionality should be considered when creating, planning, or even envisioning futures. Aside from women and children, there are many other social groups, including those of diverse sexualities and genders, Indigenous peoples, people of colour, and individuals who are disabled.

Due to high levels of structural exclusion, women and members of other marginalized groups have often created their own visions of futures where they are able to thrive and are not subject to oppression by current systems (for examples see: Moore, 2007; Muñoz et al., 2009; Lewis, 2016; Rico, 2018). However, futures studies often considers these alternative visions of futures as secondary importance. In order for the field of futures studies to be more inclusive and representative, “futures studies has to re-evaluate visions...[in order to] make their forecasts more than mere extrapolations” (p.1164), but predictions that are based on the actual needs of those communities.

An additional limitation of futures studies in general is its predominant focus on Western conceptions of time and ideas of the future. Mainstream futures studies often excludes non-Western conceptions of time. Research shows that Indigenous and African communities, for example, conceive of time in a way that is qualitative and experience-based that would not necessarily fit within the futures cone framework (Duncheon & Tiereny, 2013).

One futures studies research project found that traditional futures methods were not inclusive of Indigenous knowledges and experiences. The project was conducted with the Koyukon community of Huslia and wanted to use foresight methods to explore the implications of climate change in this particular Alaskan community (Natcher et al., 2007). The researchers quickly found out that their methods were not inclusive of the Koyukon's alternative temporal orientations, and therefore “[the researchers] would likely be asking community members to participate in a process that is in many ways culturally inappropriate” (p. 116). The researchers involved in the project were able to adapt their methods with the support of local community members. Upon reflection, Natcher et al. were able to see the problematic nature of assuming that everyone thinks in the same or similar ways. It was noted that “if our attempts to forestall the effects of Arctic climate change are inconsistent with the way[s] in which Indigenous people see the world, we will ensure the perpetuation of inequalities that have long challenged cross-cultural research in the north” (p. 123). Although this is only one example, there are likely others that have come across similar obstacles. This shows that there is not only one way to think about the future or to use futures methods. Instead, futurists and other academic researchers must ensure that they are culturally aware and their methods are inclusive of diverse ways of thinking.

Foresight In Futures Studies

A specific practice of futures studies is known as foresight. Foresight can be described as “the application of futures tools in specific policy-making or decision-making settings” (Bezold, 2019, p. 1). Foresight is often used in strategic planning or analysis. Moreover, Rafael Popper (2008) proposes a number of common objectives for the use of foresight, some of which include “fostering science, technology, and innovation cooperation and networking, orienting policy formulation and decisions, identifying research/investment opportunities, helping to cope with ‘Grand Challenges’ (e.g. climate change, natural disasters, terrorism, etc.), and triggering actions and promoting public debate” (p. 45).

It is clear that the use of foresight can be applied in a variety of different settings. Foresight practice grew significantly in the United States after World War II. It was during this time that humankind “sought to tackle the ever quicker and more interrelated transformations taking place and to identify the future consequences of present actions in order to avoid being overwhelmed or taken unaware by events” (Masini, 2006, p. 1159). This was the case not just in the United States, but in parts of Europe as well, where the emerging field of foresight was mostly restricted in use to government agencies and business corporations (p. 1161). During this time, the RAND Corporation in the United States was highly influential in the growth and development of foresight as a “scientific/scholarly activity” (Cornish, 2004, p. 196). At the time, the RAND Corporation was a global policy think tank that was responsible for providing intelligence support for the American armed forces and their focus on military foresight then led to the creation of the Institute for the Future in the year 1968 (p. 196).

Foresight's historical roots were based in military and corporate intelligence, making it not easily accessible to the mass populations; it was more so used as a strategic tool to plan and accommodate for changes in technology, economic markets, political realms, and planning for military battles. Arguably, this is still a quandary that futurists today must overcome. Hyeonju Son (2015) believes that “the dominance of foresight in futures practice somewhat reflects the impact of neoliberalism on the field” (p. 128). This is troubling, considering how neoliberalism often perpetuates, or even exacerbates, growing economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Son continues to remain critical of foresight's application in the world today:

Futurists focusing on foresight tend to show a lack of moral orientation for the public interests and future generations. The obsession with foresight promotes acceptance of a market-oriented future society. Such a market-oriented future can serve to benefit those in power. The practical utility of foresight can sometimes neglect the question of those whose interests are gained by effective alternative futures. They circumvent value issues, marginalized people, inequality issues, freedom, and human rights that are striking evidences of how futurists have ignored the moral orientation of futures studies. The lack of moral orientation questions whether futurists are fair in their responsibilities for improving the quality of life for everyone. (p. 129)

Son's criticisms are not often present in the mainstream discourse surrounding foresight, especially since the majority of foresight is executed by corporations and academic institutions. However, there are a growing number of academic scholars and futurists that focus on futures studies that are critical of foresight's neoliberal agenda. One critical futurist, Sohail Inayatullah (1998), considers the following questions for the contentious, emergent, and growing field of futures studies. He asks:

Should futures studies be technical, concerned with forecasting, or culture based, concerned with recovering the futures from the instrumental rationality of modernity? Or is futures studies primarily a movement...to keep the future open, less concerned with academic treatises, and more with social action? Or should futures studies be specific in its orientation, as in future generations studies, which seeks to sustain and transform social conditions on behalf of the rights of future generations? (p. 386)

Inevitably, there is no consensus on how futures studies should be applied or used in various disciplines and these questions reflect how vast, and often contentious, the field of futures studies can be. The practice of foresight as it is often conducted by corporations requires a level of expertise that is not easily accessible. However, no one person can be an expert on all possible futures, which leads to a problematic element of foresight. The lack of transparency in corporate foresight has led to the creation of more centralized, horizontal practices such as participatory futures.

Scenarios In Futures Studies

A key component in the majority of futures studies literature is the concept of scenarios. In general, "scenarios are a synthesis of different paths (events and actors' strategies) that lead to possible futures" (Roubelat, 2000, p. 4). Durance and Godet (2010) add that "a scenario is not a future reality but rather a means to represent it with the aim of clarifying present action in light of possible and desirable futures" (p. 1488). Additionally, scenarios can "help forecast the future...[and] clarify alternatives. Scenarios are useful because they give us distance from the present, open up the future and allow the creation of alternative futures" (Mietzner & Reger, 2005, p. 223).

The history of scenarios is vast, similar to the history of futures studies in general. It is estimated that the use of scenarios originated during World War II, when "the US Air Force tried to imagine what its opponents might do and to prepare alternative strategies" (p. 221). Soon after, the use of scenarios became a tool for "business prognostication" (p. 221). Scenarios are historically, as well as presently, evident in strategic foresight, and Son (2015) remains critical of their application, stating that scenarios espouse capitalist values and market-oriented growth (p. 128). However, the use of scenarios is not exclusive to the world of business, and can be very useful for non-profit or other community-based projects. In this regard, scenarios are important for futures studies because they allow for individuals or communities to organize and envision ideas for their preferred futures. Jim Dator (2009) uses scenarios (or alternative futures) "within the context of helping an organization or community plan for and move towards its preferred future" (p. 1).

Over the years, there have been many different methods developed for the purposes of generating scenarios. Since there is such a wide variety of methods to choose from, there is not a singular method that is the most correct or best to use in all cases. Notable examples of scenario generation methods include: the double uncertainties method, causal layered analysis, and four generic futures (Inayatullah, 2008; Curry & Schultz, 2009; Dator, 2009). Each of these methods have their own strengths and weaknesses, and it is likely that different methods will yield different results. In general, scenarios can be useful for generating visions of possible futures, but they are not without their limitations. Scenario generation is often a time-consuming and practitioner-led approach. Therefore, it can be difficult to practice scenario generation adequately without the presence of a 'scenario expert'.

It can be difficult for people to think beyond the most likely types of scenarios (Mietzner & Reger, 2005, p. 236). Dator (2009) echoes a similar notion, stating that “‘the future’ that most people have in mind when they are first asked to think about the future usually is that ‘whatever is happening now will continue’” (p. 4). Therefore, this means that “if times are currently good, most folks will believe that they will remain good and will not want to think about or plan for ‘bad’ things” (p. 4). The reverse is also true, such that, “if things are falling apart now, then many people will feel that there is no way to put them back together...and will ridicule all attempts at envisioning a bright future” (p. 5). These perspectives are important to consider when using futures methods because while most individuals have the ability to think about the near future and how it will affect them personally, trying to envision the future of climate change, for example, can be a much greater challenge.

Scenarios are integral to the field of futures studies because they allow us to think beyond what is probable and envision what might be possible. But how can we envision futures beyond what might be possible since, arguably, there are endless worlds beyond what we can conceive as possible? One of the ways that this can be conceived is through the practice of design fiction. Design fiction bridges together design, science fiction, and science fact (Bleecker, 2009, p. 6). Julian Bleecker (2009) provides a detailed explanation of how design fiction currently operates:

Science fiction can be understood as a kind of writing that, in its stories, creates prototypes of other worlds, other experiences, other contexts for life based on the creative insights of the author. Designed objects — or designed fictions — can be understood similarly. They are assemblages of various sorts, part story, part material, part idea-articulating prop, part functional software. The assembled design fictions are component parts for different kinds of near future worlds... They are complete specimens, but foreign in the sense that they represent a corner of some speculative world where things are different from how we might imagine the ‘future’ to be, or how we imagine some other corner of the future to be. These worlds are ‘worlds’ not because they contain everything, but because they contain enough to encourage our imaginations. Design fiction objects are totems through which a larger story can be told, or imagined or expressed. They are like artifacts from someplace else, telling stories about other worlds. (p. 7)

Design fiction can be used as a method for scenario generation that is much more imaginative and speculative than the four aforementioned methods. While most academics and corporate professionals may shudder at the idea of speculative anything, design fiction has allowed for the creation of very interesting possible worlds (for examples see Bleecker, 2009). Having said that, design fiction could be used as an avenue for futures studies to be practiced outside of the confines of the corporate and academic worlds. However, Dunne & Raby (2013) are critical of design fiction, stating that it "strongly emphasizes technological futures" and note that "design fictions...are rarely critical of technological progress and border on celebration rather than questioning" (p. 100). Of course, this is not true of all design fiction but should be noted as a limitation to be mindful of.

There have been a number of projects that use a blend of science, fiction, science fiction, speculation, and design fiction as a way to imagine alternative futures. These practices have been useful as a way to imagine different futures in worlds affected by anthropogenic climate change. The practice of climate fiction merges these ideas as a way to imagine the previously unimaginable, since “an unprecedented problem like climate change requires — at least to some extent — unprecedented solutions” (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 172). One noteworthy example comes from Donna Haraway’s, *Staying With The Trouble*. Embedded in Haraway’s work is the musings of alternative futures that explore ideas beyond solely humanism, especially her idea of the Chthulucene. In the Chthulucene, humans and nonhumans alike must shape, become, and make the world together. Unlike in the Anthropocene, “human beings are not the only important actors in the Chthulucene, with all other beings able simply to react... Diverse human and nonhuman players are necessary in every fiber of the tissues of the urgently needed Chthulucene story” (Haraway, 2016, p. 55). Haraway’s futures are rich with ideas of hope and harmony. It is important to include nonhuman species when considering alternative futures; while humans are responsible for anthropogenic climate change, there is no way to recover from it without considering all the nonhuman matter and other species that are fighting to exist as well.

Additionally, the impacts of climate change often lead to visions of possible futures that are mostly dystopian. The science makes that hard to ignore; sea levels are rising, glaciers are melting, and temperatures are increasing. The depiction of possible dystopian futures, according to Whyte (2018), is already the reality that many Indigenous peoples are living with today. He offers the idea that “Indigenous peoples do not always approach the climate crisis as an impending future to be dreaded” (p. 227) as the majority of futures affected by climate change currently portray. Whyte believes that this is due to the fact that “Indigenous peoples have already endured harmful and rapid environmental transformations due to colonialism and other forms of domination” (p. 227). These points are also reinforced by the fact that non-Indigenous science fiction futures depict a world where Indigenous ideas are secondary (p. 234). Similar criticisms of other methods of futures studies remains relevant and worth repeating here: it is crucial that design fiction is practiced in a way that is inclusive of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives in order to avoid generalizations, assumptions, and essentialism.

Futures Studies: In Summary

To summarize, futures studies is a broad field that, in general, is used to look into the future to understand potential changes to society, the environment, and everything in between. Futures studies is not concerned with predicting the future, but instead suggest that many futures are possible, plausible, probable, and preferable. Critical futures studies asks questions such as “preferable for whom?” Within futures studies exist types of practices, such as foresight and design fiction. Military and corporate strategists have traditionally used foresight as a way to plan and stay ahead, which some suggest has made the field inaccessible to broader communities and perpetuates neoliberal principles that focus on competition, capital, and getting ahead. The use of scenarios is essential to practices of futures studies because it is a tool that allows for the ideation and creation of possible futures. Speculative and design fiction use principles from science fiction to envision alternative futures that go beyond what is thought of as possible.

Key themes of futures studies, as examined above, are highlighted in Figure 6. This visual representation is not an exhaustive list of futures studies components. Futures studies is the second main component and area of inquiry in this MRP. The following section provides an exploration of the convergence of the two fields.

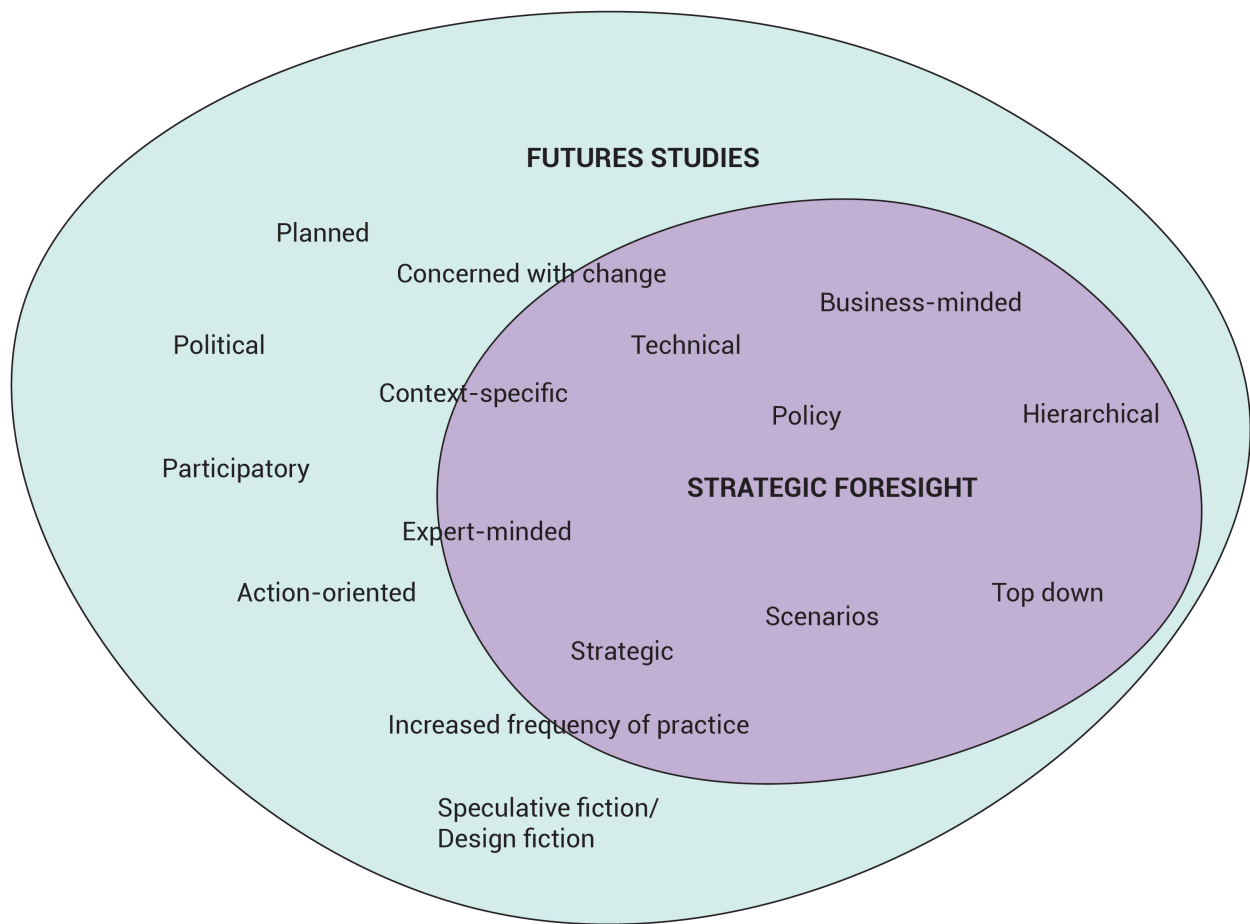


Figure 6: Futures studies themes, including strategic foresight.

Social Movements & Futures Studies

There is opportunity for convergence of the two fields: social movements and futures studies. A question that remains relevant, initially posed by Negri and Hardt (2017), is how can we develop the strategic capacities of the multitude? (p. 20). One viable answer to that question lies in the strategic foresight. Strategic foresight can encourage social movements to envision possible futures that are different from the present and more preferable for the masses. The intersection of the two topics can lead to the creation of fruitful discussion and debate about our world's potential futures. Social movements allow individuals to exercise their right to assemble and protest injustices. Strategic foresight provides the space and opportunity to envision other preferable and possible worlds.

In some social movements, the use of futures language has some stark realizations. One such recognition is that young people are acutely aware of how what is happening today has a direct impact on their future wellbeing. A recent example is the climate justice movement. During climate strikes across the world, children and youth are seen holding signs that portray their harsh realities (Figures 7-13). Framing the narrative in a way that points to possible futures makes it clear that young people are demanding action now so they will still be able to live and thrive in the future.



Figure 7: Climate strike sign #1.
Sign reads "Don't wreck my future" from youth climate strikes in London, UK on March 15, 2019. Photo by Kip Loades, retrieved from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kiploades>



Figure 8: Climate strike sign #2.

Sign reads "Give us a future" from climate strike in Toronto, Ontario on September 27, 2019.

Photo by Hector Vasquez, retrieved from

<https://www.blogto.com/slideshows/climate-strike-toronto/16861>



Figure 9: Climate strike sign #3.
Sign reads "We must write...a better ending" from climate strike in Toronto, Ontario on September 27, 2019. Photo by Hector Vasquez, retrieved from <https://www.blogto.com/slideshows/climate-strike-toronto/16844>



Figure 10: Climate strike sign #4.

Sign reads "You're burning our future" from climate strike in Lahore, Pakistan on September 21, 2019. Photo by Arif Ali, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2019/sep/20/global-climate-strike-millions-protest-worldwide-in-pictures>



Figure 11: Climate strike sign #5.

Sign reads "You'll die from old age. We will die from climate change" from climate strike in Toronto, Ontario on September 27, 2019. Photo by Hector Vasquez, retrieved from <https://www.blogto.com/slideshows/climate-strike-toronto/16820>



Figure 12: Climate strike sign #6.
 Sign reads "My future depends on it!" from climate strike in Iqaluit on September 27, 2019.
 Photo by Sara Frizzell, retrieved from
<https://twitter.com/MsFrizzell/status/1177619816892583939>



Figure 13: Climate strike sign #7.

Sign reads "History has its eyes on you" from climate strike in Halifax on September 27, 2019. Photo by Darren Calabrese, retrieved from <https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/nova-scotia-legislature-committee-told-new-climate-targets-don-t-go-far-enough-1.4659199?cache=%3Fot%3DAjax>

These images are powerful, and clearly show an activated group of youth that are aware that their futures can potentially be plagued with climate disasters and a consequently unlivable planet. The tactics used by this movement to frame the problem as one that must be dealt with now in order to create better futures is accessible and understandable. They are saying that we are in a crisis and need to take appropriate action in order to avoid global catastrophe. It is clear that they are thinking with a futures-oriented mindset. The question remains, however, as to whether the narrative framing and futures oriented mindsets are enough to move beyond passively accepting the future. Or, is there further action that needs to be taken to ensure that these protesters can instead actively create more preferable futures?

There have been a number of social movement scholars who have been critical of how movements think about and envision futures. For instance, David McNally (2006/2017) states that social movements "have been much more effective at resisting rather than overturning...[and] radical movements cannot change societies without a vision of a different society" (p. 62). Similarly, Michael Hardt (2017) has said that "some of the most important work of social movements today, in addition to protesting and resisting the injustices of the ruling powers, is to imagine that a new world is possible" (p. 231). Hardt continues with the sentiment that "without losing sight of the urgency of protest, we need to be thinking with an equal sense of urgency about ways to transform those visions into reality" (p. 231).

However, one question that remains relevant is "why have the movements, which address the needs and desires of so many, not been able to achieve lasting change and create a new, more democratic and just society?" (Negri & Hardt, 2017, p. xiii). These examples indicate that there is an opportunity for social movements to exercise strategic foresight as a way to bridge the gap between future visions and reality. There has been little academic discourse on the convergence of the two fields in recent years, resulting in a very limited amount of literature on the topic. However, there is some evidence indicating that the two fields can work together harmoniously and strategically.

One pertinent example of the convergence of social movement and futures study scholarship comes from sociologist Markus Schulz. In his paper *Social Movements and Futures Research* (2016), Schulz provides a preliminary exploration of the two fields. He mentions the importance of futures studies and social change, noting that “social change happens not only through voluntary action of powerful individual leaders or normal politics but also through involving active sectors in civil society’s public sphere, where ideas and agenda for imagination are born” (p. 99). Schulz goes on to advocate that futures studies has a lot to learn from the rich history of social movements.

Conversely, advocations have been made for the ways in which futures studies informs social movements, such that “foresight can inspire a sense of social responsibility and impetus for social action, at both political and personal levels” (Ramos, 2017, p. 825). Social action is a topic that is often present in social movement discourses because at the heart of social movements is the mobilization of collective social action. The confluence of social action, social movements, and futures studies is evident in the idea of foresight action research. Ramos (2017) has developed the Futures Action Model as a way to “clarify the link between foresight and action” (p. 836). The intersection of foresight and action are clearly articulated in Ramos’ ideas as a way to show how futures studies can strategically lead to social change. While the Futures Action Model has been useful for facilitating some youth and community-based programs and social innovations (p. 837), these studies, unfortunately, do not offer direct suggestions for using social movement theory in strategic foresight, or vice versa.

Moreover, Schulz provides a number of useful questions to consider for areas of future research on the two fields, including the following: “Listen to what the movements say. What are their diagnoses of the present, and what are their normative suggestions for the future? What are their demands and proposals for change?” (p. 104). Questions such as these can help guide futurists to envision futures that are inclusive of needs and demands being addressed through social movements. Consequently, it is clear that the two fields could benefit from listening to and learning from each other more directly.

There are, however, a number of projects conducted that specifically use foresight to incite action for various social, environmental, and economic challenges. These examples prove that the application of strategic foresight methods is useful and relevant for social change and transformation. It is interesting to note that these studies do not focus on traditional foresight methods, but instead rely heavily on ideas of participatory and speculative futures. The use of participatory futures can be utilized because it “engages participants in research projects, empowering them to act on alternatives to ‘business as usual’” (Gidley et al., 2009, p. 430). This is important, especially when considering futures affected by climate change, because communities need to be actively involved in the planning and scenario building process in order to understand, evaluate, and co-create alternative futures.

One specific project used “participatory futures approaches to climate change adaptation” (p. 422) as a way to engage and empower a climate vulnerable community to go beyond passively adapting to climate change. Participants were able to craft scenarios specific to their own local context, which could be modified and shared with others in the community (p. 436). Additionally, it was found that the community-based scenarios “based on a shared preferred future are likely to engender widespread commitment and implementation” (p. 436). These results are promising, such that community-based participatory futures building is possible. Oftentimes, it can be difficult to conceptualize potential futures, but creating the space for communities to generate ideas together in their own context helps encourage the active co-creation of preferred futures, rather than simply accepting probable futures.

Over the years, Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown have noticed how social movement organizers and other activists spend so much time thinking and envisioning futures that are more equitable and just than the present. According to Walidah Imarisha (2015), “whenever we try to envision a world without war, without violence, without prisons, without capitalism, we are engaging in speculative fiction” (p. 3). Consequently, they have created the idea of visionary fiction. Visionary fiction was developed “to distinguish science fiction that has a relevance toward building new, freer worlds from the mainstream strain of science fiction, which most often reinforces dominant narratives of power” (p. 4). This is an important distinction, because although science fiction imagines the unimaginable, it lacks a certain degree of justice and inclusivity. Visionary fiction “encompasses all of the fantastic, with the arc always bending toward justice” (p.4).

Visionary fiction: “explores current social issues through the lens of sci-fi; is conscious of identity and intersecting identities; centres those who have been marginalized; is aware of power inequalities; is realistic and hard but hopeful; shows change from the bottom up rather than the top down; highlights that change is collective; and is not neutral — its purpose is social change and societal transformation” (p. 279). The visionary fiction anthology titled *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories From Social Justice Movements* (2015) is a realized example of the convergence of social movements and futures studies. The work is inspired by science fiction author Octavia Butler's writing about society and social change. Throughout *Octavia's Brood*, activists turned authors share stories of other worlds that are based on their experiences organizing. The result is an inspiring collection of stories that encourage readers to think about the present and what kind of futures we want to create. Visionary fiction can be a vehicle that allows individuals to envision just and equitable futures.

Social Movements & Futures Studies: In Summary

Overall, there has been little academic contributions on the convergence on the fields of social movements and futures studies. Early observations suggest that there are opportunities for the two fields to intentionally listen to and learn from each other. Projects that have intentionally used strategic foresight and social movements focus specifically on the use of participatory foresight to engage and collaborate with communities as a way to co-create the community's preferred futures. Further, the development of visionary fiction has been used by social movement organizers as a way to encourage activists to creatively envision futures based on their experiences organizing and fighting for justice. New methods such as this are encouraging because they indicate that there are opportunities for strategic foresight and social movements to creatively benefit from each other for the greater good.

In summation, the themes highlighted throughout this chapter are encompassed in one final convergence map (Figure 14). It is clear that there are a number of similarities and overlap across the fields of social movements and futures studies. A more thorough examination follows in Chapter 4.

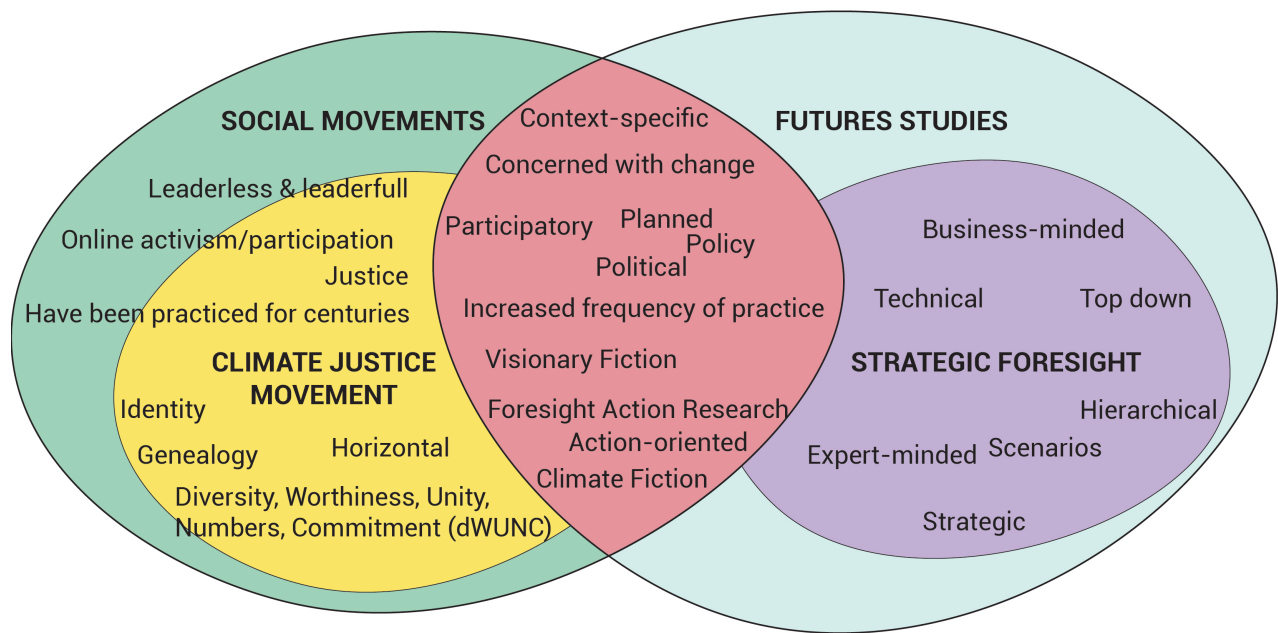


Figure 14: Social movements and futures studies convergence map.

CHAPTER 3

Findings

Chapter 3

As social, environmental, and economic injustices continue to prevail, social movements have emerged to resist policies, (in)action, grievances, and other structures of power from perpetuating any number of injustices. However, social movements are often short lived and lack an element of structural long term impact. Moreover, futures studies is a field that applies a variety of tools and skills to consciously consider possible and preferable futures. The use of strategic foresight has often been confined to a small number of industries, namely military, academia, and business corporations. The historical limitations of futures studies has led some to explore how futures tools and skills can be utilized in more accessible and participatory ways.

This research set out to examine the intersection of two fields, social movements and futures studies, to explore how elements of strategic foresight could be applied to social movement organizing strategies in order to envision preferable futures and encourage transformational change. Very little academic research has been published on this topic specifically, which therefore positions this research paper as a starting point for studying the convergence of social movements and futures studies. Through the use of a literature review, popular media scan, and convergence map, the following themes have emerged:

1. Contrast
2. Convergence
3. Change

Contrast

While there are many instances where social movements and futures studies are similar, there are also a number of points of difference. The polarities are most obvious at opposing ends of the convergence map (Figure 15). Contrasting aspects of social movements and futures studies are leadership styles, structure (top down and hierarchical versus bottom up and horizontal), and approach (business minded and technical versus identity based and genealogical).

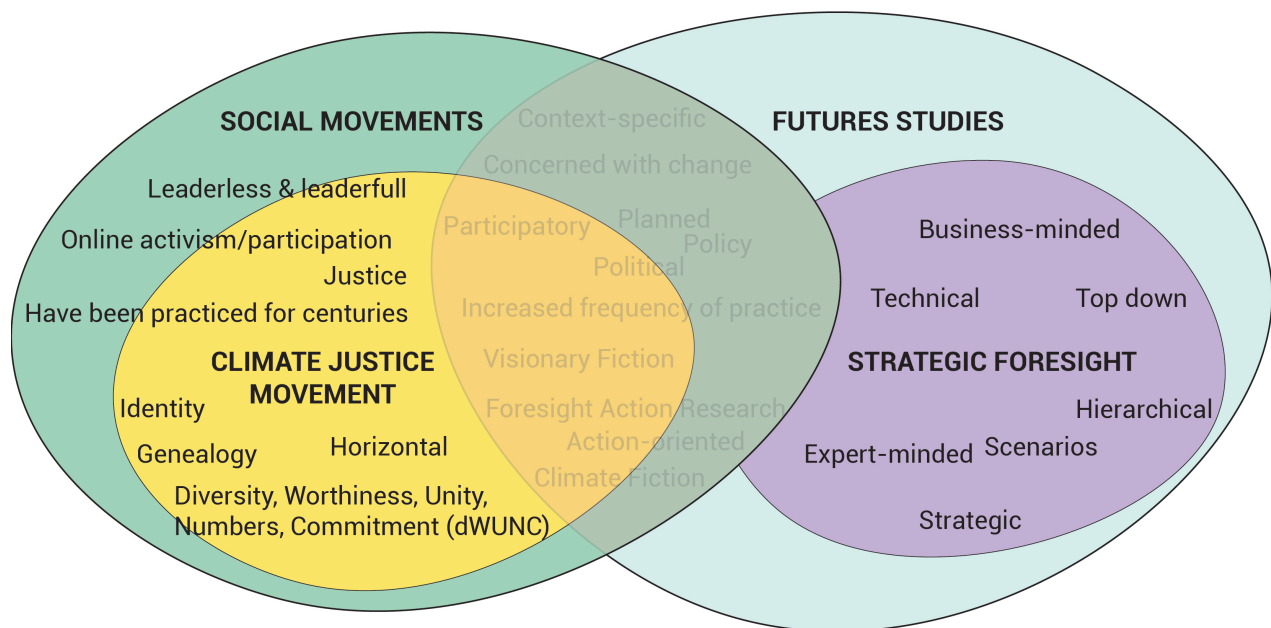


Figure 15: Convergence map highlighting points of difference.

Convergence

The results of this research show that within preexisting academic literature, there is a lack of intentional examination of how social movements and futures studies work together, benefit from, and talk to each other. The small amount of scholarly research that does focus on the intentional convergence of the two fields has led to a handful of innovative new tools and methods, such as visionary fiction (Walidah & brown, 2015) and foresight action research (Ramos, 2017). The convergence map makes it easy to observe points of similarities across all fields, including social movements, the climate justice movement, visionary fiction, foresight, and futures studies. The highlighted midsection of the map (Figure 16) shows the area of convergence between the fields. Both social movements and futures studies can be: context-specific, participatory, concerned with change, political, action-oriented, messy, and not sporadic but planned and intentional. Additionally, both social movements and futures studies are seeing an increased frequency of practice in recent years.

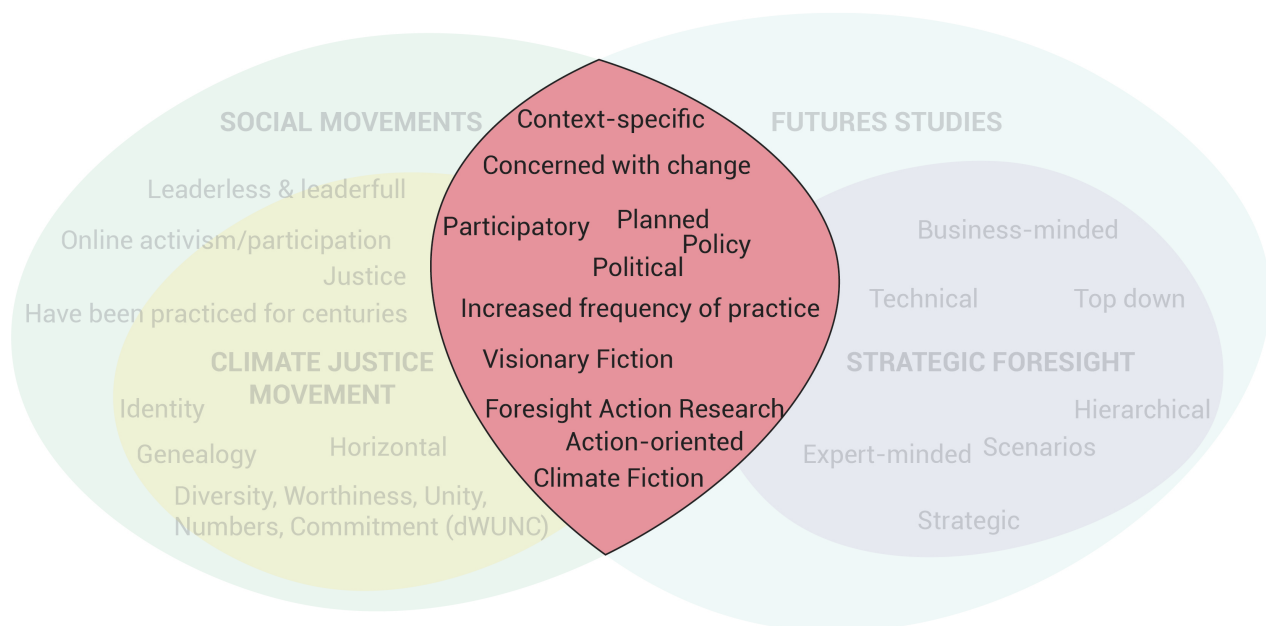


Figure 16: Convergence map highlighting area of convergence across social movements and futures studies.

Change

Through the literature review and popular media scan it was clear that traditional notions of both social movements and futures studies have changed in recent years. Issues such as polarization, anthropogenic climate change, and the emergence of new technologies have all played a role in changing how social movements and futures studies are used.

One of the major changes faced by social movements is the fact that they risk becoming depoliticized. This is one of the major implications of a movement society, even though most, if not all, social movements are inherently political. Additionally, social movement leadership and organization has changed in recent years. Historically, social movements often relied on one charismatic leader but now many social movements rely on a networked structure of organizers.

One of the major changes faced by futures studies is the growth of participatory and inclusive practices. Overall, the field has been subjected to critique because of how it has traditionally been used by corporations and military intelligence, ergo perpetuating neoliberal and capitalist ideals. Efforts such as participatory foresight have encouraged communities to actively create their preferred futures instead of passively accepting probable futures.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

Chapter 4

The current state of our world can be overwhelmingly debilitating and studies suggest that people are the least happy and most stressed they have ever been (Gallup, 2019). While it might seem easier to give up, to stop protesting, and to continue letting the world burn, I don't think we have a choice. We must not give up. We need to continue protesting. We have to ensure that the world does not burn. But, how? Based on the findings from this research, social movement organizers have a unique opportunity to apply strategic foresight tools and skills to movement strategies to go beyond resistance.

Learning, Unlearning, Relearning

The application of strategic foresight in social movement arenas could allow for the collective envisioning and active creation of preferred futures. For decades, strategic foresight has been used by a few elites as a way of reinforcing capitalist market principles. Putting strategic foresight tools in the hands of the many could allow for the creation of meaningful engagement and collaboration amongst communities. Alvin Toffler once said, “the illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn”. Proposing the application of strategic foresight to social movement organizing strategies requires a process of unlearning and relearning because of strategic foresight’s corporate and militaristic history. The ways in which strategic foresight has been used in the past has not been to the benefit of the masses. However, encouraging social movements to reapply strategic foresight tools and skills could allow for the creation of radical and inclusive futures. Identity based futures, for example queer futures, afrofutures, latinx futures, and indigenous futures, are exemplifications of the ways that futures studies can be repurposed for the benefit of resilience and community.

A quote by Audre Lorde comes to mind: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Lorde, 1979). Although Lorde’s words are often taken out of context and used as a way to accept and maintain the status quo. However, the question that remains is whose tools were they in the first place? Subsequently, “which tools have actually been stolen, repackaged, sold, and consumed as not ours” (Thanapal, 2017). This idea resonates now more than ever. We can no longer continue with business as usual, and it is foolish to assume that the same practices in the same peoples’ hands that brought us to the world’s breaking point are the practices and people that will create the changes our world needs. Herein lies an opportunity to reclaim and reapply the master’s tools in new ways to dismantle the master’s house. Negri and Hardt propose an idea of similar nature, by allowing the multitude be responsible for strategy and leaving governments responsible for tactics (2017, p. 18). The masses taking back power and reapplying tools that have traditionally been used for the advancement of capital is a simple yet revolutionary idea. When we think about potential futures where the people, instead of a few massive corporations, have the power, we are already beginning to do the work; we are reclaiming the tools that have been appropriated for capital gains and reapplying them in radical ways.

Thinking With Care

Inherent in practices of social movements and futures studies is notions of care. Care can be defined as “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live as well as possible, including our bodies, selves, and environment” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 198). Care is central to social movements because if no one cared, then no social movements would ever exist. We are moved to action and are propelled to protest because we care. Young people care about their futures, which is why millions of them flooded their cities demanding action on climate change. Elements of care are apparent in futures studies, especially when collectively envisioning preferred futures instead of passively accepting what is probable. Care is increasingly apparent in participatory futures, which aims to “democratize and encourage long-term thinking, and inform collective actions in the present” by “involving citizens in exploring or shaping potential futures” (Nesta, 2019, p. 15).

Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) offers different ways to encourage thinking with care, one of which she refers to as thinking-for. Thinking-for advocates “for a commitment to value the knowledge conceived through struggles in any context of subjugation” (p. 208). Thinking-for aims to be inclusive of diverse experiences, while warning about the dangers of appropriation. I would argue that thinking-for is most evident in the practices of participatory futures. What is of importance here is that the ground on which strategic foresight stands is beginning to shift. Participatory futures aims to put more power into the hands of the people through the use of futures studies in public engagement. Puig de la Bellacasa’s idea of thinking-for, along with her central argument of focusing on notions of care in thinking and knowing, is inspired by Donna Haraway’s multi-species thinking. Haraway includes all types of living and nonliving things in her speculative writing. Multi-species thinking, along with thinking-for, are important concepts for care, but also for social movements and futures studies. In thinking-for and with others, we are able to envision possible futures for multitudes, because “we do not encounter single individuals, a meeting produces a world, changes the colour of things, it diffracts more than it reflects, distorts the ‘sacred image of the same’” (Haraway, 1994, p. 70). Change is constant and there is not a singular formula that will prevent all the world’s catastrophes, so although “we do not know in advance what world is knocking” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, p. 212), it is important to focus on how we can centralize notions of care when envisioning preferable futures.

Context Matters

Social movements and futures studies share a number of similar properties. These points of convergence could provide some explanation as to why there is a lack of research that examines the overlap of these two fields. It has been suggested that foresight can play a role in “informing and inspiring social movements” (Ramos, 2017, p. 824). I agree to an extent, but would also offer the reversal; social movements can inform and inspire foresight, such that they can be seen as a diagnosis of the present, indicating that change is needed so that the present does not continue into the future. It is worth repeating Schulz’s considerations here: “Listen to what the movements say. What are their diagnoses of the present, and what are their normative suggestions for the future? What are their demands and proposals for change?” (2016, p. 104). Sohail Inayatullah (2005) goes even further in the convergence of the two fields, stating that “the futures approach... is as much an academic field as it is a social movement and a vehicle for organizational transformation” (p. 7).

While social movements and futures studies do have similarities and can be sources of inspiration for each other, a total convergence of the two fields lacks a contextual understanding of how the two disciplines are practiced in reality. Futures studies, specifically strategic foresight, has been used more by governments, academia, and large businesses, which means that “the ability to think long-term about the future and the capacity to shape it is grossly imbalanced” (Ramos, et al., 2019, p. 6). While not all futures studies is strategic foresight, strategic foresight practices dominate current narratives about how and who has the ability to shape the future.

Conversely, social movements are resisting injustices, disrupting the status quo, and dismantling power structures, many of which are upheld by the corporatization of strategic foresight. This is why it is crucial to consider the context in which these convergences emerge. Although social movements and futures studies either share or have similar characteristics does not mean that they are always practiced together in equitable ways.

Sherryl Vint (2016) highlights a pertinent example of this by examining the futurity of marketing materials from Monsanto:

Monsanto's advertisements... repeatedly claim the space of utopian futurism: "We've been inspired to improve the crops that feed and fuel our world because we dream of a better tomorrow for all of us" reads the text of a "We Dream Here" advertisement, while a "We Grow Ideas Here" poster (Figure 17) proclaims, "As a company founded on scientific innovation, we are passionate about sharing our love of science and creating educational opportunities for children here at home—because they are the future of our community." Visually, the first advertisement appropriates the promise of futurity embodied in the reproductive, heteronormative family, while the second evokes a multicultural vision of inclusivity with its portrait of multi-ethnic future scientists. Both erase the socioeconomic inequities of the present, including the uneven distribution of health risks and pollution in which Monsanto participates.

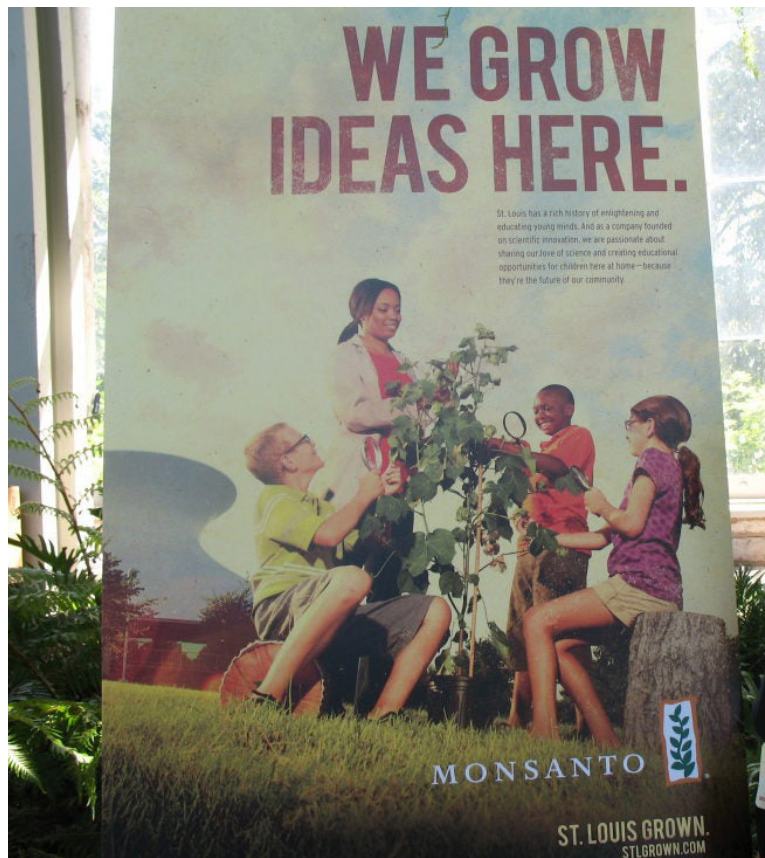


Figure 17: Monsanto advertisement.

Image source: <https://patch.com/missouri/crevecoeur/monsanto-unveils-st-louis-grown-initiative>

This Monsanto example raises concerns about how corporations use marketing tactics to sell us their visions of possible futures. This is significant because it highlights a perspective that is not always evident in social movement or foresight conversations. While social movements and strategic foresight may both be concerned about policy change, their motivations for doing so could be drastically different. For example, a climate strike might be demanding governments put in place a policy that bans the use of pesticides because they are harmful to the environment. However, a corporate foresight team might be lobbying with government officials to alleviate policies that restrict pesticide use because the use of those pesticides can produce high agricultural yields and lead to higher profits. This is one example that indicates “futures practice tends more to serve specific projects and organizations for developing their survival and success than to aid the general public of society for developing their common goods.

This trend has resulted in the focus on the individual or institutional visions of the future rather than on the vision of humanity’s future as a whole (Son, 2015, p. 130). The use of strategic foresight by certain actors has the ability to shape and influence our future to increase corporate profits or market values. This perpetuation of capitalist principles are cause for some of the world’s most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Although social movements are organized as a form of resistance against injustices, or as a way to encourage positive social change; is it fair to ask social movements be responsible for doing the work of dismantling current systems and creating new societies, especially considering corporations hold so much power and influence? I would argue that it is our responsibility to fight injustices and encourage positive social, economic, or environmental change, but I am not proposing that social movements be solely responsible. The roles that different stakeholders play in fostering positive change is one area that requires further exploration and research.

What really is impossible
is to carry on as we
are, with social and
economic systems that
enrich a few but destroy
the environment and
impoverish most of the
world's population.
Our very survival depends
on finding another way of
living.

Ruth Levitas, 2013



CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Chapter 5

Social movements and futures studies are complex topics with their own unique histories. Scholars and activists alike have varying opinions on these fields independently. This research is only the starting point of understanding the intersections of social movements and futures studies. Due to a lack of academic research on this specific topic, I wanted to further explore the idea of applying futures practices to social movements. Social movements are practiced with increased frequency across the world today, while futures studies practices are becoming more accessible and participatory.

This research set out to answer the following question: ***how might social movements use strategic foresight to envision and create futures that are more equitable, just, and sustainable?***

The ultimate contribution of this research is the exploration of a new perspective for the use of strategic foresight in social movement organizing. An examination of modern social movements has shown that the majority of canonical social movement research has been conducted by academics of Western backgrounds, and social movements today risk depoliticization because we currently live in a movement society. This research has been critical of strategic foresight's application in corporate arenas and how this has led to the perpetuation of capitalist market principles where companies advertise and sell their vision of possible futures to consumers. Efforts such as participatory futures and visionary fiction are two examples that speak to the call for foresight to become more accessible and inclusive. This is an indication that futures tools can be used in ways that benefit the majority of people, and do not have to be practiced exclusively by corporate entities that can afford to practice strategic foresight.

Next Steps

Advocating for positive social, economic, or environmental change is never easy; it requires labour, dedication, support, and care. This research offers only a small glimpse into what could potentially create equitable, sustainable, and just futures. For further exploration, I offer the following ideas:

For futures professionals:

The demand for futurists is at an all time high. It would be useful to interview futures professionals to understand how they practice strategic foresight, and explore new ways of making the field more equitable and inclusive. No one individual can be the expert on 'the future', especially since many futures are possible. One person's utopia could be another person's dystopia. With that in mind, I would ask futures professionals:

- How do social movements influence your work?
- Whose perspective are you representing in your work?
- How can you ensure that the scenarios you create are representative of marginalized voices and communities?
- Have you considered inviting other voices to the table?
- What kind of future do you want?

For social movement organizers:

Social movements are the core tenant of this research project. Social movement organizers would need to be included in further research to understand their current ways of organizing and if they would be open to learning about strategic foresight. While many may share common principles and tactics, no social movements are the exact same. Therefore, a number of social movement organizers will need to be consulted to understand their unique needs and perspectives. I would ask social movement organizers:

- Would you be interested in learning new strategies for thinking about possible, probable, and preferable futures?
- In what ways do you currently think about creating more equitable futures?
- Do you have the capacity to apply strategic foresight tools to your organizing practices?
- In what ways could we co-create strategies for applying foresight in your organizing practices?

For myself (and maybe you too):

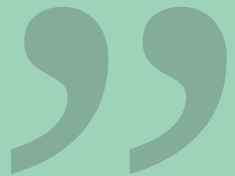
One of the main reasons why I chose to undertake this particular topic of research is because I am concerned with the current state of our world. The world is changing rapidly, and not always for the better. The twenty-four hour news cycle can make it seem like our future is already determined and the outlook is grim. But I believe that we have an opportunity to shape the futures we want. The commentary I have generated through this research is based on my own experiences and positionality. As an able-bodied, white settler, I am aware of how my relative privilege allows me access to certain spaces, and the responsibility that comes with that. I remain open to continuously learn about the ways in which the changing world adversely affects marginalized communities, as well as exploring how I can use my privilege in ways that centres ideas of thinking-with and thinking-for those communities. As I reflect upon my time in the Strategic Foresight and Innovation program at OCAD University, I felt it was important to use this research platform to critically examine some of the tools I have learned from my time in this Masters program. From my experience researching social movements and futures studies, the following questions are ones that I hope to bring with me in my professional practice, outside of the confines of this comfortable university space:

- What can I change today that will make the world a better place tomorrow?
- How can I get involved in my community?
- How can I use my platform to ensure I am amplifying the voices of those who are often intentionally unheard?

Social movements are not universal, nor can they be all things for all people. Similarly, strategic foresight is not the be all end all solution for our world's increasingly complex social, economic, and environmental challenges. Nonetheless, there is definitely an opportunity for social movements to apply strategic foresight to their organizing efforts as a way to encourage the collective visioning of preferred futures. In this way, social movements can reapply and reclaim futures tools for the benefit of collectives, not corporations. There should be no copyright on wanting to create preferable futures. As a citizen who is invested in social change, this research does not end here; it is only a starting point. The ideas presented in this research will continue to change and evolve as they need to and as I continue to learn more about the implications of using strategic foresight in social movement organizing.

No one is too small to make
a difference.

Greta Thunberg



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