

ACTIVITY 5:

How change happens

We look at our experiences in movements for change (or at one of the case studies in this guide) and draw out our assumptions about how change happens, and how our own efforts contribute to the process of resisting, shifting, and building power. We will revisit and deepen these questions throughout the Guide, particularly in Chapter 6: Power and Strategy.

Step 1: What do we assume about how change happens?

Plenary: Using the Antonio Machado quote for inspiration, we can reflect on some of our assumptions about the change process – which is certainly not as linear, causal, or predictable as some planning frameworks indicate. Think about a change process led by movements in your context (or refer to one of the case studies in this guide). What do you observe about what makes change possible and what some of the important ingredients are? Consider these questions:

- Who or what creates the ‘enabling conditions’ – or lays the groundwork for social change to happen?
- Which different actors and organized groups contribute to the change process?
- How do different groups’ actions complement each other? Are there tensions?
- What can we learn from this reflection about the ingredients and actions that might be needed to advance our vision and agenda?
- Will our change efforts benefit from complementary strategies? Might there be conflict with other actors? And if yes, who? Where? Why?

Small groups: Each group takes a different question from this list (or other questions that arise in discussion) and generates three or four responses. What assumptions can you make about how social change happens?

Plenary: Small groups share their key thoughts. Draw out highlights from each one and open up to further discussion.

Share the quote Naming the Moment, inspired by Latin American experiences of struggle. Invite someone to read it aloud. Ask:

- What are the key assumptions in Naming the Moment?
- How do they enrich or challenge your thinking?
- What do you feel is the most important insight about power? About how change happens?
- What questions does it raise for you and your organization?