

Mapping Our Roles in Social Change Ecosystems (2020)

In our lives and as part of movements and organizations, many of us play different roles in pursuit of equity, shared liberation, inclusion, and justice. And yet, we often get lost and confused, or we are newcomers to ongoing social change efforts and don't know where to start, or we are catalyzed into action in the midst of a crisis in our community.

This is a framework that can help individuals, networks, and organizations align and get in right relationship with social change values, individual roles, and the broader ecosystem.

What you're reading now is the most current version of the social change map, developed in 2020. Below you'll find a *Frequently Asked Questions* section. Following that are the three components: the map, the description of roles, and a reflection guide.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who developed the framework?

My name is Deepa Iyer, and I'm a writer, strategist, facilitator, and activist. Learn more about the original concept [here](#). As I utilized the framework with others, it began to evolve; see more about that [here](#). This is the most current version of the framework.

What are the components of the framework?

The map, the description of the roles, and the reflection guide can all be found in this document. If you'd like to access individual components, you can find them [here](#).

How do I use this framework?

It's a three-step process: (1) identify your values and context in the middle circle; (2) map your roles and those played by your ecosystem; and (3) reflect, observe, and plan.

Who can use this framework?

Anyone. Individuals can use it to reflect, assess, and plan. Organizations can use it at staff and board retreats, team-building meetings, orientations, and strategy sessions. Workplaces can use it to assess their effectiveness. Coalitions and networks can use it to clarify different lanes.

When should this framework be used?

As an individual, you can use it when you need a re-set, when you feel stuck, or when you feel confused. I use it often when there is a community crisis and I don't know how to respond. For example, people have been using the framework to figure out their roles during COVID-19 and the struggle for Black liberation.

What are the permissions and restrictions on using this framework?

The framework is copyrighted and licensed under [Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0](#). The original material may be copied, redistributed, and shared with attribution. In addition, it may be adapted as long as it stays true to the original content *and* provides attribution. No commercial use is permitted. **Attribution should read:** Deepa Iyer, SolidarityIs, and Building Movement Project. Questions? Please contact Deepa via email (diyer@buildingmovement.org), on Twitter (@dviyer), or on Instagram (@deepaviyer).

Mapping Our Roles in a Social Change Ecosystem (2020)



© Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0.
Attribution: Deepa Iyer, *SolidarityIs* and Building Movement Project

The Roles

Weavers: I see the through-lines of connectivity between people, places, organizations, ideas, and movements.

Experimenters: I innovate, pioneer, and invent. I take risks and course-correct as needed.

Frontline Responders: I address community crises by marshaling and organizing resources, networks, and messages.

Visionaries: I imagine and generate our boldest possibilities, hopes and dreams, and remind us of our direction.

Builders: I develop, organize, and implement ideas, practices, people, and resources in service of a collective vision.

Caregivers: I nurture and nourish the people around me by creating and sustaining a community of care, joy, and connection.

Disruptors: I take uncomfortable and risky actions to shake up the status quo, to raise awareness, and to build power.

Healers: I recognize and tend to the generational and current traumas caused by oppressive systems, institutions, policies, and practices.

Storytellers: I craft and share our community stories, cultures, experiences, histories, and possibilities through art, music, media, and movement.

Guides: I teach, counsel, and advise, using my gifts of well-earned discernment and wisdom.

Reflection Guide

- Reflect on the values in the middle of the map. Circle the ones that connect with you and/or add more. You can also choose to write in a particular issue, campaign, or crisis that calls to you to take action (i.e. COVID-19, solidarity with Black communities, campaign to center immigrants).

- Locate yourself on the map and put your name inside the circles that you find yourself playing most frequently. Add other circles if needed and label them with roles (not job titles). Recognize that you can be playing multiple roles, and that these roles can even shift depending on the context.

- What role(s) do you feel comfortable and natural playing, and why? What role(s) make you come alive, and why? Are there any differences between these two responses for you to explore?

- What is the impact of playing these roles on you - physically, energetically, emotionally, or spiritually? What/who sustains you?

• In your role(s), how often do you vision and dream? What is the effect of repetition and redundancy, or compromise and sacrifice in the roles you play?

• How does your role connect to your privilege and power? For example, are there roles where you might be taking too much space (or not enough)? Which roles provide positional authority and power and what are the effects?

• What story emerges about you when you review the map and your reflections?

• How could you stretch yourself? Where can you take bolder risks?

My Ecosystem

- Who is in your ecosystem? What roles do they play? Start with your immediate ecosystem (usually your organization), and then zoom out to include mentors, supporters, and colleagues outside of your organization. You can also do this part of the exercise through the lens of an organizational ecosystem by first identifying your organizational role(s) on the map, and then placing allies and partners in different circles.

- The middle circle in the map identifies the values of the communities and the world we seek to create. Which resonate with your ecosystem and why? How does your ecosystem create the conditions for justice, liberation, solidarity and inclusion to be realized?

- What observations emerge about your team, organization, network, or movement when you review the complete ecosystem, and your role in it?

- An effective, healthy, and sustainable social change ecosystem requires people playing diverse roles. Is your map imbalanced in any way? If so, how could the ecosystem provide support, alter objectives, or course correct?

• Often, social change ecosystems are prone to maintaining cultures of overwork, productivity, and performance at the cost of individual well-being and long-term sustainability. Does the mapping process provide insights into the culture of your ecosystem? Are there roles that need to be strengthened in order to cultivate a more sustainable culture?

Alignment and Aspirations

There are times when we all feel confused and lost about the roles that we should play, especially during community crises. When you don't feel in alignment with my roles, how can you re-set? Who can you turn to for guidance? When you are in right relationship between your roles and values, how do you feel?

Based on the reflections above, set 2 goals for yourself to try out before your next check-in. Identify 1 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) goal and 1 [B-HAG](#) (Big, Hairy, Audacious) goal. Check in every quarter to reflect on what's changed, and if possible, work with a partner, coach, or team-member for accountability and momentum.
