

FreeMoCap as Counter-Hegemonic Project

A Strategic Worksheet for Liberating
Knowledge, Education, and Science

“The great revolution in the history of man, past, present and future, is the revolution of those determined to be free.”

— **Toussaint Louverture**

“Information is power. But like all power, there are those who want to keep it for themselves.”

— **Aaron Swartz**

On tools: The Haitian revolutionaries got their muskets from the French. They got their military tactics from the French. They got the language of universal liberty from the French Revolution — then held France accountable to ideals France never intended for them. Tools are not ideologically fixed to their origins. The code doesn’t know who’s running it. **Appropriate everything.**

Based on Jonathan Smucker’s *Hegemony How-To* and political organizing theory
Prepared for the FreeMoCap Foundation

Contents

1 Mapping the Enemy — The Current Hegemony	5
1.1 The Institutional Landscape	5
1.2 The Hegemonic Common Sense	6
1.3 Cracks in the Edifice	6
1.4 Who Benefits, Who Loses	7
2 The Counter-Hegemonic Vision	9
2.1 The World We’re Building	9
2.2 Core Principles of the New Hegemony	9
2.3 Prefigurative Politics	10
3 Theory of Change — How Hegemonies Fall	12
3.1 Historical Models	12
3.2 Your Theory of Change	13
3.3 The Stages	13
3.4 Multiple Fronts	14
4 The Public Narrative	15
4.1 Story of Self	15
4.2 Story of Us	16
4.3 Story of Now	17
4.4 The Integrated Narrative	18
5 Alliance Mapping	19
5.1 Allied Movements	19
5.2 Potential Organizational Allies	19
5.3 Intellectual Lineages	20
5.4 Building Alliances	20
6 Organizing for the Long Haul	22
6.1 The FreeMoCap Foundation as Vehicle	22
6.2 Developing Leadership	23
6.3 Organizational Culture	23
7 Strategic Questions to Keep Asking	25
7.1 The Smucker Questions	25
7.2 The Scale Questions	26
7.3 The Sustainability Questions	26
8 Immediate Actions	27
8.1 Top Priorities for Next 90 Days	27
8.2 What You’re NOT Doing	27
8.3 Accountability	27
9 Reading & Resources	28
9.1 Core Strategic Reading	28
9.2 Key Concepts Quick Reference	28
10 The Vision Document	30

How to Use This Worksheet

This worksheet is designed for both individual reflection and group discussion:

1. **Individual first pass:** Each core team member completes sections independently
2. **Compare and discuss:** Share responses and identify patterns, disagreements, tensions
3. **Synthesize:** Develop shared answers that represent collective understanding
4. **Revisit quarterly:** These questions aren't "solved" once — return to them as the project evolves

Set aside dedicated time. This isn't a 30-minute exercise — budget 2-3 hours for serious engagement with each major section.

Framing: What Are We Actually Doing?

FreeMoCap the motion capture software is **Stage 1** — a concrete demonstration that:

- Research-grade scientific tools can be free, open, and accessible to everyone
- You don't need a university affiliation to do real science
- You don't need a \$200,000 budget to produce knowledge
- The barriers are artificial, maintained by institutions that benefit from scarcity

The **actual project** is much larger: dismantling the current hegemony of knowledge production — the interlocking system of universities, academic journals, proprietary software, professional credentialism, and institutional gatekeeping that determines who gets to participate in science, education, and the creation of knowledge.

Mapping the Enemy — The Current Hegemony

Before you can overturn a hegemony, you need to understand it clearly. What are the structures you're fighting? How do they maintain power? What ideology justifies them?

— Strategic Principle

The Institutional Landscape

Map the interlocking institutions that control knowledge production:

Institution	What it Controls	How it Maintains Control	Justifying Ideology
Universities	Access to education, research resources, credentials	Accreditation, degree requirements, tenure system	<i>"Expertise requires formal training"</i>
Academic Journals	What counts as "real" knowledge	Peer review gatekeeping, impact factors, paywalls	<i>"Peer review ensures quality"</i>
Proprietary Software	Tools for knowledge production	Licensing, prices, closed formats	<i>"Professional tools cost money"</i>
Professional Associations	Who counts as "qualified"	Certifications, ethical codes as gatekeeping	<i>"Credentials protect the public"</i>
Funding Agencies	What research gets done	Grant systems, overhead rates	<i>"Competitive funding ensures quality"</i>

Add others you identify:

Institution	What it Controls	How it Maintains Control	Justifying Ideology

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The Hegemonic Common Sense

Key Insight

Hegemony works by making contingent arrangements seem natural and inevitable. What do people currently believe that serves this system?

Complete these sentences as a “normal person” embedded in current structures would:

To be a real scientist, you need _____

Research isn't valid unless _____

Education requires _____

If software/journals/education were free, _____

People outside institutions can't do real research because _____

We need universities because _____

Where did these beliefs come from? Who benefits from people believing them?

Cracks in the Edifice

No hegemony is total. Where is the current system failing?

System Failure	Who Experiences This?	What Do They Currently Blame?
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Reproducibility crisis	Researchers, public	<i>“Bad actors,” not systemic incentives</i>
Student debt crisis	Students, families	<i>“Expensive schools,” not credentialism itself</i>
Journal paywalls	Everyone outside elite institutions	<i>“Greedy publishers,” not the publication model</i>
Adjunctification	Early-career academics	<i>“Budget cuts,” not the tenure system</i>
Research irrelevance	Practitioners, public	<i>“Ivory tower,” not funding structures</i>
Proprietary lock-in	Researchers, educators	<i>Specific vendors, not proprietary model</i>

Key question: These people are experiencing real problems with the system. How could you help them see the SYSTEMIC cause rather than blaming individuals or specific bad actors?

Who Benefits, Who Loses

Under the current system, who benefits?

Who	How
Tenured faculty at elite institutions	
Academic publishers	
Proprietary software companies	

Who loses?

Who	How
Students (debt, limited access)	
Adjuncts and contingent faculty	
Under-resourced institutions	
Global South academics	

Independent re-searchers	
The public	

Critical Question

The people who lose vastly outnumber those who benefit. **Why hasn't the system already changed?**

Your analysis:

The Counter-Hegemonic Vision

What new 'common sense' are you trying to create? What does the liberated landscape look like?

— Strategic Question

The World We're Building

Complete these sentences as someone living in the world FreeMoCap is building:

Anyone can do real science because _____

I learned [skill/knowledge] by _____

When I need research tools, I _____

Knowledge is validated by _____

Education happens _____

My work is valued because..., not because I have credentials from _____

Core Principles of the New Hegemony

What are the foundational beliefs of the world you're building?

Draft 5-7 core principles:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

For each principle, you'll need to articulate:

- **Why it's true** (the positive case)
- **What current belief it displaces**
- **What changes if people accept it**

Prefigurative Politics

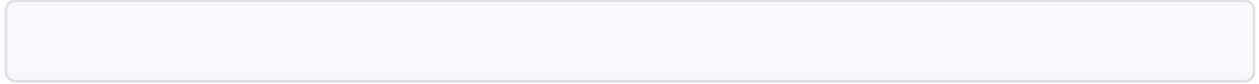
Definition

Prefigurative politics means embodying the future you want to create in how you organize now. FreeMoCap should BE the proof that another way is possible.

Principle	How FreeMoCap Demonstrates This NOW

Where does FreeMoCap fall short of its own principles? (Be honest)

What would it look like to more fully embody these principles?



Theory of Change — How Hegemonies Fall

Smucker is clear: being right isn't enough. You need a plausible theory of how the current system gets replaced by yours.

— Strategic Principle

Historical Models

Movement/Project	Hegemony Challenged	How They Won	Lessons for FreeMoCap
Free Software Movement	Proprietary software as default	Built viable alternatives, created licensing infrastructure, changed developer culture	
Open Access Movement	Journal paywalls	Mandates, repositories, demonstrated demand, Sci-Hub as civil disobedience	
Wikipedia	Expert-only encyclopedias	Just built it, proved it worked, became too useful to ignore	
Linux	Microsoft/proprietary OS hegemony	Server dominance first, enterprise adoption, Android	

What do successful counter-hegemonic projects have in common?

Your Theory of Change

Complete this theory of change:

If FreeMoCap _____

Then [constituency] will _____

Which will cause [institutional change] _____

Leading to [broader shift] _____

Until eventually [new hegemony] _____

What are the key assumptions in this theory? What has to be true for it to work?

The Stages

If FreeMoCap motion capture is Stage 1, what are the subsequent stages?

Stage	Focus	Goal	Success Looks Like	Enables Next Stage By...
1	Motion capture	Prove FOSS can match proprietary	Adoption in labs, citations	Builds credibility, community
2				
3				
4				
5				

What capabilities/resources/credibility do you need to build at each stage?

Stage 1 → 2 requires: _____

Stage 2 → 3 requires: _____

Stage 3 → 4 requires: _____

Multiple Fronts

Counter-hegemonic projects usually require pressure on multiple fronts simultaneously.

Front	What Victory Looks Like	Who's Already Fighting Here?	FreeMoCap's Role
Tools (FOSS research software)	FOSS default for research	NumPy, R, Jupyter, etc.	Active combatant
Publishing (Open Access)	Paywalls gone, new validation	PLOS, arXiv, Sci-Hub	?
Education (alt credentials)	Degrees not required	MOOCs, bootcamps	?
Funding (alt models)	Research funded outside grants	Crowdfunding, citizen science	?
Community (indie research)	Legitimate research outside academy	Indie researchers	?

Where should FreeMoCap focus? Where should it build alliances?

The Public Narrative

Your narrative must serve the LARGER project, not just the motion capture software.

— *Strategic Principle*

Marshall Ganz's Framework

Story of Self → Why YOU? What choice led you here?

Story of Us → Who is WE? What binds us together?

Story of Now → Why NOW? What's the urgent ask?

Story of Self

Why are YOU, Jon, fighting to liberate knowledge production?

The Encounter: When did you first experience the injustice of the current system? What specific moment showed you something was wrong?

The Choice: What moment of choice committed you to this fight? (Not a gradual drift — a moment when you could have done otherwise but chose this.)

The Cost: What have you given up or risked by making this choice? (Sacrifice demonstrates commitment and values.)

The Values: What deep values drive this work? Not 'open source is good' but the VALUES underneath — justice? freedom? democracy? human flourishing?

Draft your Story of Self (3-4 sentences, conversational):

Story of Us

Who is the “we” fighting for liberated knowledge? This must be MUCH bigger than “FreeMoCap users.”

The broadest possible “we” — who has been harmed by or excluded from the current knowledge system?

- Students crushed by debt for credentials that gatekeep knowledge
- Researchers at under-resourced institutions
- Global South academics locked out by paywalls and equipment costs
- Independent researchers dismissed as “not real scientists”
- Practitioners who can’t access research relevant to their work
- Curious people told “you’re not qualified to understand this”
- _____
- _____

The shared experience — what do all these people have in common? _____

The shared enemy (not 'universities' — the SYSTEM, the ideology): _____

The shared vision — what world are 'we' building together? _____

Draft your Story of Us (3-4 sentences):

Story of Now

Why is THIS MOMENT critical?

What's happening RIGHT NOW that creates opportunity or urgency? (AI democratizing/concentrating capabilities, reproducibility crisis, student debt crisis, pandemic lessons, institutional distrust, climate crisis...)

What window is closing? What opportunity will we lose if we don't act?

The specific ask (for different audiences):

Audience	What Do You Want Them to DO?
Someone experiencing the system's failures	
A potential contributor	
A potential ally organization	
Someone with resources	
Someone with platform/influence	

The Integrated Narrative

Weave them together. This should take 3-5 minutes to tell. Practice out loud.

[Story of Self — your encounter with injustice, your choice, your values]

“And I discovered I wasn’t alone...”

[Story of Us — the shared experience, the shared enemy, the shared vision]

“And right now, we face a critical moment...”

[Story of Now — the urgency, the opportunity, the ask]

“That’s why I’m asking you to...”

Alliance Mapping

You're not fighting alone. Many movements share pieces of this vision. Who are your allies?

— *Strategic Principle*

Allied Movements

Movement	What They Fight For	Overlap with FreeMoCap	Key Organizations
Free Software	Software freedom	FOSS as default, anti-proprietary	FSF, SFLC
Open Access	Free access to research	Against paywalls, open publishing	SPARC, PLOS
Open Science	Reproducibility, transparency	Open tools, data, methods	COS, FOSTER
Right to Repair	Ownership of technology	Against proprietary lock-in	iFixit, Repair.org
Citizen Science	Public participation in research	Research outside institutions	SciStarter
Hacker Culture	Information wants to be free	Tool-building, sharing knowledge	Hackerspaces, CCC
Library Movement	Public access to knowledge	Against information enclosure	ALA, Internet Archive

Potential Organizational Allies

Organization	What They Do	Alliance Potential	Who Do You Know There?
Software Freedom Conservancy			
Internet Archive			

Electronic Frontier Foundation			
Mozilla Foundation			
Wikimedia Foundation			
NumFOCUS			
Center for Open Science			

Intellectual Lineages

What thinkers/traditions inform this work?

Thinker/Tradition	Key Ideas	How It Informs FreeMoCap
Ivan Illich	Deschooling, convivial tools, institutional critique	
Aaron Swartz	Information liberation, guerrilla open access	
Richard Stallman	Free software as freedom, not just price	
Paulo Freire	Critical pedagogy, education as liberation	
Yochai Benkler	Commons-based peer production	
Elinor Ostrom	Governance of commons	

Building Alliances

For your top 5 potential allies, develop an approach:

Ally	What You Offer Them	What You Need From Them	First Step
1.			
2.			
3.			

4.			
5.			

Organizing for the Long Haul

Counter-hegemonic projects take decades. How do you build an organization that can sustain this?

— *Strategic Question*

The FreeMoCap Foundation as Vehicle

Is the FreeMoCap Foundation the right organizational vehicle for the larger vision?

Consideration	Current State	What's Needed for Larger Vision
Legal structure	501(c)(3)	
Name/brand	"FreeMoCap" = motion capture	
Mission statement		
Governance		

Critical Question

Should there be a broader organizational entity that FreeMoCap is one project **within**?

Your thinking:

Developing Leadership

“Strong people don’t need a strong leader.” — Ella Baker

What leadership roles will you need that don’t exist yet?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do people BECOME leaders in your organization? (Make this explicit)

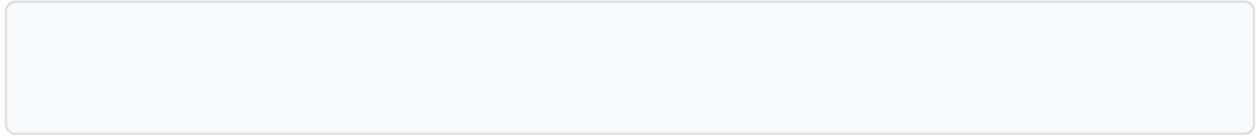
Organizational Culture

Value	What It Looks Like in Practice	Current State (1-10)
Radical accessibility		
Distributed leadership		
Long-term thinking		
Solidarity with allied movements		
Prefigurative practice		

Cultural patterns to AVOID:

- Founder dependency
- Insider/outsider dynamics
- Technical elitism
- Burnout/martyrdom culture
- Purity politics
- Short-term thinking

Which of these are you most at risk for?



Strategic Questions to Keep Asking

These aren't one-time questions. Return to them regularly.

— Ongoing Practice

The Smucker Questions

Ask yourself monthly:

“Is what we’re doing likely to advance our mission, or does it primarily express our identity as [open source developers / academics / hackers / activists]?”

“Are we building power, or are we performing righteousness?”

“Who are we bringing IN to this work who wasn’t here before? Or are we just activating the already-convinced?”

“What have we WON recently? What concrete victory can we point to?”

The Scale Questions

“Is what we’re doing now building toward the larger vision, or are we getting stuck at Stage 1?”

“Are we building the organizational capacity to do MORE than motion capture software?”

“Are we connecting with allied movements, or operating in isolation?”

The Sustainability Questions

“Can this continue without Jon?”

“What happens if a key contributor burns out or leaves?”

“Are we moving at a sustainable pace?”

Immediate Actions

Strategy without action is fantasy. What are you doing THIS MONTH?

— Call to Action

Top Priorities for Next 90 Days

#	Priority	First Concrete Step	Deadline	Owner
1				
2				
3				

What You're NOT Doing

Strategy means choosing

What are you explicitly deprioritizing?

1. _____ (Why: _____)
2. _____ (Why: _____)
3. _____ (Why: _____)

Accountability

Who will you share this with?

When will you review progress?

- 30-day check-in: _____
- 90-day review: _____

Reading & Resources

Core Strategic Reading

Tier 1: Essential

[Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals](#) Jonathan Smucker — Core strategic framework

[Deschooling Society](#) Ivan Illich — Foundational critique of institutional education

[Tools for Conviviality](#) Ivan Illich — Technology that liberates rather than dominates

[No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power](#) Jane McAlevey — Organizing vs. mobilizing

[Working in Public](#) Nadia Eghbal — Open source sustainability and community

Tier 2: Deepening

[Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#) Paulo Freire — Education as liberation

[Pedagogy of Hope](#) Paulo Freire — Hope as ontological necessity

[Emergent Strategy](#) adrienne maree brown — Adaptive organizing

[The Wealth of Networks](#) Yochai Benkler — Commons-based peer production

[Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto](#) Aaron Swartz — Information liberation ethics

Key Concepts Quick Reference

Term	Definition & Application
Hegemony	Making your values become the “common sense” of society. FreeMoCap aims to make “motion capture should be free/accessible” into common sense.

Political Identity Paradox	Strong group identity enables commitment but creates insularity. Balance community cohesion with outward focus.
Expressive Strategic vs.	Acting to express identity vs. acting to achieve outcomes. Prioritize actions that advance mission over actions that feel good.
Organizing vs. Mobilizing	Mobilizing activates existing supporters; organizing expands your base by reaching non-activists.
Conscientização	Paulo Freire's term for developing critical consciousness — moving from fatalism to understanding systemic causes to taking action.
Prefigurative Politics	Embodying the future you want to create in how you organize now. FreeMoCap should BE proof another way is possible.

The Vision Document

After working through this worksheet, draft a 1-page vision document that articulates the full scope of what FreeMoCap is building toward. This becomes your north star.

— *Final Synthesis*

FREEMOCAP VISION DOCUMENT

DRAFT

THE PROBLEM

THE VISION

THE THEORY OF CHANGE

THE CURRENT STAGE

THE CALL

This is a living document.

The work of building counter-hegemonic power is never complete. Return to these questions. Revise your answers. Share them with co-conspirators. Build the infrastructure for a long fight.

The current system wasn't built in a day. It won't fall in a day.

But it WILL fall.

FreeMoCap Foundation
freemocap.org · github.com/freemocap

Based on frameworks from Jonathan Smucker, Paulo Freire, Jane McAlevey, Marshall Ganz, Ivan Illich, adrienne maree brown, and others.