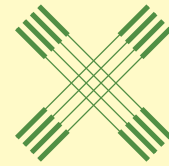




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***Social change:  
inspired by evolution  
or revolution?***

*Topic reflection*

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# What do we call social change?

**Social change** as defines in *Encyclopedia Britannica* is “the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations or value systems.” Other definitions for social change describe it as:

- "Social change means, that large no. of persons are engaging in activities that differ from those which they or their immediate fore-fathers engaged in some time before." (Merril & Elbridge);
- "Social change as "modification in ways of doing & thinking of people." (M.D.Jenson)
- "Social change refers to a process responsive to many types of changes; to changes the man in made condition of life; to changes in the attitudes and beliefs of men, and to the changes that go beyond the human control to the biological and the physical nature of things." (Maclver and Page)
- "Social change means that large number of persons are engaging in activities that differ from those which they or their immediate forefathers engaged in some time before." (Merrill and Eldredge)

According to definition of social change by *Encyclopedia Britannica* it is possible to state that social change affects way of life and interconnects between a **macro** and **micro** level. As example possible affected micro level aspects: values, attitudes, belief system, attitude, perception, behavior; and possible affected macro level aspects: social policy, social structure, isolation or contact, cultural factors, and social norms and etc. Change itself could be described as modification of previous state and current state of existence.

By summarizing all the definitions listed and stated above, it is possible to conclude that **two types of social changes are:**

- Changes in the structure of society,
- Changes in the values and social norms which bind the people together and help to maintain social order.

These two type of changes should not, however, be treated separately because a change in one automatically induces changes in the other.

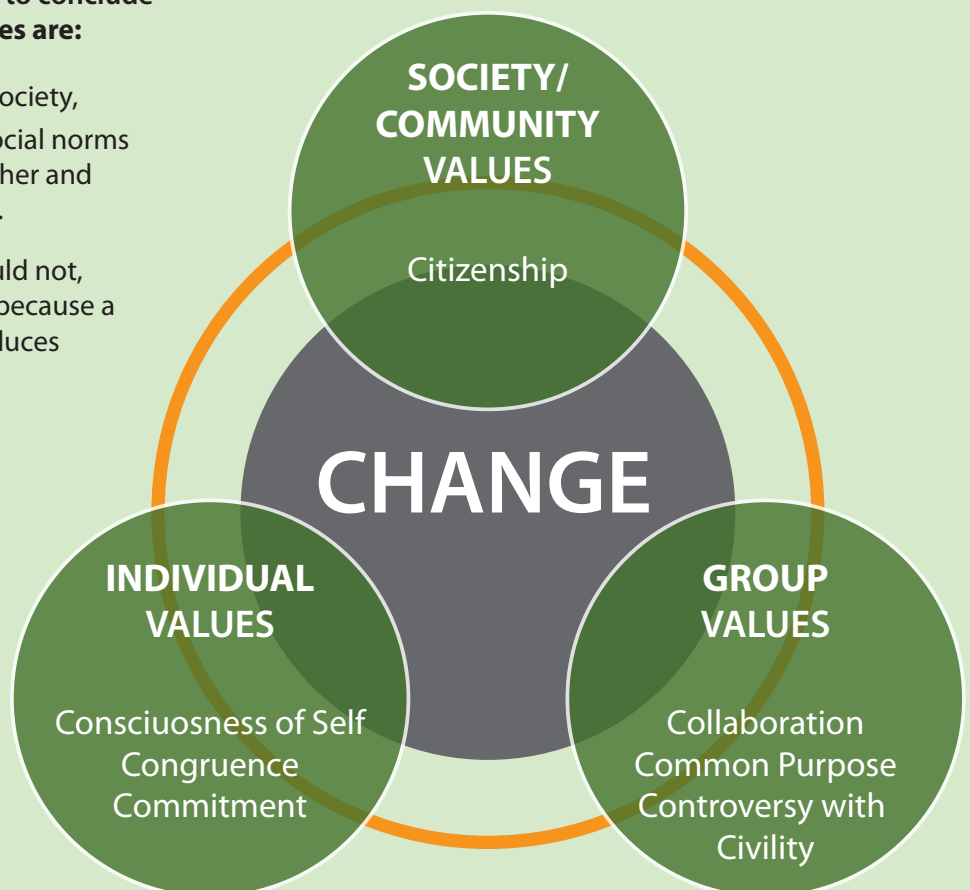


Illustration 1 A Social Change Model of Leadership Development Guidebook. Source: Higher Education Research Institute.

### **Social change is constantly happening in a society.**

Society is not at all a static phenomenon, but it is a dynamic entity. It might be slower in some context in other faster. It could occur due to many factors: demography, change in environment, positive or negative events in a social context, personal experience, focus on social capital and etc

When there is social change, the process of socialization also changes accordingly. The individual who is an active member of the society becomes an agent and target of social change. He brings social changes and also is influenced by such changes. For some, social change takes the form of advocacy for individuals; for others, it involves campaigning.

These days due to industrial, technological and urban connected developmental aspects and alternative forms for social interactions the social change is more rapid as compared to earlier times.

*"Today is not yesterday, we ourselves change. No change is permanent, it is subject to change. This is observed in all spares of activity. Change indeed is painful, yet needful"*

### **W.E. Moore defines some important characteristics of social change as:**

- Social change might happen faster or slower depending on context and interconnected factors within society
- Individuals may strive for stability, yet the fact remains that society is an every changing phenomenon
- Society is a system of social relationship and connections which are never permanent.
- The phenomenon of social change is not simple but complex.
- Social change may occur either in the natural course or as a result of planned efforts.
- The study of social change involves no-value judgement. It is ethically neutral.
- Social change may be Short-term and Long-term Change.
- It is difficult to make any prediction about the exact forms of social change.
- Social Change may be Peaceful or Violent
- Plans, programmes and projects are made by man in order to determine and control the direction of social change.

# Revolution or evolution?

From the information mentioned already it appears that social change could be categorized into:

## Evolutionary Social Change

**Evolutionary theories** are based on the assumption that societies gradually change from simple beginnings into even more complex forms. Early sociologists beginning with Auguste Comte believed that human societies evolve in a unilineal way- that is in **one line of development**<sup>1</sup>. According to them social change meant **progress toward something better**. They saw change as **positive and beneficial**. To them the evolutionary process implied that societies would necessarily **reach new and higher levels of civilization**.

People are able to adjust better with evolutionary social changes as the process is slow and gradual and hence easy to adjust. This could be example in development cooperation sector as sharing information, knowledge and skills we develop some new influential changes. For example: early many kids did not attend school and were encouraged to work by families worldwide, but now people in many advocacy and policy actions many have developed the mindset that education is important and encourage children's education. Evolutionary changes occur gradually within sufficient time perspective.

## Revolutionary Social Change

**Revolutionary Changes** - is the opposite of evolutionary change. When the changes in various sectors of our social system occur **suddenly, drastically and sufficiently** so as to differentiate it from gradual, slow change, it is called revolutionary social change.

The change comes in "high speed". The changes are such that they change the whole social system and the norm or style of living, action and attitudes of social "rights" or "wrongs". They might occur due to some movement, revolution war, rapid technological changes, due to sudden change in social circles. (Stroh, P. David, "Systems Thinking For Social Change", 2015).

Those remarkable and changes which occur in the social system of a country or society in a very short span of time are possible due to revolution and movements big or small. Such drastic changes not only change the life style of people in a society, they also transform the relationship between individual across countries including within the countries.

According to Dr. Marianne Broadbent when either evolutionary or revolutionary changes take place in the social system one lives, observable changes take place in the social values, customs, traditions, cultural heritage, age old beliefs, style of living, dress, attitude, superstitions stereotype, way of conducting oneself in the society, process of socialization and overall behavior of its members.



Illustration 3 Social Change Wheel. Source: University of Alabama

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/auguste-comte-3026485>

## Social change – what helps?

Consider four things when planning social change activities:

### The target of social change

(Individual, Group/Organizations, Communities, Society)

### The agents of social change

(directors, administrators, organizers / financial backers, political supporters / volunteers, employees, technical and professional support staff/consultants)

### Relation of agent to target

(empirical-rational strategies / normative/re-educative strategies / power/coercive strategies)

### Reasons for public support

(What will gain public support for your goal?)

**Most of all social change groups are willing to inspire various types of legal change. This is because in nowadays societies<sup>2</sup>:**

- People respond to legal changes, they respect the law (it is seen as democratically driven and rationally determined), and legal change leads to relatively quick social change.
- Changes in the law lead to changes in all other institutions.
- The law can be used to punish those who do not comply with social changes. This reinforcing the social changes.

## Cambodia: Rethinking Orphanage Tourism (Evolutionary Social Change)

Cambodia's Ministry of Social Affairs announced that registered orphanages increased from 154 to 254 by 2015. This also confirmed by UNICEF<sup>3</sup>. According to UNICEF, only about one in five "orphans" is actually without relatives.

"Orphanage tourism" has become the next logical step: many facilities attract tourists by using their wards for entertainment. Tourists are actively encouraged to donate "for the children's sake"<sup>4</sup>, or even asked to volunteer as short-term caregivers in these orphanages. The whole corrupt business model is founded on the demand from tourists for feel-good experiences and avenues to "help."

Australian government even went so far as to classify the orphanage tourism business as a form of modern-day slavery<sup>5</sup> in 2018. Australian Senator Linda Reynolds referred to volun-tourism as the "perfect 21st century scam," a scheme in which well-meaning visitors get a "sugar rush" from allegedly doing good and then posting their experiences on social media. A monumental effort by NGOs and activists including the Rethink Orphanages network helped to launch a government inquiry into orphanage trafficking and its links to tourism, which passed into law in Australia in the end of 2018. Specifically, the bill requires travel companies, NGOs, and educational institutions to report on how they are mitigating orphanage trafficking and child exploitation in their supply chains. Although the issue has been debated in the Commonwealth, Australia remains the only country to have introduced legislation. Social change just start taking the beginning.

*Movements form from non-violent social change groups when the group gains momentum and begins attracting large numbers of people and expands their agenda beyond a few objectives into changing larger institutions, norms, culture, and organization.*



Illustration 3 Children are not tourist attraction. Source: ThinkChildSafe

<sup>2</sup> University of North Carolina Wilmington, Social Change Strategies. Available at <http://people.uncw.edu/pricej/teaching/socialchange/Social%20Change%20Strategies.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/unicef-concern-prompts-cambodian-investigation-of-orphanages--118571399/1355594.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/19/the-race-to-rescue-cambodian-children-from-orphanages-exploiting-them-for-profit>

<sup>5</sup> <https://theglobepost.com/2018/12/06/australia-orphanage-tourism/>

## Lithuania and Hong Kong: Reshaping the Social Norms (Revolutionary Change)

The event, known as the Baltic Way, happened on 23rd of August 1989 (the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact). Approximately two million people joined their hands to form a human chain spanning 675.5 kilometres (419.7 mi) across the three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which were considered at the time to be constituent republics of the Soviet Union<sup>6</sup>. The Baltic Way was the largest and most important campaign of the Baltic States aimed towards regaining their freedom. The Baltic Way broke the existing social norms as isolation, restriction of free speech, social goods and wrongs among the existing social system back in time.

The “Baltic Way” present the social change in human’s attitude and values also reforming social norms and policies. Cut-over took place quickly and on a large scale: the entire social entity and perception was transformed.

30 years after the Baltic way to the day, which was formed on the 23rd of August 1989, a human chain was also formed in Hong Kong. While the “Baltic Way”, also known as the chain of freedom, spanned 675.5 kilometres, from Estonia into Latvia and ending in Lithuania, the Chain of Freedom in Hong Kong was held on the 23rd of August 2019. It was 50 miles long<sup>7</sup>.

*The goal of non-violent strategies is to change attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviours, and to stop injustices and violence.*



Illustration 4 Baltic Way



Illustration 4 Hong Kong, Human chain inspired by Baltic Way

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.thebalticway.eu/en/history/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/hongkongers-are-forming-a-baltic-way-style-human-chain-2019-8>