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.**

Contents

How to Use This Worksheet

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 as the project evolves

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 and accessible, that you don't need a university affiliation or $200,000 budget to produce knowledge, and that the barriers are artificial.

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

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	*"Expertise requires formal training"*
Academic Journals	What counts as "real" knowledge	Peer review gatekeeping, impact factors, paywalls	*"Peer review ensures quality"*
Proprietary Software	Tools for knowledge production	Licensing, prices, closed formats	*"Professional tools cost money"*
Professional Associations	Who counts as "qualified"	Certifications, ethical codes as gatekeeping	*"Credentials protect the public"*
Funding Agencies	What research gets done	Grant systems, overhead rates	*"Competitive funding ensures quality"*

Add others you identify:

Institution	Controls	Maintains Control	Ideology

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 _____

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

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Cracks in the Edifice

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

System Failure	Who Experiences This?	What Do They Currently Blame?
Reproducibility crisis	Researchers, public	*"Bad actors," not systemic incentives*
Student debt crisis	Students, families	*"Expensive schools," not credentialism itself*
Journal paywalls	Everyone outside elite institutions	*"Greedy publishers," not the publication model*
Adjunctification	Early-career academics	*"Budget cuts," not the tenure system*
Proprietary lock-in	Researchers, educators	*Specific vendors, not proprietary model*

How could you help people see the SYSTEMIC cause rather than blaming individuals?

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Who Benefits, Who Loses

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Who benefits?

- Tenured faculty at elite institutions
- Academic publishers
- Proprietary software companies
-

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Who loses?

- Students (debt, limited access)
- Adjuncts and contingent faculty
- Global South academics
- Independent researchers
- The public

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

Your analysis:

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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 _____

Core Principles of the New Hegemony

Draft 5-7 core principles of the world you're building:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

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.

How does FreeMoCap currently embody these principles?

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

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	Hegemony Challenged	How They Won	Lessons
Free Software	Proprietary software	Built alternatives, licensing infrastructure, changed culture	
Open Access	Journal paywalls	Mandates, repositories, Sci-Hub	
Wikipedia	Expert-only encyclopedias	Just built it, proved it worked	
Linux	Microsoft hegemony	Server dominance first, 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 _____

Leading to _____

Until eventually _____

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, citations	Builds credibility
2				
3				
4				
5				

Multiple Fronts

Front	Victory Looks Like	Who's Fighting Here?	FreeMoCap's Role
Tools (FOSS)	FOSS default	NumPy, R, Jupyter	Active combatant
Publishing	Paywalls gone	PLOS, arXiv, Sci-Hub	
Education	Degrees not required	MOOCs, bootcamps	
Funding	Alt funding models	Crowdfunding, citizen science	

Where should FreeMoCap focus? Where 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?

The Choice: What moment committed you to this fight?

The Values: What deep values drive this? (Not 'open source is good' — the values underneath)

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

Story of Us

Who is the "we" fighting for liberated knowledge? Much bigger than "FreeMoCap users."

The broadest possible "we" — who has been harmed/excluded?
- Students crushed by debt for credentials that gatekeep knowledge
- Researchers at under-resourced institutions
- Global South academics locked out by paywalls
- Independent researchers dismissed as "not real scientists"
- Curious people told "you're not qualified"
-

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

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

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

Story of Now

Why is THIS MOMENT critical?

What's happening NOW that creates urgency? (AI, reproducibility crisis, debt crisis, climate...)

The ask for different audiences:

Audience	What Do You Want Them to DO?
Someone experiencing system failures	
A potential contributor	
A potential ally organization	
Someone with resources	

The Integrated Narrative

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

[Story of Self]

"And I discovered I wasn't alone…"

[Story of Us]

"And right now, we face a critical moment…"

[Story of Now + The Ask]

Alliance Mapping

You're not fighting alone. Many movements share pieces of this vision. — *Strategic Principle*

Allied Movements

Movement	What They Fight For	Overlap	Key Organizations
Free Software	Software freedom	FOSS as default	FSF, SFLC
Open Access	Free research access	Against paywalls	SPARC, PLOS
Open Science	Reproducibility	Open tools/data	COS, FOSTER
Right to Repair	Tech ownership	Anti lock-in	iFixit
Citizen Science	Public participation	Outside institutions	SciStarter
Hacker Culture	Information freedom	Tool-building	Hackerspaces, CCC
Library Movement	Public access	Against enclosure	Internet Archive

Intellectual Lineages

Thinker	Key Ideas	Application to FreeMoCap
Ivan Illich	Deschooling, convivial tools	
Aaron Swartz	Information liberation, guerrilla open access	
Paulo Freire	Critical pedagogy, conscientização	
Yochai Benkler	Commons-based peer production	
Elinor Ostrom	Governance of commons	

Building Alliances

For top 5 potential allies:

Ally	What You Offer	What You Need	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

Critical Question

Is the FreeMoCap Foundation the right organizational vehicle for the larger vision? Should there be a broader 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?

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

Organizational Culture

Values to cultivate:
- Radical accessibility
- Distributed leadership
- Long-term thinking
- Solidarity with allies
- Prefigurative practice

Patterns to AVOID:
- Founder dependency
- Insider/outsider dynamics
- Technical elitism
- Burnout/martyrdom culture
- Purity politics

Which risks are you most vulnerable to?

Strategic Questions to Keep Asking

These aren't one-time questions. Return to them regularly.   *— Ongoing Practice*

The Smucker Questions (Ask Monthly)

"Is what we're doing likely to advance our mission, or does it primarily express our identity?"

"Are we building power, or performing righteousness?"

"Who are we bringing IN who wasn't here before?"

"What have we WON recently?"

The Sustainability Questions

"Can this continue without Jon?"

"What happens if a key contributor burns out?"

"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

Share this with:

Review dates: 30-day: _____
90-day: _____

Reading & Resources

Core Reading

Tier 1: Essential

Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals — Jonathan Smucker — Core strategic framework

Deschooling Society — Ivan Illich — Foundational institutional critique

Tools for Conviviality — Ivan Illich — Liberatory technology

No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power — Jane McAlevey — Organizing vs. mobilizing

Working in Public — Nadia Eghbal — Open source sustainability

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

Guerrilla Open Access Manifesto — Aaron Swartz — Information liberation ethics

The Wealth of Networks — Yochai Benkler — Commons-based peer production

Key Concepts Reference

Term	Definition & Application
Hegemony	Making your values become "common sense." Goal: make "mocap should be free" into common sense.
Political Identity Paradox	Strong identity enables commitment but creates insularity. Balance cohesion with outward focus.
Expressive vs. Strategic	Acting to express identity vs. to achieve outcomes. Prioritize mission over feeling good.
Organizing vs. Mobilizing	Mobilizing activates existing supporters; organizing expands base to non-activists.
Conscientização	Freire: developing critical consciousness — fatalism → systemic understanding → action.
Prefigurative Politics	Embody the future in how you organize now. FreeMoCap should BE proof another way works.

The Vision Document

Draft a 1-page document articulating 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 Smucker, Freire, McAlevey, Ganz, Illich, brown, and others.