
AN ANALYSIS OF

METANARRATIVE

SURVEY AND INTERVIEW

NOVEMBER 2016

NEW ECONOMY COALITION

neweconomy.net

CENTER FOR STORY-BASED STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

One of the key assumptions that inspired the project was that the “new economy movement” would benefit from a more strategic and aligned framework about what the new economy is and what our collective goals are. In 2015, the New Economy Coalition interviewed 58 people from its member groups and allied organizations to learn more about their organization’s needs and about how they were communicating the “new economy” in their work. The goals of this listening project were to inform NEC’s strategic planning process in 2015-2016 and to explore the need and appetite for long-term collaboration on new economy messaging and narrative strategy.

Every social change effort is inherently a conflict between the status quo and the change agents to control the framing of an issue. This contest is the battle of the story—the struggle to define meaning and thereby build power and momentum for change.

Within the new economy movement, there are multiple narratives and frames that overlap, making it more difficult for any narrative to compete against the status quo, and for newcomers to see shared vision and a coherent movement. Even the phrase “new economy” is contested within NEC’s network, with many groups preferring alternative phrases to describe their transformative vision for the future. These interviews explore why this is the case, and whether or not there is a sufficient foundation of trust and shared vision for this net-

work to coalesce around a common identity.

This report is designed specifically for NEC members and other stakeholders in the new economy movement. It is not meant to be a public document. The report synthesizes the results of the interviews so that members of NEC’s network can learn from what was shared, and so that we can introduce possible next steps together.

The interview process was designed in partnership with the Center for Story-Based Strategy (CSS), a US-based nonprofit that specializes in movement narrative strategy. This report was co-created with the Solidarity Research Cooperative, who conducted the data analysis in the “Results” section and designed this report. They are a NEC member and a cooperative agency.



WHAT IS NEC?

The New Economy Coalition (NEC) is a network of 173 organizations imagining and building a future where people, communities, and ecosystems thrive. Together, we are creating deep change in our economy and politics—placing power in the hands of people and uprooting legacies of harm—so that a fundamentally new system can take root. Our network advances change in three main ways:

1. We convene and connect leaders to tackle common challenges in their work to build a new economy.
2. We amplify stories, tools, and analysis, weaving a collective new economy narrative that can build shared identity, shift culture and policy, and promote a clear vision of the next system.
3. We lift up the work of communities on the frontlines of interrelated economic and ecological crises who are organizing for transformative change, through right relationships and direct support.

METHODS

1. Design

There were two components to the interview project:

1. one-on-one video or phone interviews with specific NEC members and allies
2. an online survey open to all NEC members

The questions for both the interview and the survey were designed by NEC and CSS. The interviews were conducted by NEC staff and ranged in duration from about 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Due to time limitations, we were unable to ask each interviewee every question. The interviewer was given discretion to decide which questions to ask.

2. Analysis

Solidarity Research Cooperative was given the results of the surveys and interviews from Survey Gizmo. SRC harmonized the two data sets for consistency and coded open-ended answers based on recurring themes. SRC conducted descriptive analysis of the following responses using SPSS and Excel:

- Organizational type, age, geography, budget, density, size, and staff composition
- Identification with the New Economy movement
- Membership in the New Economy Coalition
- New Economy assumptions
- Organizational obstacles
- Audience assumptions about the New Economy
- Metaphors of the New Economy
- Opportunities for the New Economy Coalition
- Connecting the New Economy story to various issues
- Future of the New Economy movement
- Future role for the New Economy Coalition
- Solutions for the New Economy Coalition
- Interest in metanarrative projects with the New Economy Coalition

SRC did a crosstab analysis of some of major questions with organizational information to determine if answers to the questions varied by organization characteristics. Finally, SRC reviewed open-ended responses and pulled out representative and outlier quotes. Some quotes were edited for spelling and clarification.

RESULTS

1. OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 Identification with New Economy Movement

The New Economy movement means different things to different people. One way of understanding it according to Gar Alperovitz, is a “far-ranging coming together of organizations, projects, activists, theorists and ordinary citizens committed to rebuilding the American political-economic system from the ground up.”¹ The overarching goals of the movement are to democratize ownership of the economy for the 99% in a participatory manner that is also ecologically sustainable. Alperovitz adds that “the movement includes young and old, ‘Occupy’ people, student activists, and what one older participant describes as thousands of ‘people in their 60s from the ‘60s.’”

Survey responses to the question: “Does your organization identify as being part of the New Economy Movement?” were mostly affirmative, with many of the no and “it’s complicated” comments reflecting the amorphous nature of the term New Economy or the desire of organizations to use different, more appropriate terminology for their work, rather than opposition to New Economy work.²

In total, there were 45 groups that answered Yes (68%), 19 answered It’s Complicated (29%) and 2 answered No (3%). See Figure 1. There is some difference in new

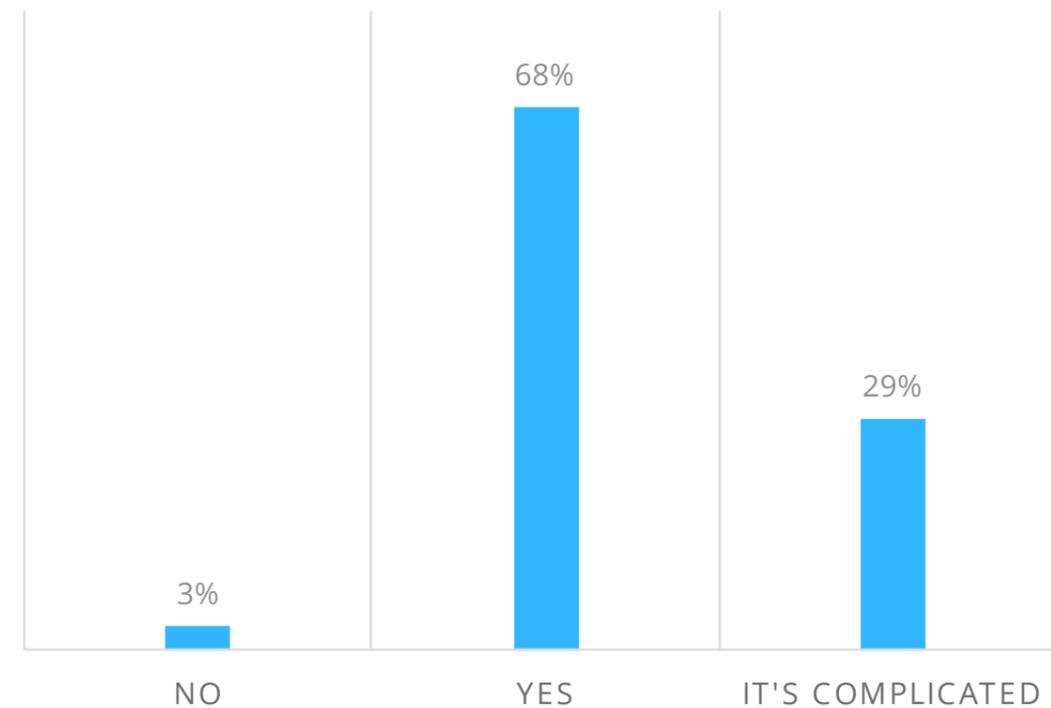
economy identification correlated with group age, with younger groups, 0-15 years old, having a 63% Yes response and older groups, more than 15 years old, having an 80% Yes response.

Specific comments from the “It’s Complicated” group include:

Maybe. I guess so. To me, new economy is an amorphous term. My sense of NEC is that there is a huge amount of overlap and that many folks in coalition use [a] solidarity economy framework. Where there isn’t a clear overlap is that solidarity is explicitly post-capitalist. A lot of your folks have that vision but others think the capitalist system can be reformed.

To be perfectly honest, we don’t use the language all that often. We tend to use “Community Wealth Building” to describe the work at the local level. We talk increasingly about The Next System or systemic transformation to talk about the work in a bigger frame. We use “New Economy” in our writing or in materials but we often feel the need to ground it and say “a New Economy grounded in economic democracy and sustainability.” For a lot of audiences “The New Economy” doesn’t immediately

Figure 1. Identification with New Economy Movement



capture something where it’s immediately apparent what that’s all about. The term doesn’t immediately resonate with people. We don’t really like “New Economy.” We really prefer economic democracy. I don’t know if this project is going to get to the question of the two-word name. In some ways it’s irrelevant but in a lot of ways it’s really important.

One of the No answers also indicates a preference for different terminology:

No. Not as an organization. First we use “New Work, New Culture,” then “Solidarity Economy,” then “the New Economy.” Not a popular term in Detroit. We’d have to know more about the movement. Begun doing work with NEC but need to know

more about the movement. We don’t even really identify with the first two terms. We identify as an Environmental Justice organization.

Another No answer questions whether their work would be considered part of the New Economy movement at all:

We’re highly supportive of New Economy Work but we don’t necessarily see each other as part of the movement. Maybe we do. We have a lot of work around Black male achievement that touches on participation in the economy, it’s framed around participation in the current economy. I don’t know if they’d see it as part of the New Economy. We’ve never talked about it explicitly.

1.2 New Economy Assumptions and Issues

Assumptions, according to the Center for Story-Based Strategy, are the glue that holds together how we make sense of the world, the unstated parts of the story you accept in order to believe that the narrative is true.³ Just as the dominant culture relies on assumptions to justify their monopoly over power and resources (see Section 2.3, Status Quo), a countermovement can wield alternative assumptions to undermine the status quo.

In order to test a number of narrative assumptions, as well as ideological and strategic issues about the New Economy, both the survey and interview asked respondents to “evaluate the following statements on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree),” also asking for elaboration at any point:

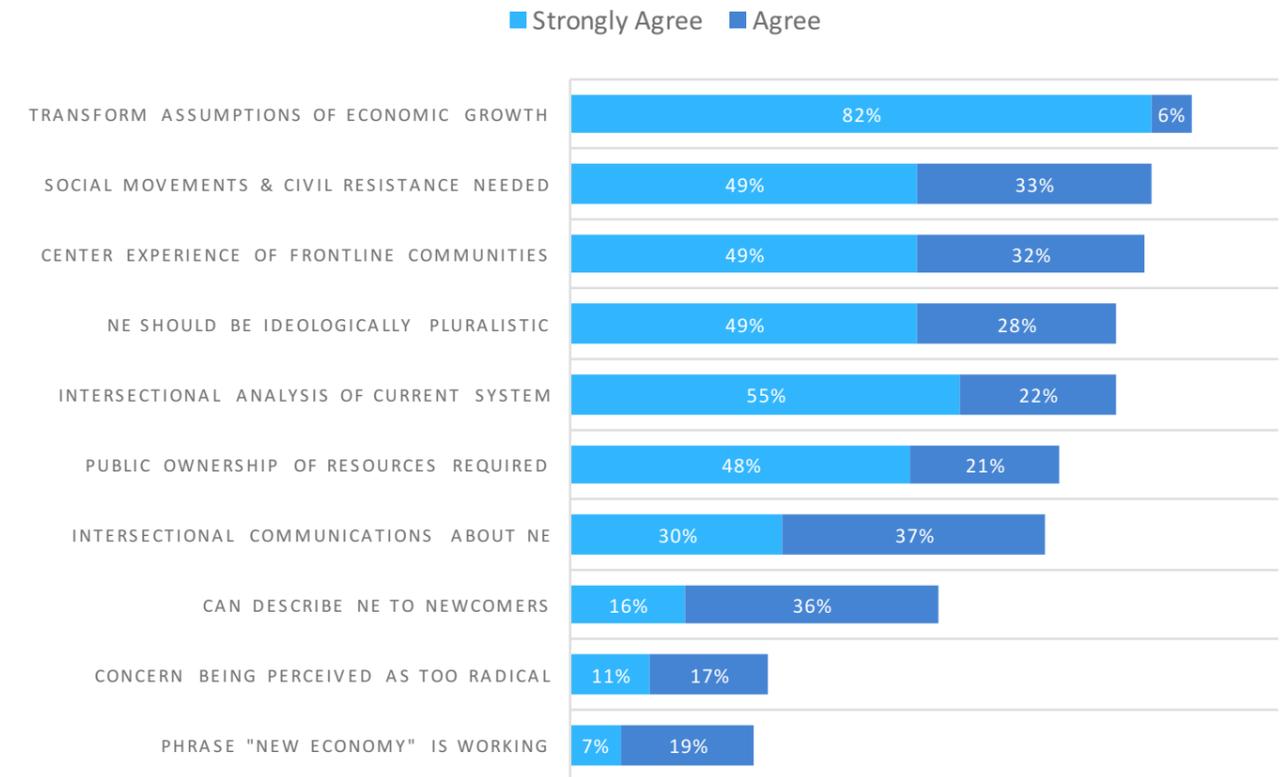
- The phrase “new economy” is working for my organization.
- My organization is able to effectively describe what the “new economy” is to newcomers.
- Achieving a “new economy” will require significant levels of public ownership of common resources, including national and state owned utilities.
- Achieving a “new economy” will require a transformation of society’s assumptions about economic growth.
- We will not achieve a “new economy” without popular social movements and widespread civil resistance.
- The “new economy” should remain

ideologically pluralistic, allowing for different theories of change and system design to co-exist.

- The “new economy” movement story should center the experiences, history, and leadership of communities on the frontlines of crisis.
- My organization has an analysis of what’s wrong with the existing system that includes the impacts of racism, patriarchy, and environmental injustice.
- My organization is able to connect the new economy to issues of race, class, and gender/sexuality in our external communications. (Interview only)
- Key decision-makers in my organization have concerns about our group being perceived as too radical (i.e. left wing) by our stakeholders.

Figure 2 shows a summary of the Strongly Agree and Agree (Total Agree) scores for each one.

Figure 2. Testing Assumptions About the New Economy



With more than 75% agreement, respondents feel strongly that to achieve a new economy we must transform assumptions about economic growth, support social movements and civil resistance, center the experience of frontline communities, cultivate ideological pluralism, and have an intersectional analysis of the current system. The statements with the highest total disagreement (adding the 4 and 5 scores) reflect that being perceived of as too radical is not a major concern, that the phrase New Economy may not be working, and there is some difficulty describing the New Economy to newcomers.

Because these questions reveal a number of interesting and important patterns and perceptions, below is an in-depth exploration of each tested assumption.

The phrase “new economy” is working for my organization

This only received a 26% Strongly Agree or Agree score, the lowest level of agreement of all the statements. This also had the second highest Strongly Disagree and Disagree score of 37%. Together this expresses significant current dissatisfaction with the New Economy phrase.

Indeed a number of comments expressed frustration with the term, with some indicating that it's vague and unclear, and others indicating they don't use it. Some examples include “frustrated with ‘new economy’ because it's so empty”, “We don't use it...I use it with an explanation. The phrase itself doesn't work” and “It's even vaguer than “cooperative economy”, which wasn't working much for us either. Nobody knows what it means.”

Some comments suggested alternatives such as solidarity economy. Examples include “we use it interchangeably with next economy, solidarity economy, and sometimes cooperative economy”, “we talk about economic democracy as a specific system / thread within new economy movement. we also talk about solidarity economy, probably more often than new economy” and “Solidarity economy is perceived to be more closely aligned with movements of low income and people of color.”

Other comments think the phrase is at least somewhat useful or as good as any other.

Examples include:

We don't really use it, we use variations on it, in terms of the individual phrase. There isn't another phrase. It would be useful to have better framing on the collection of groups who are building alternatives. I think “New Economy” is as good as any. The thing we'd benefit most from is not just a description of what that work is, but all of what that sector could be. “Next systems” does that well, it's an interesting frame to talk about what's needed.

We talk about it all the time. People see different things in what that could look like. In one sense that's good because it unites us. But there's a next step in terms of narrative and ideology to get beyond contradictions and getting into the nitty gritty. State versus non-state solutions is the biggest thing that's not being dealt with. The other thing that's not working is that we don't have enough examples to point to. We don't have enough imagery. Right now our vision is a little too vague and a little too austere. There's not necessarily people living in this new economy who you can imagine.

We don't have any complaints. It's not as comprehensive as our work in terms of shifting how humans live. It's only a piece of our work. A big piece but it doesn't include it all. And it doesn't resonate with everyone. It's not intuitive what that means.

My organization is able to effectively describe what the “new economy” is to newcomers.

A slight majority, 52%, responded with Strongly Agree or Agree. This also had the third highest Strongly Disagree and Disagree score of 27%. Together this data is consistent with the results of the previous statement where many respondents had trouble with the New Economy phrase or concept.

Moreover the comments indicate some mixed feelings about what it is and the ability to explain it. Examples include “we think we can but we can't”, “I can do it, a few other staff, organizationally less so” and “I don't know what the new economy is.”

Others are more comfortable with the phrase. Examples include:

New economy as a phrase is so everything under the sun that's new. It's so broad as to be almost meaningless although there tends to be something alternative and progressive about it. It's clear that most people don't talk about the new economy as some oppressive, racist, thing. The difference in NEC, I think [is] you all have a strong core of people who are really onboard with a transformative agenda and then you have people who are broader than that who are all for socially responsible business or investment.

We're much better at critique, we end up giving up a shopping list of policies. To some extent, I don't care that much: it took neoliberals decades to get their shit down.

We haven't put enough time in our movement story or the coherence of the intellectual project that we're a part of. We've been led too much by geeks and policy wonks.

Yes, we love to talk about what's wrong with the status quo and how the New Economy is more equitable and just.

Achieving a “new economy” will require significant levels of public ownership of common resources, including national and state-owned utilities.

69% responded with Strongly Agree or Agree. The comments showed support for the concept of public ownership but also some uneasiness with the state ownership. Examples include “The state makes a strange bedfellow, we have a considerable amount of work to do before public means the same as democratic” and “I’d strongly agree that public ownership is critical. I struggle when we start talking nationally, not sure what’s meant by a national utility. Part of what’s important about the notion of local self-reliance is that the economy operates at a scale that’s compatible with democracy and community needs. I’m skeptical of large institutions. Not in favor of nationalization, am in favor of public ownership.”

Several comments suggested an alternative collective, commons, local or cooperative ownership as well. Examples include: “There needs to be collective ownership. It doesn’t always have to be the state”, “In addition to national and state level there should be local and community” and “Not the only solution. Leaves out cooperative ownership. Mixed approach.”

Several comments suggest the concept that nobody would have ownership:

I disagree. Utilities should be municipal level. Ownership is one way of holding property. There are other forms (trusteeship). Things that aren’t owned by anybody. I believe in a highly pluralistic new economy. And the enterprise forms / economic orga-

nizations are going to be pluralistic. This statement privileges one type.

We definitely believe in the commons. But that’s kind of a question about anarchy. The transition people are kind of all over the map on that question. Some would say yes, some would say no, self-sufficient off the grid, or neighborhood owned, or nobody owns it.

Possibly if the question had been phrased as calling for some sort of social ownership model, it may have received close to 100%. But this does raise interesting questions about the kinds of ownership models NEC members prefer.

Achieving a “new economy” will require a transformation of society’s assumptions about economic growth.

This one received 88%, the highest Strongly Agree or Agree score. A few comments embrace this concept. An example:

Economic growth on a macro scale is inherently unsustainable -- a point that even smart people don’t seem to get. We should be seeking equilibrium at the macro scale but growth of local and sustainable businesses at the micro scale - which necessarily entails the decline of Big Business.

However, some comments are supportive of this but also call into question the demonization of growth. Perhaps folks are looking for a fuller understanding of what sustainable growth would look like.

Examples include:

Two pieces to your statement. Agree with the first part and not the second. [I] have a strong critique about leading with [consumption] as a cardinal sin. Consumption is fine. I’ve learned a lot of this from the queer movement and from a class critique around it. Most of that comes from owning class people. I absolutely think over-consumption is a problem. But consumption is not the primary angle I have on that. Smarter way to talk about [it]. Production is where I have a lot of my critique.

Growth is not a word that I want to become pejorative. History moves in a dialectical fashion. More is not what we need. There is plenty. Collectivization really is possible because we are post-scarcity or approaching it. Shortages are political. I

would encourage NEC to grapple with where they land on the peak oil question. Are we telling people that the challenge is physical scarcity of resources? It’s unclear to me if we’re going to run out of resources before we destroy the planet. There’s actually plenty of oil left to justify degradation of planet and destruction of indigenous communities.

We will not achieve a “new economy” without popular social movements and widespread civil resistance.

This one received 82%, the second highest Strongly Agree or Agree score. A number of comments seem much more comfortable with social movements than with the concept of civil resistance, with some appearing to indicate that the term is too negative or controversial. Examples include:

“I think the word resistance is tricky. You need organizing and mobilization. I don’t know if resistance captures the engagement and mobilization needed”,

“I’m not in love with the term resistance. I know there’s a role and place for people who say “power concedes nothing without a demand” but it’s not where we live. We’re more interested in an invitation”,

“We haven’t thought a ton about resistance but we have thought about movements”,

“I agree with the first one. Civil resistance I’m less confident about.”

Other comments offer what appears to be other options of opt-out or experimentation with new models. Examples include:

“I can’t speak for everyone and I think there are some folks who think it will be easier than that if we all just choose on our own to opt out of the current system. But I think most are on board with widespread civil resistance”

“We need movements and we need resistance, but equally important is radical experimentation and innovation, piloting new models at a local level that can be scaled up with the help of groups like NEC.”

The “new economy” should remain ideologically pluralistic, allowing for different theories of change and system design to co-exist.

This one received 77% Strongly Agree or Agree score. There’s an understandable tension in the comments between valuing diverse viewpoints but also wanting to achieve some sort of ideological concreteness. Examples include:

I don’t think there’s any one next system. These next systems that we’re thinking about share certain values. At that level you draw the line. Everyone doesn’t have to be in favor of coops, even if most people are, but you do want everybody to share the goals (perhaps not everyone one of them but pretty much). That commonality should limit the pluralism. In NEC’s case, I think it’s very important to keep deep systemic change in the framework. If we ever lose that, then I think we will have lost the heart of what was initially the effort. The difference here is that the essence of the new economy comes out of system change.

I think I agree. I don’t know how politically informed that opinion is. There may be times when the left was influential when there was some degree of ideological discipline. I think serious movements need some ideological discipline. People do have to be educated.

Not sure on what the organizational answer would be. Too much diversity and too much consensus is an obstacle to having a concrete vision.

There is also some concern about bad politics and the need for some consensus on values in this comment: “I think we need pluralism but we don’t want elements of ‘profit at all costs.’ There’s got to be a set of values that bound it.”

An interesting theme in a few comments is that while the movement currently needs diversity in ideas, it also needs to become more coherent in the future. Examples include:

At this stage of development, I think that’s right. A lot of people should come in at this stage, opening up to get their feet wet. At other stages...I think there is an important role for opening up a big space. There’s a whole other intense activist thing to do, much more radical, which I also support... but I think at this point they’re both needed. Possible to talk about other systems. And then you have to win the debate with a radical position. I don’t think it’s as important as getting new people into the act. My experience is that as [people] do things they become more radical. My own position is open a big tent, but be sure what you’re saying in the tent is pretty clear and radical. I’m not afraid of cooptation. I think you get coopted when you don’t know what you’re talking about.

Thinking about this question over time. It’s important to be pluralistic and encouraging all of the above right now. That links to the NEC’s role in promoting a broad number of approaches. At the same time, I have a particular belief about what the fundamen-

tals of a new economy would be...which I don’t think is even talked about. The basic stuff: would it be a market socialist state? Or from my standpoint, the idea of democratic planning as an alternative to central planning and market? The core DNA of the economy matters. But I don’t think it matters right now because we’re just building popularity of the critique of the system. A lot of the stuff from people I admire, to me, isn’t really right. I think the conversation can be parallel.

The “new economy” movement story should center the experiences, history, and leadership of communities on the frontlines of crisis.

This one received 81%, the third highest Strongly Agree or Agree score. The comments suggest general agreement but that frontline communities should not be framed as victims. Examples include:

People who are experiencing the most acute effects of capitalism have the best understanding of its effects. But we need to demonstrate to the rest of the 99% their self-interest in transformation. We have to figure out how to address ourselves to a lot of people. Sympathy is not adequate. Getting ourselves to feel bad has its limits. We need true solidarity, which requires an acknowledgment of privilege.

There's two things that give me pause. I mostly agree, but there's something about frontline language that doesn't feel liberatory enough. Tied to colonial versus decolonial, instead of a politics of liberation. I want to critique the way militarism has infiltrated our thinking and culture. Fetishizing struggle isn't fun or compelling. I don't think those should be the only stories, especially around the new economy, it should also be around great success. It might be the same people, but we talk about those people as victims versus agents, as people feeling the brunt of exploitation, instead of on the edge of innovation. The latter is more compelling and seductive.

Some comments stressed that others who don't identify as members of frontline communities need to feel included in this work. Examples include:

The movement should include them but not be limited to them. The problems of the marginalized communities are important but not the only focus. The current system is marginalizing but we also have to have stories of frontline communities that are finding workable alternatives.

Yes, but not to the point where it decreases the ability of average person who doesn't identify as being in crisis to identify with the movement. It's a question of where you draw those bounds.

My organization has an analysis of what's wrong with the existing system that includes the impacts of racism, patriarchy, and environmental injustice.

This received 77% Strongly Agree or Agree score. Many of the comments acknowledge the need to work on this more. This may suggest the need for more guidance from NEC. Examples include:

We have it. We know it. We don't front-end it. We could better, just like the movement of the 90s and the community organizing world give lip service to class but they don't understand or organize on those principles. We can say the right thing, but there's a lot more we can do.

We're working to deepen it but it's definitely part of the story and working to make it even more central.

We don't have an explicit analysis or documents with very strong themes about what's wrong. Racism and patriarchy are not strongly communicated in our movement culture. Part of transition is that it's non-political. Because of that, we haven't taken positions on lots of issues. Even fracking which is clearly against our goals. But since we're an autonomous, bottom up movement, we don't make those stances. Right now, it's up to every group. Internally we see those things as very important.

My organization is able to connect the new economy to issues of race, class, and gender/sexuality in our external communications. (Interview only)

This received 67% Strongly Agree or Agree score. Generally the comments suggest that this is not being done very well currently and many acknowledge the need to work further on this, and as with the previous question, this issue may suggest the need for more guidance. Examples include:

We just haven't really tried to. We're not really explicit about those things in our communications currently.

I don't think we've been as good on gender/sexuality. We started on class and have been working hard on race.

Our communications generally don't highlight particular constituencies in that way. They might highlight them in highlighting diversity of support in a cause. To contest mass surveillance, we will call out that communities of color and Muslim populations support a thing alongside libertarians.

One comment brings up the issue of a lack of resources to focus on this, "We have the analysis but haven't done it very effectively. Our communication is bad. To a great extent it's a resource issue."

Key decision-makers in my organization have concerns about our group being perceived as too radical (i.e. left wing) by our stakeholders.

This received 28% Strongly Agree or Agree score, the second lowest. This also had the highest Strongly Disagree and Disagree score of 59%. The comments generally don't regard this is much of a problem. Examples include:

I don't think we have a problem with how we're oriented. It's about how are we able to build power so that us being radical doesn't even matter. What matters is what we're able to accomplish. We are looked at as radical but that doesn't hinder us from achieving what we need to achieve. I don't think we should couch our language to appease a stakeholder. The real thing is building power.

We've been rejected for a grant or two because we were too political, nothing serious.

Not surprisingly, it appears that some of the groups operate at least partly in non-radical spaces and may feel the need to present themselves in a more liberal way. In some cases, messages may be pitched in certain ways to funders. In other cases the group's members may be resistant to a radical framework. Examples include:

We were just in a hilarious meeting with a potential funder. We had tried to tone down. Basically, it was a funder that we'd been in talks with for a while but it was a

new staff member. These are people who are committed market solutions. Funders are the main stakeholders that we're worried about. Community is mostly receptive.

I agree sometimes. Our leadership is always concerned about how we're going to be perceived. We operate in a place where we have to be careful what we say. How do we say what we mean without offending people in the process? That too depends on what audience we're trying to reach. We can be more liberal with some than others.

Some of our members are really resistant to anti-oppression work. We lost some members when we included that and affirmative action provisions in our board election process. Granted I think that the focus shifted too heavily, became a social justice conference. People weren't getting what they needed to run their coops, but there are a lot of people that don't understand why we do anti-oppression. Everything we do needs to be grounded in anti-oppression. And the capitalism thing. We don't talk about it openly with our members. We bring in other people to do it, and sometimes we do it one-on-one with members we know won't be offended.

1.3 New Economy Images and Metaphors

Effective stories, according to the Center for Story-Based Strategy, use words to create powerful imagery that captures the imagination with metaphors, anecdotes, and descriptions that speak to our senses.⁴ The survey asked “Evaluate the following images, concepts, or metaphors sometimes used to communicate the values or vision of the new economy. Are they working with your audiences?” The survey provided a number of possible answers.

The interview asked for open ended responses: “Thinking about the images or metaphors that you’ve seen used to communicate the values or vision of the new economy: what’s working? what’s ineffective or counterproductive?”

Figure 3 summarizes the responses. Metaphors that received over 50% working score were Urban Agriculture, Roots, Flowers & Plants and Mobilizations of People. Patriotic Imagery scored extremely low.

The comments indicate a wide variety of views on imagery and metaphors. A number of comments stress the importance of showing alternatives and positive imagery of people working together in cooperation. Some examples:

Mobilizations of people, but not marches and picket lines. It’s people helping people in everyday life as well as them governing their communities. I see circles and teams of people working toward the common good. It’s families and communities. It’s everyday people choosing a new way to get things done, meet their needs. How about imag-

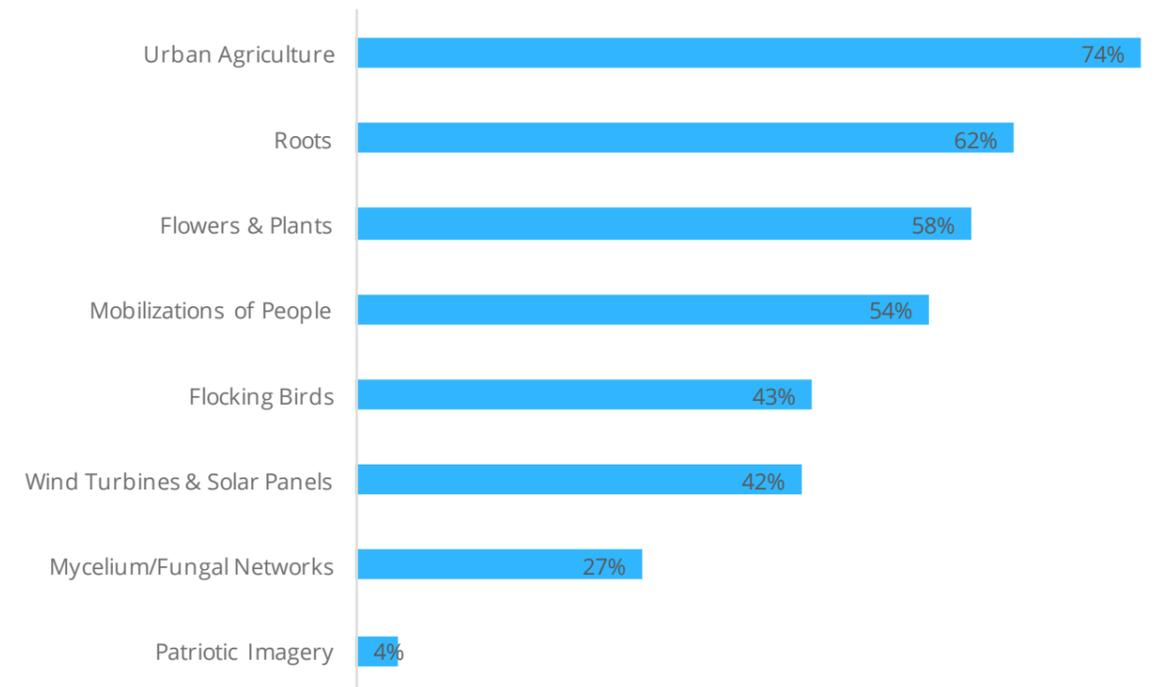
ery of dads and moms changing diapers? Or people feeding the family, growing food, building housing, teaching, providing health-care, praying, taking care of the local park, voting, etc.?

The images that work better for us are a combination of real people in positive economic situations.

Patriotic imagery is not helpful but others from the survey are good. Protest images don’t show us how life organizes. Resistance against the negative system is essential but alone it is a losing strategy because you offer no alternative. With no alternative, the dominant system wins.

To me the stories that are most resonant are the ones that lift up leadership of marginalized communities. We like to use a lot of ecological metaphors in the language, [but] I think there are limits to that. I think it’s appealing to the mostly white environmental crowd, maybe to other land-based communities, indigenous, black farmers, not sure though. I think the language of challenging the destructive system while building the new is valuable. Not just being oppositional and resistant. That’s necessary but insufficient. We also need to replace the old system while we hold it off. People get wary of oppositional organizing if there aren’t positive alternatives. I don’t even like the word alternatives. Mutual aid is the unseen economy and it’s very core.

Figure 3. Working New Economy Metaphors



Several comments discuss imagery that may be considered old and won’t resonate with people. An example:

The agricultural and mobilization imagery feels old, traditionally leftist, and stale for both reasons. The biological examples provide a clear metaphor and are more aesthetically pleasing and don’t have the same class baggage as turbines and solar power. I wish there was a spot for “Working but not that well,” I’d put the mobilizations/agriculture/ renewable power in that category.

A few comments question the use of natural imagery which may suggest the economy is a product of nature and therefore unchangeable.

I find it resonates well when I point out to people that the economy is not an act of God or a force of Nature but is, instead, a

set of systems created by humans. We invented the economy and therefore we can reinvent it. In fact we have done so over and over and over again. I think it’s crucial we overcome the belief that changing the economy is beyond our control.

I see a lot of people talking about “living systems” and I wonder about that. I’m skeptical about reducing politics to living systems. There’s a weird sort of mysticism that resonates really well if you buy it but not if you’re skeptical. I think it hurts us when we try and talk to people outside our movement. I understand you need to preach to the choir but I think you need a harder edge to get traction outside a small circle of activists.

1.4 New Economy Audience

The survey asked “Briefly describe the primary audience(s) your organization is trying to move and persuade?” The interview asked “How would you describe the primary audience(s) your organization is trying to move and persuade? If you’re a base-building organization, you might answer this question by describing your base.”

The comments identify audience in a few ways. One useful framework to understand this would be to consider an audience of grassroots leaders, policy makers, businesses and/or decision makers in general versus grassroots groups, community members and movement activists. Another split would be reaching out to more affluent folks versus a low income, working class audience. In the first cases, the groups may be trying to persuade the more affluent or elite decision maker audience to adopt progressive policies. In the second, the groups may be trying to build power among grassroots, marginalized communities.

Reviewing the comments for those that identify decision makers or grassroots audiences, there are roughly 37% that indicate a decision maker audience and 63% for grassroots, and some of these comments indicated both.

Examples of the elite decision makers:

We have multiple audiences. That’s one of our challenges. Economic thinker elite. The sustainable business community, from B-Corps to large to mid-size manufacturing corps that care about this, business

schools, NGO community working on new economy thinking, the NGO sector that’s working on problems whose root cause is the economic system. Big finance. I came out of mainstream finance. Message resonates very strongly with millennials. They don’t wrestle with the diagnosis whereas with old white guys you’re wrestling with the diagnosis.

Primarily policymakers, the media, and other NGOs interested in the issues we’re working on. I’m hesitant to say segments of the general public. There are some people interested in this stuff but it’s small. We’re interested in talking to people who want to go deep. Our partners who have members are engaging more with individual family farmers.

We have a couple of audiences. 1. Policy makers, in our advocacy work. That involves relationship building and education as well as having compelling narratives and examples that speak to policy makers. Legislators are receptive to something that’s already been done. 2. Community based entrepreneurs, in a broad sense, is another group we try to reach. We have a free legal advice clinic for people working on projects that advance a just and resilient local economy. 3. A third audience to us is the legal profession. Trying to transform it from within. We train lawyers on things like co-op law that they don’t get

Examples of more grassroots audiences:

Some organizations are focused on mobilizing swing voters in the middle. That’s not our main audience. Ours is people who identify as progressive but aren’t active. Our goal is to reach and activate those people. New left pole. People who are already sympathetic to our values. Differs for each campaign. In some campaigns we are targeting the middle. But as overarching theory we are hoping to shape the left. Strong and diverse base. People of color and white. Low to moderate income folks. Those are the communities we try to target. Sweet spot is hard edge of practical left short of super ideological.

Firstly, white co-op people who don’t see the work of solidarity economy folks as being connected to and born out of liberation for people of color and black folks, specifically. Secondly, social justice actors who have room to grow and deepen their commitment and capacity for anti-oppression values and praxis and liberation for all.

1) Base building organizations and their constituencies. Small businesses and their workers. 2) Foundations, finance, the technical assistance ecosystem, government 3) Low income communities of color 4) General progressives and the sympathetic public.

The interview also asked “Which audi-

ences are naturally drawn to support you?”

Only a few comments here. An interesting one:

There are a lot of people who need ideas who are receptive to pragmatic solutions. There are more people willing to discuss transforming the basis of our economy in unlikely places, people like hospital procurement directors, not a hotbed of radicalism, those people can feel agency around transformation if they’re given clear tools to do so. It’s not preaching to the choir, it’s about reaching well-meaning people who have agency in the current system and can be mobilized in exciting ways. I think there’s a sense that there’s a receptivity among young people but it’s hard to understand who that shifting audience is. It’s hard to construct a narrative that brings those things people are concerned about together: people are energized around climate, mass incarceration, etc. our analysis sees those things as connected to a system structured to extract wealth from communities and pursue an infinite growth trajectory. One of the hopes and challenges is how you get a message around the need to construct a new system taken seriously. We’re not just talking about a couple of projects or reforms. We’re talking about rebuilding the entire economic system and constructing a whole new set of institutions. We haven’t figured out how to get that to resonate at scale yet.

The interview also asked “Are there tar-

get audiences your organization has had trouble connecting with? If yes, why?"

Not too many comments, but several indicated trouble connecting with more elite audiences like funders, businesses or journalists. Others have trouble connecting with lower income folks or students. Here is an interesting comment which focuses on the difficulty of reaching marginalized communities to do solidarity economy work:

We've also prioritized practitioners and the importance of putting equity issues front and center. Issues of POC, low-income, marginalized are important to keep a focus on and make sure that there's real and authentic participation and leadership. That's a continual process. Big challenge for any group is getting folks to participate on top of everything else they're trying to do. True of marginalized communities and others because Solidarity Economy [work] is always something over and above what they're already doing. It's hard to get that sustained commitment of time.

1.5 New Economy Elevator Pitch

The survey asked "If someone in your primary audience emailed you asking "what is the new economy?" what would be your 2-3 sentence reply?" The interview asked "Imagine a person in your primary audience comes up to you and says, 'Hey, I've been hearing the phrase 'new economy' a lot lately, what does it mean?' What's your 1-2 minute answer?"

Most of the comments express some version of changing the economy to meet the needs of people in a more democratic, community oriented way based on fairness, solidarity, equity and sustainability. Some examples:

To us a New Economy is one that actually enables communities to determine their own economic future. It's owned by the people and supports more ecological sustainability, less wealth inequality, and promotes more happiness and thriving communities for everyone. We focus on small-scale, democratically governed, community-based projects. We think communities are the best place to decide what kind of economy they need. That's in contrast to an old economy that privileges wealth concentration in the hands of a few, is extremely destructive to the environment, and has historically oppressed and marginalized large portions of the population.

Where the economy is run by the 99% instead of CEO's and politicians; where we

allocate capital, land and labor through community processes to meet a dignified standard of living for all people, instead of using the "invisible hand" or free markets that encourage resource use for the maximization of private profits.

The new economy is a network of community solutions to provide food, energy, housing, transit, education, health, and other basic needs that people in a community create together. It ensures everyone has what they need to thrive, and engages the whole community in creating and fueling the activities we need to provide these core needs for each other. A new economy takes ownership and decision-making power back into the community and gives us the tools to fight climate change.

A few comments include an explicit rejection of capitalism, for example "The new economy movement is comprised of groups looking for solutions to the systemic social, ecological, and economic crises we face. The new economy itself is a web of networked, locally-rooted economies that build community wealth, foster resiliency, are ecologically responsible, and can move us beyond capitalism."

Some comments again express frustration with the vagueness of the phrase New Economy. For example, "It's a pretty broad term. Personally I think it's not the most well advised term. What does new mean? Soon it won't be new. It doesn't mean

much. People ask me the difference between new economy and solidarity economy. NEC hasn't settled this reform capitalism vs. transformative agenda."

One comment worries that these generally tend to be small scale projects that won't be taken seriously: "I think people also get turned off by how small scale some of this stuff seems. Putting time-banking or barter out front makes it hard to take seriously. I think some people just don't like the word "economy" at all. It feels too abstract from what people do."

The interview also asked "Now imagine a colleague in an allied organization approaches you and asks "what's unique about the 'new economy' frame, why should we care?" What do you say?"

Most of the comments are somewhat similar to the last set. A few point out that the new economy framework is very big picture and attempts to connect lots of "issue" projects together. Some examples:

Would point to our long-term agenda again. It's not time to make small scale changes. Really need to transform how our economy works. But it depends on who the ally is. Need to break out of issue silos and make sure fights on small term policy scale relate to systems change.

I think it depends on what they're doing. They might want to be enticed into this because it helps connect their work to a bigger picture. It's frustrating to work on one little piece of the problem when the problems are interconnected. I'm curious what

the resistance is for a base building organization to be part of a coalition. Maybe it's time. I think what's enticing is feeling part of a bigger picture thing that might accomplish change that makes all of our work easier.

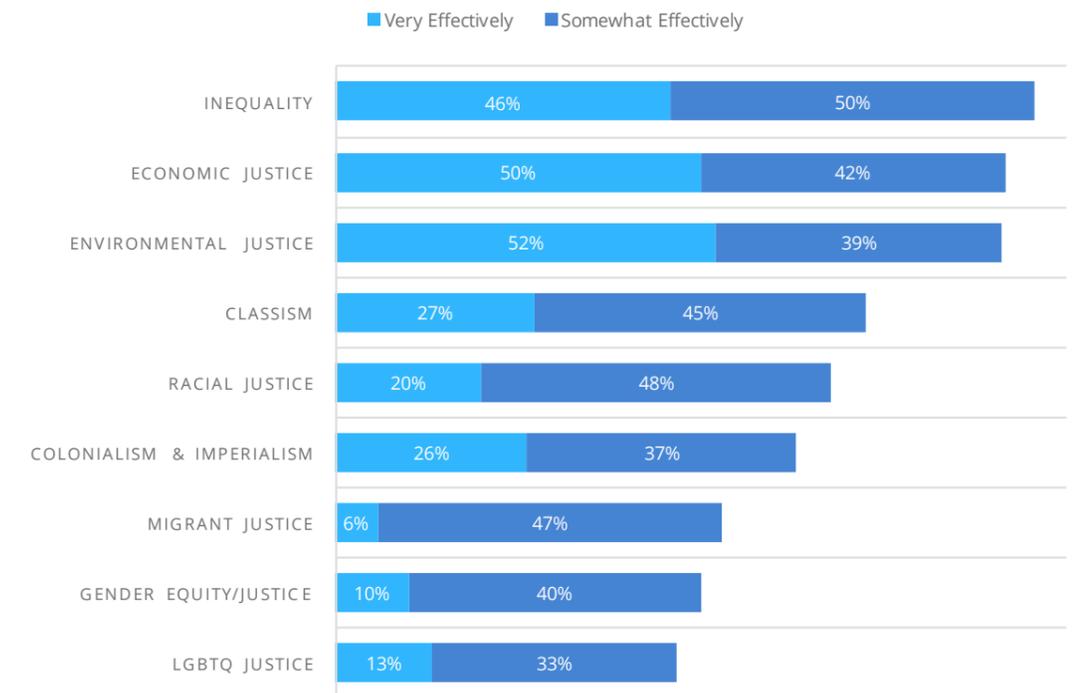
One comment stresses that New Economy work intends to create something new and better rather than regulating the current problems.

The past reform paradigm was that "the economy is like the weather, it operates on its own steam," and that "big business is here to stay, we just need government ameliorate the worst impacts". I think [the New Economy] is a really different way of thinking about change. We need to build an economy that's aligned with our values so that we're not waging an uphill battle to regulate an economy that takes us in the wrong direction.

1.6 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework that uses race, gender, and class to explain the multiple dimensions of lived experiences.⁵ This framework can be used by social movements to understand how systemic injustice and social inequality occur on a multi-dimensional basis.⁶ The survey asks "How effectively does your organization connect its new economy story to the following issues?" with answers ranging from Very Effectively to Very Ineffectively.

Figure 4. Effectively Connecting to Issues



The top three responses with more than 75% Very Effectively or Effectively scores are Inequality (96%), Economic Justice (92%) and Environmental Justice (91%). Migrant Justice, Gender Equity/Justice and LGBTQ Justice were three least effective.

There were not too many comments here. A few expressed the need to do more such as "I have made a couple of cosmetic gestures in the way of racial justice. I don't think we talk about "justice" much at all, more about improving the lives of people...", "I put N/A for a few categories because "ineffectively" implies a conscious engagement in the past, where I don't think there has been much in all of these issues. I put "somewhat ineffectively" in two cases where I think we could improve, particular-

ly with regard to diversifying our authors" and "Where I've marked Somewhat Ineffectively it's largely because those issues are not as pronounced in our communications as they ought to be. The analysis is there, even sometimes mentioned, but not regularly."

One comment mentioned that they don't think about the world in these kind of silos, "We don't see the world as a bunch of silos like this. This is not to say these aren't important issues."

RESULTS

2. CHALLENGES

2.1 Obstacles for Organizations

Advocates for a new economy face a number of key obstacles in their work. Two that stand out in the survey and interview responses are: a lack of funding to do new economy work specifically, and the linked challenge of convincing stakeholders that building alternatives is a priority (or, in a number of cases, even a possibility). See Figure 5. Responses such as these are grounded in broader trends within society at large (e.g. perceptions about whether alternatives to capitalism are possible) and the nonprofit sector (e.g. lack of funding).

A 2015 survey of over 5,000 nonprofit organizations found that the top challenge was a lack of sustainable funding (Non-profit Finance Fund 2015).⁷ This concern is widely echoed in the survey and interview results. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 92%, identified funding as an organizational obstacle. Almost three-quarters characterized funding as a major obstacle for their organizations.

Foundations often restrict the use of their donations to a particular purpose or project, which limits how organizations can spend funds. A staff person at a medium-sized organization with a budget between \$1 and \$3 million cites reliance on

grant funding as a challenge:

Resourcing is tough. We're reasonably well resourced but it's not general operating funds. If we could use the money as we saw it we'd more effective. The restricted funds impact our creativity and flexibility.

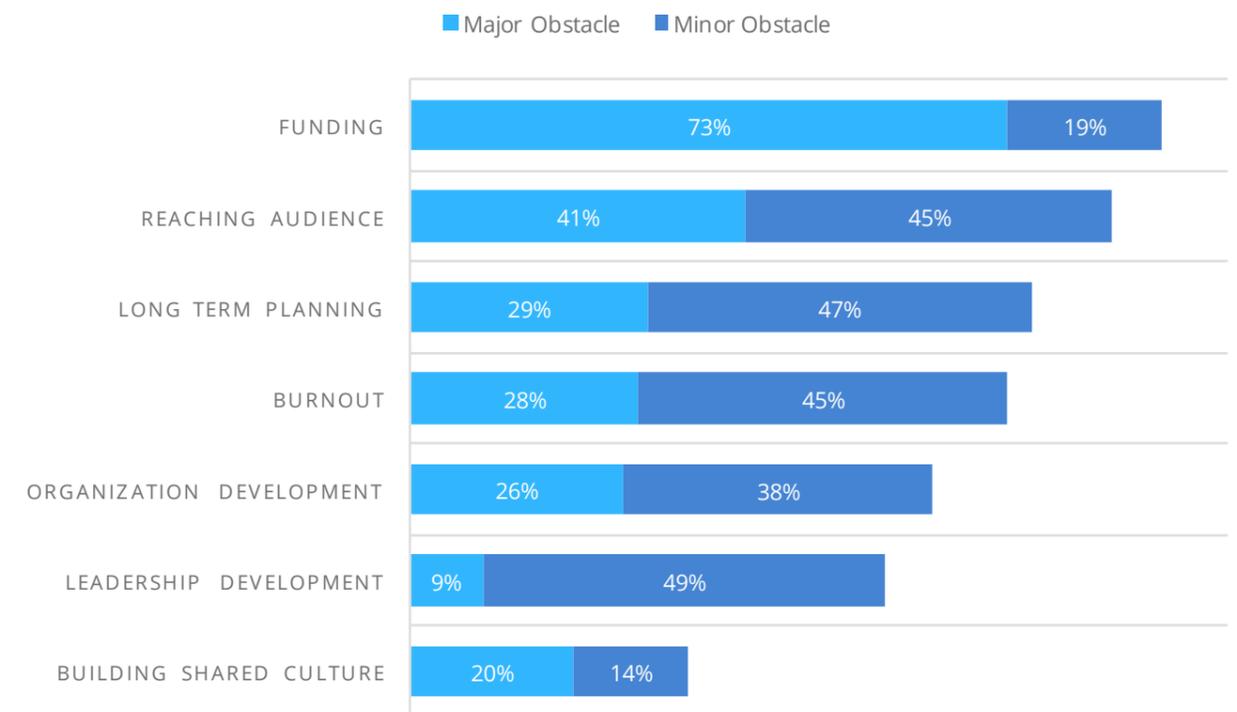
A director at a large organization with a budget over \$3 million agrees that stipulations by foundations limit programming.

Most foundations have gotten more professionalized and short-term metrics oriented. They are more focused on specific segments of what will make up the New Economy. It's an impediment to integrated New Economy work. More groups would move a lot faster in that integrated New Economy direction if there was more funding that was multi-sectoral.

An executive director at a small organization points to the difficulties they face raising money from major funders for work that might challenge the economic and political status quo:

Funding is our biggest challenge, especially in the climate of gentrification. Social justice organizations that take a pro Black stance or critical economic stance are black balled and shut out from foundations.

Figure 5. Obstacles for Organizations



Another executive director at a medium-sized organization concurred about the dearth of resources, expressing confusion as to why there is not more funding, given the clear presence of demands for alternatives:

I thought there would be way more resources for Wall Street reform work given the Occupy movement and Elizabeth Warren, but there's not. Very active work is required to piece together a budget.

2.2 New Economy Barriers

Despite the success that social movements have had shifting popular opinion on inequality, systemic racism, and other related topics, responses suggest that there are still a number of obstacles standing in the way of high levels of public support for the New Economy.

The inability to reach target audiences was the second biggest obstacle identified by organizations. 86% of respondents see it as a challenge, 41% as a major one. While specific target audiences varied vastly -- from industrial manufacturers specializing in lean production to base building groups rooted in low-income communities of color -- the barriers are similar.

Almost 90% of respondents feel that the biggest barrier was target audiences thinking that the New Economy was too small or niche. See Figure 6. A number of responses reflect the perception that building political power through campaigns and electoral campaigns often takes precedence over building alternatives. Half of the respondents think this is a major barrier, while close to 40% see it as minor. A director of a small organization explained:

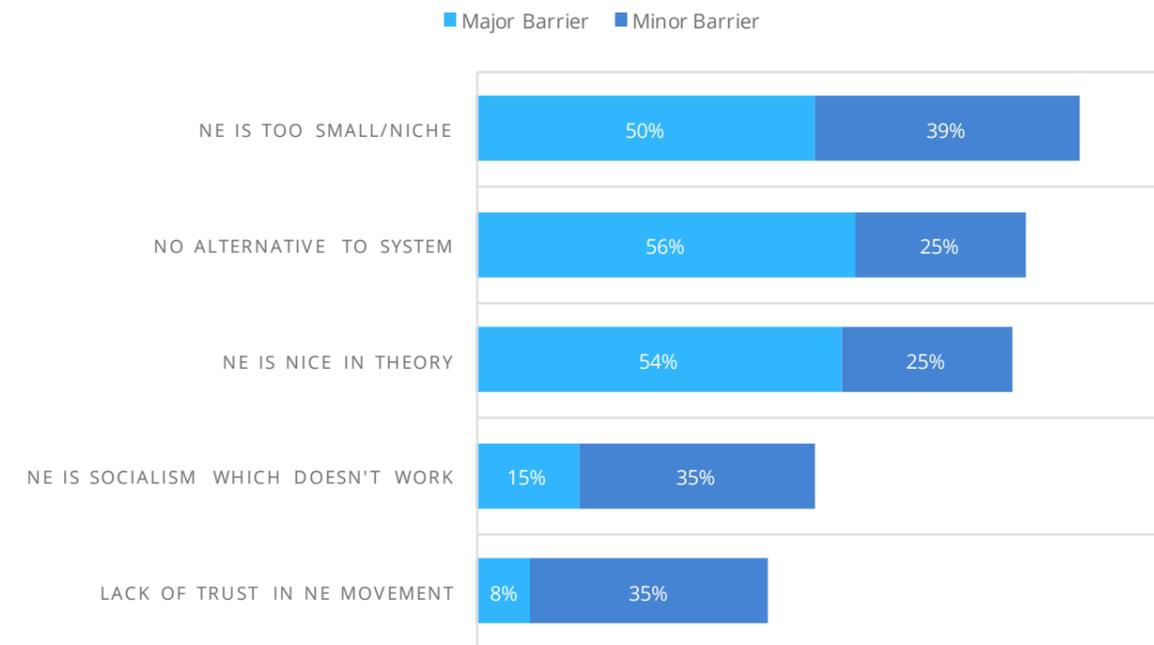
We're doing our best to introduce the concept of a new economic system. We've been doing that through creating new models and resisting old models like privatization and commodification. But the term 'New Economy' is still foreign to our communities. This doesn't mean that the term needs to change; we just need to step

it up more.

The second and third major barriers to reaching audiences, according to respondents, were: the popular belief that there is no alternative to the existing system and that while the New Economy might be nice in theory, it is not politically feasible. 81% of respondents identify this as a barrier: 56% as a major one and a quarter as a minor one. An organizer with a small organization said, "People think we have no viable alternatives to the existing system. Communism and socialism don't work, but nothing else has worked better." An executive director of a small organization listed off typical assumptions communicated by the target audience, "I don't know anyone who has done that.' 'That's nice dear, now back to the real world.' 'People are just not that nice.' 'What does it matter, we'll all be working for the Chinese, overrun by ISIS, out of a job and battling cancer soon anyway.'"

These anecdotes mirror data and research on popular perceptions about our economic context: A recent Gallup poll indicated that 60% of Americans retain a positive view of capitalism, despite the intervention of the Great Recession.⁸ At the same time a Harvard University poll of 18 to 29 year olds found that fewer millennials are embracing capitalism.⁹ For respondents who suggested that their reach was impacted by the belief that building a New Economy is not politically possible, a num-

Figure 6. New Economy Barriers



ber of respondents also reported finding it easier to reach audiences through a critique of the current system than through the promise of an alternative. "Talking about the status quo is the most resonate piece we have," said a project manager at a small organization, "Everyone has something to dislike about the current economy."

More than 40% of respondents reported that target audiences are suspicious of the New Economy movement, for example, that the organizations involved will try to co-opt communities and not prioritize the issues that matter the most to them. This was a sentiment shared by many base building organizations who work with low-income communities of color as constituents. Touching on the focus on addressing these obstacles in a thoughtful manner, a coordi-

nator of a national network said:

We've prioritized practitioners and the importance of putting equity issues front and center. Issues of people of color, low-income, and the marginalized are important to keep a focus on, and to make sure there's real and authentic participation and leadership. That's a continual process. We've had success in reaching out and getting folks involved in some extent. But, the big challenge for any group is getting folks to participate on top of everything else that they're trying to do. This is true of marginalized communities because the Solidarity Economy is always something over and above what they're already doing. It's hard to get that sustained commitment of time.

2.3 Status Quo

The story of the status quo, according to the Center for Story-Based Strategy, is authored by the dominant culture. This represents powerful institutional interests and perpetuates the stories that validate their political agendas.¹⁰ Over time, the stories can become invisible and accepted as conventional wisdom or assumptions about the state of the world.

Research has found that people exhibit significant status quo bias when making decisions.¹¹ In experimental testing, academics found that people will choose the option that aligns with their current outcome, rather than seek a different answer. In essence, the status quo acts as a psychological anchor for individuals. And the tendency towards sticking with the status quo increases when the number of choice alternatives proliferates.

When faced with ideas and research about the future of the economy, we confront a myriad of possibilities. Advocates for the New Economy face stiff opposition to their proposals for alternatives by adherents to the status quo. Many respondents shared that they address the status quo in their messaging about the New Economy. An attorney with a New Economy law firm shared, "We always contrast the New Economy with the status quo when telling our story."

A sustainable economy developer echoed the strategy.

I usually briefly highlight a few aspects of

what's not working in the status quo economy -- poverty, environmental damage, student debt, getting harder and harder to cross economic class lines in US. Also, I love the Edward Abbey quote, "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell." I counter this by focusing on what would make a muscular, rather than cancerous, economy.

Whether calling out the status quo as the problem--as many respondents say they do--is the answer to status quo bias is unclear. Also, there is no shared understanding of who or what comprises the status quo. For some, the status quo were corporations or corporate power, instead of capitalism. "We tend to be pretty strong on narrative about corporate power," said the communications director of a national network. "The analysis of corporate power is at the center of our story about the opposition. We're trying to figure out how to incorporate race and gender into talking about opposition and our positive vision. The bad guy is the 1% and corporate power."

A few respondents critiqued capitalism without explicitly naming it. "We talk about wealth concentration as a structural problem--the way large corporations are structured makes inequality inevitable--instead, we want distributed ownership," said a director at a think tank. "We critique capitalism but we don't use that language, we're not sure when it's useful. We want to be

engaging and open to a lot of people and communities."

A director of communications at a research institute characterized the approach of not explicitly naming capitalism as a politically motivated strategy.

We tend to not talk about capitalism much in our local work. In part because it's getting ahead of ourselves. We emphasize the brokenness on the local level. We'll talk about globalization, deindustrialization, historic dispossession; we talk about disinvestment and gentrification. We generally won't talk about capitalism. We do talk about capitalism at the system level. We talk about corporate capitalism and state socialism as discredited systems of the 20th century and we're intentional about using those modifiers.

An economist with a think tank added, "In the US today, terms like capitalism and socialism aren't helpful. They've lost meaning." For others, such as the coordinator of a national network, whether capitalism was named explicitly depended on the audience.

If we're talking amongst ourselves, we name the status quo as capitalism and it's not something we can reform. We have to fundamentally change the system with new values and measures of success. By and large, I think the solidarity economy tends to be fairly pragmatic, cognizant of the dangers of cooptation, but using inflammatory language for the purpose of inflammatory language is not our style.

2.4 Capacity

Most of the respondents were affiliated with small organizations, with less than ten staff. Not surprisingly, staff capacity and burnout was cited by three-quarters as a major organizational obstacle, about 30% as a major obstacle and 45% as a minor one. “Our major challenge is not having enough time; working way too many hours and not being able to keep up with the excitement and energy,” reported a board member of a small organization.

This sentiment was echoed by a director at a small organization. “Our biggest obstacle is staff capacity. We have an ambitious and broad agenda. We want to continually grow that and get involved in as many projects as we can.” A programs director at a small organization said, “We want to message in a way that reaches the mainstream. There’s a ton of potential but we haven’t had the resources. Our local organizers experience a high degree of burnout. Some of them fall apart. Some start up again. There’s a morale issue because people see that happening.”

2.5 Anti-Oppression

Almost 35% of respondents identified building a shared culture of anti-oppression and collective liberation as an organizational challenge. A regional organizer for a small organization said, “The ongoing challenge is engagement with the community. Coming out of transition work, we’re very white. We’re not the cross-class multi-racial movement we need to build a New Economy. We’ve tried to introduce anti-oppression work, even in all-white communities. We’ve tried to acknowledge where we are and move forward towards building a more diverse movement. That’s our biggest challenge, really. I don’t yet know what it would look like to have a New Economy movement led by people of color. I want to.”

RESULTS

3. SOLUTIONS

3.1 Future of the Movement

Most Americans have a bleak view of the future.¹² Gallup found that close to 60% reported that the economy is getting worse. This is a perspective shared globally. The Pew Research Center reported that most people feel pessimistic about the financial prospects of the next generation.¹³

Advocates for a New Economy surveyed and interviewed for this report were asked how the movement could provide bulwark against despair. When asked what the New Economy movement could look like in three to 10 years, almost 30% responded that they anticipated the New Economy to grow in scale, starting from the local level and then branching out. See Figure 7.

One coordinator of a national network said, “I think the solidarity economy will mostly be articulated on a local level in the U.S. I don’t see there being the same type of national movement that we see in other countries, because of the deadlock that we see on the national level. I hope we have a strong network of local solidarity economy nodes that are sufficiently resourced so that they can accomplish things, pull together local initiatives, promote education, and work towards a larger vision.”

A scholar articulated that successful lo-

cal implementation paved the way for New Economy models to be replicated in other places.

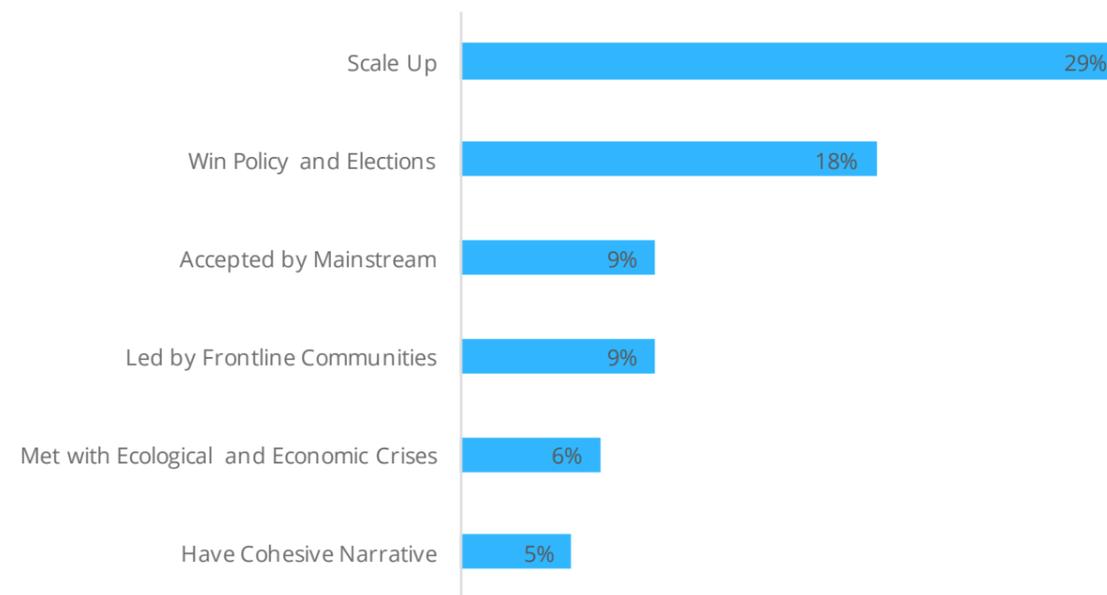
The path of success for the New Economy movement is rooted at a city level in the time frame of three to 10 years. A couple of cities will need to dramatically change the landscape of economic and social activity, which includes developing an inclusive model that significantly lowers the carbon footprint. This is how you build credibility and those are the stories you tell as you go to higher levels and scales. The smaller cities are the units where you can build political power and where you see an openness to change.

Networks were identified by many respondents as the entities connecting local examples.

We will have massive networks of cooperatives and cooperative-like organizations, including public ownership, that will operate energy, food, housing, and transit systems in local communities,” said a coordinator of a small organization. “These networks are affiliated with each other to leverage large-scale economic and political power.

While respondents emphasized the

Figure 7. New Economy Movement in 3-10 Years



need for local examples, about 20% also thought the future of the movement necessitated victories in policy reform and elections at the national level.

Coops are very segregated from each other based on sector,” said an educator at a medium-sized organization. “We need a national entity that can push for national cooperative legislation. I also think we need a Left party, an actual Left front.

Changes at the national level, according to a communications director of a medium-sized think tank, facilitated local innovation. “I think there are some really interesting possibilities with federal breakthroughs. A federal commitment, or even significant state commitment, to move New Economy aspects forward creates a lot of traction and gives traditional movement actors a way to engage.”

Almost 10% of respondents thought the future would bring greater acceptance of

economic alternatives by a broader audience. A chief executive officer of a small environmental consulting firm described the movement with a broader reach.

We have evolved from being a growing fringe movement to an oft talked about, studied, and analyzed movement. New Economy principles and practices have entered mainstream lexicon, and economic and political dialogues. There is widespread understanding that we cannot have an economy that requires continuous escalation in the consumption of natural resources.

Conversations about the New Economy would not be relegated to a minority, according to respondents. An executive director of a small cooperative incubator described greater public search for alternatives.

I see us asking the question, what if we really are one human family? How does one

treat members of one's family? I see this question being asked in town hall meetings, board rooms, op-ed pages, and kitchen tables. I see that asking these questions no longer brands you a wild-eyed idealist but the most pragmatic of realists. I see the question being, not how we can try to solve this particular problem, but how can we step back and see the source of the problem and work all the way back to an opportunity to grow our souls a little bit.

In addition, more would participate in systemic alternatives. A co-director of a small environmental collective shared, "At least half of the people in our neighborhood are involved in at least one New Economy project, as a member of a coop or activist group. Some people will be able to exist economically mostly within New Economy initiatives. The discourse and understanding of a New Economy could be significantly more on the front of people's minds. We will be considerably more connected and coordinated around issues and projects. We will be much more advanced around gender, some around race and immigration, and a little around class."

Almost 10% of respondents also felt that the movement would be led by frontline communities in the future. An organizer with a network of cooperatives said, "It'd be dope to see the movement led by communities of color and not just all dudes. We should have a spectrum of people guiding how folks see the New Economy. Guidance by the most marginalized in our society will help to center how we envision an economy where we relate to each other in health-

ier ways."

Respondents to the metanarrative survey and interview pointed to fear, greed, and ignorance as primary obstacles to future implementation of a New Economy.

People still being scared about meeting their basic needs," said an executive director of a coop developer. "How are people going to make a living? The biggest thing standing in the way of people going for a new economy is fear. It shapes what majors they study in college, what careers they choose, what houses and spouses they choose, etc. Also, to some extent, greed/laziness -- the hope that somehow the dream will come true. Well, and of course the trillions of dollars stoking the old economy, and the built environment and existing capital base.

The other obstacle respondents pointed to was the entrenched interests of the existing power structure who will not monopolize resources if an economic and social transition were to occur. "The fossil fuel industry and the finance sector are obstacles," said a board member of a faith-based coop developer. "Most of all the middle and upper class' sense of security being tied up in a system that is inherently unjust and insecure is as well. Many people's retirement depends on both ever increasing stock prices and ever increasing housing prices. How can we help people feel secure in other ways?"

A few respondents saw structural racism, its corollaries of white supremacy and antiblackness, as major obstacles

to the future of the movement. "White supremacy is our biggest obstacle," said an organizer with a Southern coop developer.

We're not even speaking our own language. It feels real hard to transform our own world because white supremacy is a cloak over our whole society. Alice Walker says 'Get the white man off of my mind's eyeball.' It's the lens that we use to look at our whole world. We can't turn it off. How do we turn it off? Those are the obstacles. We have to learn to be more patient with each other and know this is a process. It takes time. The Zapatista movement takes years to make some decisions. We don't take time to work towards consensus. We don't take the time for real democracy. It takes taking risks and experimenting and making mistakes. It takes patience and love.

Five percent of respondents thought that the movement would coalesce around a shared narrative. An environmental lawyer and advocate said, "I think a critical component is that somehow progressives overcome their strategic deficit disorder and come together around a shared vision that cuts across the issues. The vision includes the implementation of a shared platform of action, a coordination of priorities, and common messaging, all of which is currently much further developed on the right."

The content of the narrative varied for respondents. For an educator with a small collective, a shared narrative was tied with leadership by frontline communities. "The

narrative of coops led by and for people of color is the story about coops and the solidarity economy, not an afterthought." For a researcher with a small think tank, the story was about the shift in economics. "The key part of this story is a new theory for economics, one that includes the partnership elements of capitalism and socialism, but goes beyond both to ensure human needs and capacities are nurtured and our natural habitat is conserved."

Some respondents linked a shared narrative to a broader involvement in the New Economy. A director at a food justice organization said, "To the extent that the narrative work is successful, I think increased public awareness of what the New Economy means and how pieces are tied together is possible. There's a lot of momentum, it just needs to coalesce and people need to see it as part of the whole."

3.2 Future Crises

Six percent of respondents felt that the future of the New Economy movement would be met with ecological and economic crises. However, for some, crises presented an opportunity to consider alternatives.

Sadly, the more dissatisfaction there is with the present economy," said an associate director of an environmental organization, "The more opportunities there are to offer alternatives in the form of tangible, pragmatic, 'no regrets' options for living as if the 'new economies' were already extant, and our actions better aligned with our values.

Crises, in itself, could be the tipping point for the New Economy movement. "I suspect that a breakpoint could be a financial system collapse," shared the founder of a think tank. "When it is obvious that old ways can't get us any further, entrepreneurial thinking may go in new directions."

The chief executive officer of an environmental consulting firm made an explicit connection between crises and change. "The ongoing upheaval in the status quo economy and the feeling of uncertainty by vast numbers of people provide an opening for us to convey a more comfortable, hopeful economy."

3.3 New Economy Coalition Roles

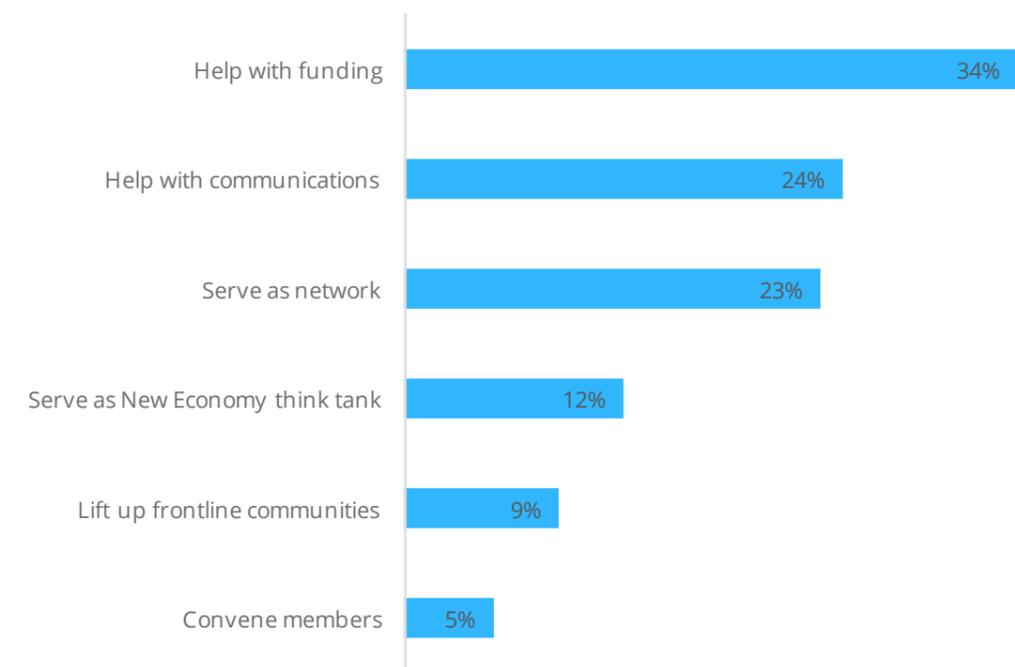
New Economy Coalition was borne of a partnership between the E.F. Schumacher Society, dedicated to the legacy of economist, and the New Economics Foundation, a British think tank, in 2010.¹⁴ Then known as the New Economics Institute, the organization merged with the New Economics Network two years later to form the New Economy Coalition.¹⁵ NEC has played various roles over the years, from convener of members and New Economy practitioners at a biannual conference CommonBound to pooling resources for the New Economy movement.¹⁶

Many respondents to the metanarrative survey and interview felt that NEC should continue to play the role as a network. See Figure 8. The sentiment that each node was

stronger when connected together was echoed by many surveyed and interviewed. "We're stronger together," said a director of a legal organization, "The more we're learning from each other and sharing resources the more effective and powerful we'll be."

A communications director of a think tank added, "One thing I think NEC could be really helpful with is bridging anti-systemic movements with designers of the next system. You don't need to facilitate tight coordination, but you can facilitate the way the story gets told. If people are talking about climate action or urban poverty, there needs to be a second beat of what an alternative looks like. NEC can be a switchboard, a space to connect those two halves."

Figure 8. How Can NEC Help Organizations?



3.4 Solutions by New Economy Coalition

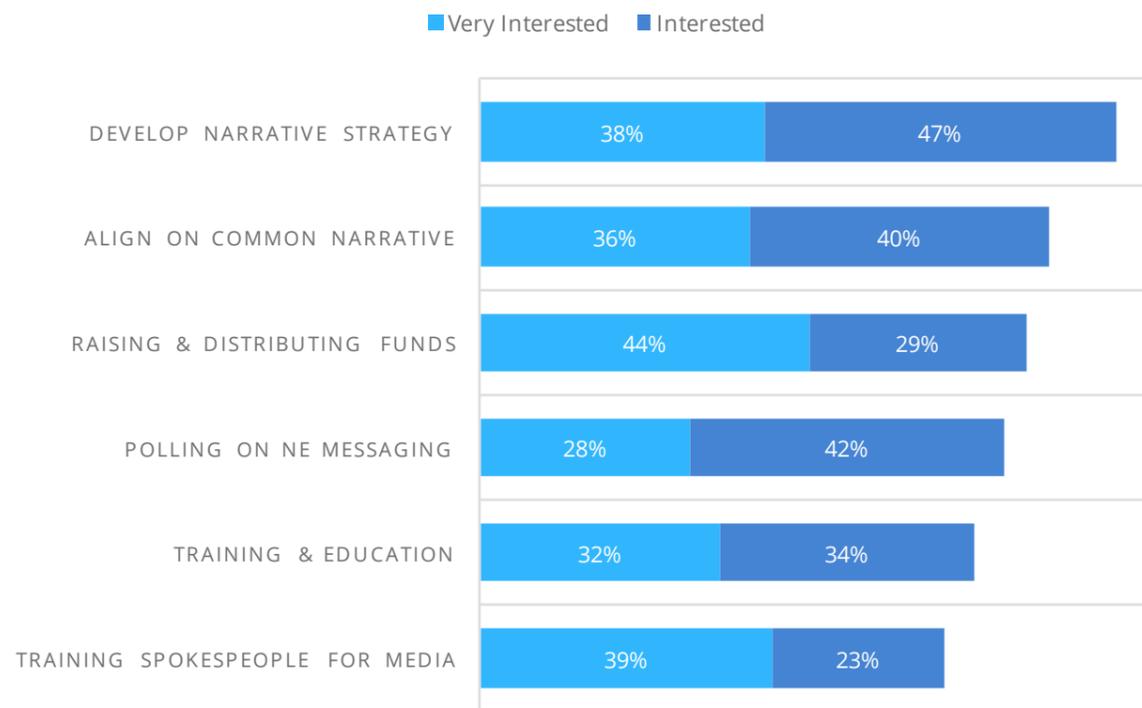
In terms of what NEC convenes member organizations to accomplish, respondents identified building a shared narrative and pooling resources, such as funding, as two priorities. A director of a medium sized think tank said, "Part of the idea of the New Economy Coalition and the narrative work, in particular, is to create alignment among the member organizations. The more we have a coherent story, the more we can attract resources and visibility as a whole."

A director of a climate justice organization explained how NEC could help with fundraising. "We're getting shut out of local funders because of our criticism of the economy. So, if NEC is willing to stick its neck out, we'd really appreciate it. The New

Economy is not just about building a coop or an organization. How are you going to be supportive of people who are criticizing the old economy? Funders love the New Economy, they love the pretty stuff. But, they don't like when you criticize the old economy."

Similar to respondents' visions for the future of the movement, a few emphasized the importance of leadership by frontline communities in the coalition. A senior associate at a large civil rights organization said, "If NEC does not have communities of color at the frontline of building the New Economy, it will not be a success."

Figure 9. New Economy Opportunities



3.5 New Economy Engagement

Looking forward, the vast majority of those surveyed and interviewed were interested in NEC developing narrative strategy, projects, and campaigns. 85% indicated that they were interested, almost 40% expressed that they were very interested. More than three-quarters of respondents indicated interest in NEC helping its members align around a common movement narrative. See Figure 9.

"We call it framing the issue or building a narrative in an echo chamber," said a director of a civil rights organization. "I see that work as complementary to movement building."

Although respondents expressed interest in narrative, a few were concerned that a shared narrative be targeted to broader audiences. "We need to make how the economy works a more fundamental task rather than a script that only resonates with the choir," said an outreach director for a small think tank.

Others were concerned that a common narrative would be difficult to agree on. A coordinator of a national network said, "We are interested depending on what the narrative is. If you had clarity about where you stand vis-a-vis capitalism and it was on the transformative side, then we'd be invested. If the narrative continues to be either and both, that further muddles the waters."

The shared narrative, for some, had to be rooted in the experience of frontline communities. "How can we define the language for ourselves?" asked an organizer with a Southern coop developer. "Part of it is learning, but some is taking from what we already know. Frontline language should guide the

NEC definition and frame how to talk about it because they're living it, instead of it coming from the outside."

The vast majority of respondents were enthusiastic about contributing to a shared narrative project or campaign. They offered to add their stories, their intersectional analysis of how the New Economy touches their constituents, and their outreach to constituents. "The major role we can be playing is telling the internal stories: what the hell does workplace democracy look like?" offered an executive director of a coop network. "Here's how we run our meetings. Here's how we do peer evaluations. This is how we teach people to read financial statements. This is how we keep these things actually running. We can show that it's not just grey-haired white people with wealth. It's not just that there's no boss, there's no investors."

Out of a shared narrative of the New Economy, according to a coordinator of a food sovereignty organization, a new world will emerge.

"The world has been stuck in its own bubble. To the extent that a 'new economic' model has been applied it has been limited to the neoliberal economic model that is not so new at all and recommends privatization, consolidation, and 'ownership' as the solution. This, to us, is the old narrative. The new narrative has to be rooted in the alternative, and a true new economy has to emerge. We have some of the language, but we need to bring other brains to this to make the narrative as a clear source of a new vision."

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS



The interviews present a broad range of insights into the state of organizations in NEC and the challenges facing our collective efforts to advance a multi-sectoral, intersectional new economy movement. Although we don't have concrete answers to every question raised in the results above, we do see opportunities to leverage NEC and other networks and platforms to take some next steps together.

At NEC's 2016 Annual Members' Meeting, representatives from 63 member organizations worked on identifying shared challenges and opportunities that could form the basis of ongoing collaborations within the network. Many of the challenges raised in the interview results were the inspiration for breakout groups at the annual meeting, some of which have become standing working groups made up of NEC staff and membership, including: "Community Organizing and Economic Development", "Policy", and "Network Building". If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved with these groups, please contact anand@neweconomy.net.

On the narrative front, these interviews confirmed our assumption that there is an opportunity for members to co-create a stronger narrative framework. The results show that there is a foundation of shared values and assumptions about who we are and what we're trying to achieve. Perhaps most importantly, there is also an appetite to explore the strategic differences between competing new economy narratives. In order to reach a larger audience beyond our existing base of support we need nar-

ratives that are rooted in persuasion. This doesn't mean telling our truth louder or more stridently; it means changing hearts and minds. There are narrative dimensions to the physical relationships of power and privilege, the unequal access to resources, and denials of self-determination that shape contemporary society.

Over the next several months, NEC will be facilitating a "metanarrative" process in partnership with the Center for Story-Based Strategy. The long-term objective is to emerge with language, images, metaphors, interactive media, and other vital components of a strategic narrative that can resonate broadly and create more of a shared identity among the many organizations and leaders organizing around new economies.

This process will be led and shaped by NEC members. The next project will be to deconstruct existing narratives about the economy, in order to inform how we'll begin to construct a shared framework together. We also intend to launch some narrative campaigns to test messages and communications strategies. If you or your organization is interested in contributing to this process, please contact metanarrative@neweconomy.net.

Thank you to all the participants in this project, especially those who offered their time to be interviewed by NEC staff. We know how valuable your time is and we hope that this report is a useful resource that can inform your work and our movement together.

ENDNOTES

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