



THREE CIRCLES STRATEGY CHART

Source: Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project, www.movementgeneration.org

Developed by Gopal Dayaneni, Dave Henson, Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan, Jason Negrón-Gonzales, Mateo Nube, Carla Perez.

This tool illustrates a theory of how change happens to help us draw out our visions and align our strategies. Given the current state of ecological crises, it can be used to help our organizations, alliances, and movements identify what we believe is materially and culturally necessary (top circle), assess what is currently politically realistic (middle circle), and identify the false solutions that are being put forth by forces with an interest in maintaining the current system (bottom circle). The arrows indicate strategies for impacting the state of affairs – winning space to advance our agenda, pushing false solutions off the table, etc.

Using the tool:

1. We must identify what is materially and culturally necessary to ensure climate justice. If social movements don't define our visions, we will be stuck in a defensive/reactive posture. Our vision should not be limited by what is politically realistic even if we can't yet win the totality of that vision. Still, some components of what is materially and culturally necessary do overlap with what is politically realistic.
2. The location of the politically realistic circle is fluid. It is influenced by the political climate which is influenced by social movements, the power of corporations, the current state of the world, etc. It is the role of social movements to move more of what is materially and culturally necessary down into the politically realistic circle. And to push the false solutions out of what is politically realistic.
3. Just because there is overlap between politically realistic and what we really need doesn't mean that we will get it. And if we only focus on that narrow space, we don't inherently extend our influence to bring in more of our agenda into that space. We have to engage in a variety of spaces to advance that agenda. If we don't say what we really want, we will never get it. So, for example, a total moratorium on all new fossil fuels exploration and exploitation is not at all politically realistic in 2012, but we don't want to wait until material conditions become so bad that it becomes viable (because at that point, the false solutions will have colonized all the space for what is politically realistic). We have to find ways to advance that agenda now, so that it can become politically realistic. For example, employing strategies that target Tar Sands as a vulnerable link in the fossil fuels chain; or fighting for protection of pristine ecosystems from new exploration.
4. What we really need and false solutions do not every overlap. What goes in each circle depends on your worldview, what you believe and the groups you are aligned with.
5. The top and bottom circles do not occupy the same amount of space and do not employ the same strategies. Aligning the circles is an important part of the exercise. It allows for a snapshot of the state of play. Then we can talk about what we might move from the top circle into the overlapping space.

When we use this tool as a group, we can use hula-hoops and large strips of paper to brainstorm necessities and false solutions; then arrange them and discuss strategies to move the agenda forward.



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