



# **A CRITICAL POWER ANALYSIS OF THE IDG INITIATIVE**

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# Preface

This essay was written by the AI language model Claude, based on instructions and source material provided by me, Thomas Jordan. I thought that it would be interesting to get an in-depth scrutiny of the Inner Development Goals initiative from a critical power analysis perspective. Through a conversation with ChatGPT, I selected a couple of theoretical frameworks used in analysing power dynamics of social phenomena. Claude then got the task to write up a synopsis, and eventually the entire essay.

I want to emphasize that the author of this essay is Claude, not me. Claude is a language model, with a very sophisticated “ability” to apply a complex set of discourse to a new task. But of course this mode of operating has important limitations. The result is something that looks like deductive reasoning, where Claude applied theoretical frameworks to the specific topic, the IDG framework. This should be kept in mind, and the reader should use his or her own critical judgement in evaluating the validity of the reasoning and conclusions in the essay.

Personally, I think that this essay provides a valuable perspective, even though I do not agree with some conclusions. Referring to the IDG framework, reading an essay like this one, if you are engaged in using the IDG in some way, is an exercise in advanced use of one of the IDG skills, perspective skills. Being capable of holding several perspectives in mind even when they contradict each other, or cannot be harmonized, is useful in order to grasp complexity.

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# Summary

This essay presents a rigorous critical examination of the Inner Development Guide (IDG) framework, arguing that despite its transformative aspirations and sophisticated recognition of both individual and collective capabilities, it risks functioning as what Foucault would call a "governmental technology"—a mechanism that appears to empower while actually reinforcing existing power structures.

## The Central Thesis

The essay's core argument is that the IDG framework performs a "double movement": it presents inner development as the fundamental response to systemic crises (shifting focus from structural transformation to capability development), while simultaneously channeling transformative energy into forms that can be absorbed by existing systems. The framework produces individuals who are self-aware but not structurally aware, who see complexity but not power, and organizations with sophisticated capabilities that make them more effective at operating within—rather than transforming—unjust systems.

## Theoretical Lenses

The analysis employs four complementary critical frameworks:

1. **Critical Management Studies (CMS)** reveals how the framework participates in contemporary organizational control through "identity regulation"—shaping who workers are rather than merely what they do. The expansion to collective capabilities extends this technology of control from individuals to entire organizations.
2. **Gaventa's Power Cube** maps how the framework operates primarily in "invited spaces"—apparently participatory forums that remain carefully bounded to ensure existing power relations stay unchallenged. Visible, hidden, and invisible forms of power constrain what development is possible and what purposes it serves.
3. **Lukes' Three Dimensions of Power** shows how the framework shapes preferences themselves, creating situations where dominated groups desire forms of development that serve dominant interests. This third dimension of power—shaping what people want—proves most insidious.
4. **Foucauldian Analysis** exposes how the framework operates as productive power, creating new categories of development, standards of normality, and forms of subjectivity. It produces "docile" subjects and organizations that are simultaneously more capable and more governable.

## Key Problems Identified

The essay identifies several systematic blind spots:

**Individualization of Structural Problems:** Climate change becomes about developing systems thinking rather than dismantling fossil fuel infrastructure. Inequality becomes about cultivating compassion rather than redistributing wealth.

**The Collective Capability Trap:** Organizations are "meta-responsibilized"—made responsible for developing capabilities to develop capabilities—while remaining structurally powerless within larger systems that determine what's actually possible.

**Depoliticization:** The framework transforms political questions into technical ones. It substitutes "what capabilities do we need?" for "who should have power?" This linguistic and conceptual shift serves existing power by channeling transformative energy into safe developmental forms.

**The Gap Between Capability and Power:** Organizations may develop remarkable capabilities yet remain unable to create needed transformations. This produces "sophisticated ineffectiveness"—the ability to see systemically matched by inability to act systemically.

**Structural Violence:** Demanding capability development from resource-poor organizations while leaving structural conditions unchanged constitutes extraction, not empowerment. The framework can create new forms of "capability credentialism" that reinforce existing hierarchies.

### **Organizational Realities**

Part Five examines concrete patterns across diverse contexts—corporations, nonprofits, social movements—revealing consistent disconnections between capability and power. Even organizations with highly developed collective capabilities encounter structural limits that prevent genuine transformation. The framework enables more sophisticated accommodation to systems that should be challenged.

### **The Conclusion**

The essay concludes by calling for "repoliticization"—insisting that power redistribution, not capability development, is the precondition for genuine transformation. It argues for connecting developmental work to power-building, supporting "claimed spaces" where marginalized groups organize autonomously, embracing necessary conflict, and centering the leadership of those most marginalized by current arrangements.

The appendix offers twelve strategic recommendations for the IDG initiative, including making power an explicit framework dimension, distinguishing accommodative from transformative development, and subjecting the initiative's own governance to critical examination.

Throughout, the essay maintains that IDG qualities are genuinely valuable but radically insufficient without structural transformation of the power relations that determine whether capabilities can serve transformation or merely enable more sophisticated compliance.

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# Introduction

## The Seductive Promise

The Inner Development Guide framework has emerged as a compelling response to humanity's apparent inability to address the crises we have created. Climate breakdown accelerates despite decades of warnings. Inequality deepens even as wealth multiplies. Democratic institutions erode while authoritarianism gains ground. Ecosystems collapse as economic growth remains the unquestioned imperative. Faced with these systemic failures, the IDG framework offers what appears to be a profound insight: perhaps the problem lies not in our external systems but in our inner capabilities—both individual and collective. Perhaps we need to develop the consciousness, skills, and qualities that would enable us to act wisely in complexity, to collaborate across difference, to think systemically, and to care for the whole.

This diagnosis contains undeniable truth. The challenges we face do require capabilities many of us lack. Climate change demands systems thinking that can grasp interdependencies across scales and timeframes. Global cooperation requires perspective-taking that transcends tribal identities. Ecological crisis calls for connectedness that experiences rather than theorizes our embeddedness in living systems. The IDG framework's identification of twenty-five specific qualities—from self-awareness and system thinking to co-creation skills and resilience—provides practical specificity where vague calls for "consciousness change" offer only abstraction.

Moreover, the framework's evolution to recognize collective capabilities represents sophisticated understanding that individual development alone is insufficient. As the companion essay on collective capabilities demonstrates, organizations and communities need more than aggregated individual skills. They require emergent collective properties—organizational self-awareness, distributed intelligence, network care, coordination architectures, institutional courage. An organization populated entirely by systems thinkers may still make reductionist decisions if its structures force linear planning. A network of compassionate individuals may manifest no collective care if its coordination mechanisms remain transactional. This recognition that capabilities must be cultivated at multiple levels—individual, organizational, network, community—suggests mature understanding of social complexity.

Yet it is precisely this sophistication that makes the IDG framework a potentially powerful technology of depoliticization. By offering such a comprehensive and appealing analysis of what human development we need, the framework may obscure critical questions about power, structure, and politics that determine whether such development can occur and what purposes it ultimately serves.

## The Double Movement of Power

This essay argues that the IDG framework, despite its transformative aspirations and genuine insights, risks functioning as what Michel Foucault would recognize as a governmental technology—a means through which power operates not by repressing but by producing particular kinds of subjects and collectives who govern themselves in alignment with existing structures. The framework performs a double movement that appears to challenge while actually reinforcing dominant relations of power.

The first movement presents inner development—whether individual or collective—as the fundamental response to systemic crisis. This shifts attention from structural transformation to capability development, from changing systems to changing ourselves and our organizations. We are told, in effect, that the problem is not capitalism but our inability to operate consciously within it; not hierarchical domination but our lack of collaborative skills; not extractive institutions but insufficient systems thinking. Even when the framework acknowledges structural issues, it implicitly suggests that developing capabilities is how we address them, rather than recognizing that the structures themselves prevent such capabilities from manifesting or from creating change when they do manifest.

The second movement channels whatever transformative energy does emerge into forms that can be absorbed and utilized by existing systems. The framework helps produce individuals who are self-aware but not structurally aware, who can see complexity but not power, who have inner compass but point it toward goals defined by others. It helps create organizations with sophisticated collective capabilities that make them more effective at operating within unjust systems rather than transforming them. A corporation that develops collective systems thinking, authentic care practices, and distributed intelligence becomes better at what Marcuse called "repressive desublimation"—satisfying enough human needs to prevent revolutionary consciousness while maintaining fundamental exploitation.

## **The Critical Apparatus**

To reveal these operations of power, this essay employs four complementary theoretical lenses, each illuminating different aspects of how the IDG framework may serve governmental rather than transformative functions.

**Critical Management Studies (CMS)** provides tools for understanding how contemporary organizations co-opt human development for instrumental purposes. Scholars like Mats Alvesson and Hugh Willmott have shown how management appropriates the language of empowerment, authenticity, and self-actualization while maintaining fundamental relations of domination. They reveal how "cultures of fun," "spiritual leadership," and "values-driven management" become sophisticated means of control that operate through the production of subjectivity rather than through coercion. The IDG framework, with its emphasis on inner compass, authenticity, and purpose, provides exactly the kind of developmental technology that CMS scholars identify as characteristic of contemporary managerial control—control that works by shaping who we are rather than merely what we do.

**John Gaventa's Power Cube** offers a three-dimensional framework for mapping how power operates through forms (visible, hidden, invisible), spaces (closed, invited, claimed), and levels (local, national, global). This analytical tool reveals how the IDG framework may create what Gaventa calls "invited spaces"—apparently participatory forums where people can develop and exercise capabilities, but only within boundaries that ensure existing power relations remain unchallenged. The framework enables us to see how even sophisticated collective capabilities may operate only in spaces and at levels where they cannot threaten real power.

**Steven Lukes' three dimensions of power** deepens this analysis by distinguishing between power's different modes of operation. The first dimension involves observable conflicts where power prevails in decision-making. The second dimension operates through agenda control, determining what gets decided and what remains undiscussable. The third and most insidious dimension shapes preferences themselves, so that people come to want what serves power's

interests. The IDG framework potentially operates at all three levels but most powerfully at the third—shaping people and organizations to desire forms of development that align with rather than challenge existing structures.

**Michel Foucault's analytics of power** provides perhaps the most fundamental challenge to the IDG framework's implicit theory of change. Foucault showed how modern power operates not primarily through prohibition but through production—producing knowledge, discourse, subjects, and desires. His concept of governmentality reveals how we come to govern ourselves in ways that serve power's purposes, experiencing this self-governance as freedom and self-actualization. His analysis of subjectivation shows how we become subjects through technologies of the self that appear to develop us while actually producing us as particular kinds of beings suited to existing orders.

## **The Individualization of Structural Problems**

One of the IDG framework's most problematic effects is how it potentially individualizes responsibility for addressing collective, structural problems. Climate change becomes a matter of developing our personal and organizational systems thinking rather than dismantling fossil fuel infrastructure and growth imperatives. Inequality becomes about cultivating compassion and perspective-taking rather than redistributing wealth and democratizing ownership. Democratic crisis becomes about building our collaboration skills rather than confronting the concentration of political and economic power.

This individualization operates even when the framework explicitly recognizes collective dimensions. The essay on collective capabilities acknowledges that organizational capacities emerge from structures, cultures, and systems rather than from aggregated individual competencies. Yet it still frames the challenge as developing these collective capabilities rather than transforming the political-economic structures that shape what capabilities can emerge and what effects they can have. An organization may develop exquisite collective systems thinking, but if it operates within market structures that demand quarterly returns and endless growth, that systems thinking becomes sophisticated means of optimizing exploitation rather than transforming systems.

The framework thus performs what Ulrich Beck called "individualization of systemic contradiction"—making individuals and organizations responsible for managing problems that are structurally generated and can only be structurally resolved. This responsabilization becomes particularly pernicious when it appears in the language of empowerment and development. We are told we need to develop our capabilities to address global challenges, obscuring the fact that those with the most developed capabilities often have the least structural power to create change, while those with structural power have every incentive to prevent the very changes that developed capabilities would suggest.

## **The Collective Capability Trap**

The framework's recognition of collective capabilities, rather than escaping this critique, potentially deepens it. Organizations are now responsabilized not just to develop their individual members but to cultivate emergent collective properties. They must become "learning organizations," develop "collective intelligence," manifest "organizational courage." This creates what might be called meta-responsibilization—organizations become responsible for develop-

ping the capabilities to develop capabilities, for transforming themselves into entities capable of transformation.

Yet this proliferation of developmental imperatives occurs without addressing the fundamental question of power. An organization may develop sophisticated collective capabilities while remaining structurally powerless within larger systems. A nonprofit may manifest beautiful collective systems thinking, authentic network care, and genuine collaborative capacity, yet remain dependent on funders whose priorities shape what work is possible. A social enterprise may develop evolutionary purpose and distributed leadership while operating within market structures that ultimately determine its survival.

Moreover, the very process of developing collective capabilities may serve governmental functions. Organizations absorbed in the complex work of internal transformation—developing new decision-making architectures, communication systems, coordination mechanisms—may have neither energy nor resources to challenge external structures. The intensive work of building collective capabilities becomes a kind of infinite deferral of political action. We must first develop our capabilities, then our organization's capabilities, then our network's capabilities, then our community's capabilities—a recursive loop that never quite arrives at the moment of structural challenge.

## **The Depoliticization of Transformation**

Perhaps most fundamentally, the IDG framework risks depoliticizing the very idea of transformation. By framing change primarily in terms of capability development, it obscures the inherently political nature of the changes required. Climate action is not merely a matter of systems thinking but of confronting fossil fuel interests and growth imperatives. Social justice is not just about perspective-taking but about redistributing wealth and power. Ecological sustainability is not simply about connectedness but about challenging property relations and accumulation logics.

The framework's language reveals this depoliticization. It speaks of "inner development," "qualities," "skills," "capabilities"—terms that suggest technical competencies rather than political struggles. Even when addressing power-laden concepts like courage or mobilization, it frames them in developmental rather than political terms. Courage becomes a quality to be cultivated rather than a response to domination. Mobilization becomes a skill rather than a form of resistance.

This linguistic depoliticization has material effects. When organizations adopt the IDG framework, they often create training programs, coaching initiatives, and capability assessments. They develop sophisticated approaches to cultivating individual and collective qualities. What they rarely do is examine how power operates in their contexts, who benefits from current arrangements, and what structural changes would be required for developed capabilities to create actual transformation.

## **The Question This Essay Addresses**

This essay does not argue that the capabilities identified by the IDG framework are unimportant or that efforts to develop them are misguided. The qualities the framework identifies—from self-awareness to systems thinking, from compassion to collaboration—are genuinely neces-

sary for addressing our interconnected crises. The question is not whether we need these capabilities but rather: Under what conditions can such capabilities emerge authentically rather than as technologies of control? How does power shape what development is possible and what purposes it serves? What would be required for inner development to enable rather than substitute for structural transformation?

These questions become more rather than less urgent given the framework's sophistication about collective dimensions. If even organizations with highly developed collective capabilities remain trapped within structures that prevent transformation, what does this tell us about the relationship between development and power? If capability building at individual and collective levels can be so thoroughly absorbed by existing systems, what kinds of interventions might prove more genuinely transformative?

## **The Structure of the Argument**

The essay proceeds through five interconnected analyses that reveal different aspects of how power operates through the IDG framework.

Chapter One examines the IDG framework as managerial discourse, showing how it participates in the instrumentalization of human development characteristic of contemporary capitalism. Drawing on Critical Management Studies, we analyze how both individual and collective capabilities become technologies of organizational control, producing self-managing subjects and self-optimizing organizations that more efficiently serve existing purposes.

Chapter Two employs Gaventa's Power Cube to map how power operates across forms, spaces, and levels in IDG implementation. We reveal how the framework creates invited spaces for participation that remain carefully bounded, how invisible power shapes what kinds of development seem desirable, and how even collective capabilities remain constrained to levels where they cannot challenge fundamental structures.

Chapter Three uses Lukes' three dimensions of power to analyze what remains undiscussable in IDG processes and how participants come to want forms of development that serve existing interests. We examine how the focus on capabilities keeps structural questions off the agenda and how organizations internalize developmental imperatives that align with rather than challenge power.

Chapter Four provides a Foucauldian analysis of how the IDG framework produces particular kinds of subjects and collectives suited to neoliberal governance. We explore how developmental stage theory creates new hierarchies and normalizations, how "evolutionary purpose" becomes totalizing ideology, and how self-managing organizations may intensify rather than reduce disciplinary pressure.

Chapter Five examines organizational realities and structural limits, providing concrete examples of how power constrains what collective capabilities can achieve. We analyze the frustration of sophisticated ineffectiveness—being able to see systemically but not act systemically—and how capability development may create new forms of organizational elitism.

The conclusion considers what genuine transformation might require beyond capability development, exploring the necessity of politicizing what the IDG framework depoliticizes and centering power redistribution rather than capability building.

The appendix offers strategic recommendations for the Inner Development Guide initiative itself, translating the critical analysis into constructive guidance. Written in the spirit of "critical friendship," these recommendations identify concrete steps the initiative might take to address the power dynamics the essay reveals—from making power an explicit dimension of the framework to centering marginalized constituencies and connecting capability development to power-building.

## **An Invitation to Critical Engagement**

This essay offers neither wholesale rejection nor cynical dismissal of the Inner Development Guide framework. Rather, it provides critical examination of how even well-intentioned and sophisticated approaches to human development can serve governmental functions, maintaining existing power relations while appearing to challenge them. The point is not that we should abandon efforts to develop individual and collective capabilities but that we must understand how power shapes these efforts and work to create conditions where development serves transformation rather than accommodation.

The stakes of this analysis could not be higher. We face converging crises that genuinely require new human capabilities at all scales. Yet if our efforts to develop these capabilities are captured by existing power structures, we may find ourselves with highly developed individuals and sophisticated organizations that remain fundamentally unable to create the structural transformations our survival requires. Understanding how power operates through development is thus not academic exercise but urgent practical necessity.

The invitation, then, is to read this essay not as condemnation but as diagnostic—an attempt to reveal systematic blind spots and hidden operations of power that may limit the transformative potential of even our most thoughtful interventions. Only by seeing how power shapes development can we begin to imagine forms of development that might reshape power.

# 1. The IDG Framework as Managerial Discourse

## The Evolution of Control

Critical Management Studies has traced a fundamental transformation in how organizations exercise control over workers. Where industrial capitalism relied on direct supervision, time discipline, and the threat of termination, contemporary organizations increasingly operate through what Alvesson and Willmott call "identity regulation"—shaping who workers understand themselves to be rather than merely controlling what they do. This shift from behavioral to ontological control represents not the softening of power but its intensification. When control operates through the production of subjectivity, it becomes far more pervasive and difficult to resist than when it remains external and coercive.

The Inner Development Guide framework emerges within and contributes to this transformation. It offers organizations a sophisticated technology for producing particular kinds of subjects—self-aware, purpose-driven, systemically thinking, collaborative—who govern themselves in alignment with organizational imperatives while experiencing this governance as personal growth and authentic self-expression. The framework's recent expansion to include collective capabilities extends this technology from individual subjectification to the production of entire organizational subjects, creating what might be called "developed organizations" that self-manage, self-optimize, and self-exploit with remarkable efficiency.

This is not to suggest conscious manipulation by the framework's creators, who appear genuinely committed to human flourishing and planetary wellbeing. Rather, it reveals how even emancipatory intentions can be captured by managerial rationality, transformed into technologies of control that operate through the very language of liberation they employ. The road to organizational hell, we might say, is paved with developmental intentions.

## Individual vs. Collective: The False Choice

The IDG framework's evolution to recognize collective alongside individual capabilities appears to represent sophisticated understanding that transformation requires more than personal development. The companion essay on collective capabilities demonstrates convincingly that organizational capacities cannot be reduced to aggregated individual skills. An organization needs collective self-awareness, distributed intelligence, network care, coordination architectures, and institutional courage that emerge from systemic properties rather than individual competencies.

Yet this apparent sophistication may actually deepen rather than resolve the framework's depoliticizing effects. By presenting both individual and collective capabilities as the solution to systemic crises, the framework creates what appears to be comprehensive response while obscuring the fundamentally political nature of required changes. We are offered a false choice: Should we focus on developing individual capabilities or collective capabilities? Should we train people or transform organizations? Should we build personal skills or systemic capacities?

This binary obscures the real question: How does power determine what capabilities can develop and what effects they can have? An organization may develop sophisticated collective systems thinking, but if it operates within market structures demanding quarterly returns, that

systems thinking becomes a tool for optimizing exploitation rather than transforming systems. A network may manifest beautiful collective care, but if it lacks resources and political power, that care cannot address structural violence.

The framework thus performs a kind of theoretical displacement. By expanding from individual to collective capabilities, it appears to address criticisms of individualization while actually extending the logic of responsabilization to new scales. Now not only must individuals develop themselves, but organizations must develop their collective capabilities, networks must cultivate emergent properties, communities must build systemic capacities. The burden of transformation shifts upward through scales but never arrives at the level of structural power where actual transformation might occur.

Consider how this plays out in practice. A sustainability organization adopts the IDG framework and recognizes the need for collective capabilities. It invests significant resources in developing organizational self-awareness through cultural assessments and reflection practices. It builds distributed intelligence through new communication architectures and collaborative sense-making processes. It cultivates network care through stakeholder engagement and partnership development. It creates coordination mechanisms enabling genuine co-creation. After enormous effort and expense, it has indeed developed sophisticated collective capabilities.

But this organization still operates within funding structures that determine what work is possible, legal frameworks that constrain what actions are permissible, market systems that shape what strategies are viable, and political structures that limit what changes are achievable. Its sophisticated collective capabilities enable it to navigate these constraints more skillfully, to optimize within given parameters, to collaborate more effectively within existing structures. What they do not and cannot enable is transformation of the structures themselves.

## **Subjectivation Through Development**

Foucault's concept of subjectivation—the process through which individuals become subjects—helps reveal how the IDG framework operates as a technology of the self that produces particular kinds of persons suited to contemporary capitalism. But the framework's recognition of collective capabilities extends this subjectivation to organizational levels, producing particular kinds of collectives suited to neoliberal governance.

### **The Production of the Ideal Change Agent**

At the individual level, the IDG framework constructs a normative image of the developed person that aligns remarkably well with what contemporary organizations require. This ideal subject possesses self-awareness that enables emotional self-regulation without requiring organizational support; an inner compass that provides intrinsic motivation without external rewards; systems thinking that grasps complexity without challenging fundamental structures; empathy and compassion that maintain care despite systemic violence; collaboration skills that enable teamwork despite competitive structures; and perseverance that sustains effort despite structural impossibility.

This subject is precisely what Byung-Chul Han describes in "The Burnout Society"—the self-exploiting subject who no longer needs external discipline because they have internalized the imperative to optimize themselves. They are never developed enough, never aware enough,

never skilled enough. The framework's twenty-five qualities become an infinite horizon of self-improvement that can never be fully achieved, ensuring perpetual striving.

But the framework does not stop at producing individual subjects. It extends this logic to collective entities, constructing normative images of the developed organization, the developed network, the developed community.

## The Production of the Ideal Organization

The developed organization, according to the framework's logic, manifests collective self-awareness, knowing its patterns and shadows; organizational systems thinking that grasps interdependencies; institutional integrity aligning values and actions; collective presence responding to emergence; network care attending to stakeholder wellbeing; distributed intelligence leveraging diverse perspectives; genuine co-creation through shared power; organizational courage taking bold action; and resilience sustaining effort through difficulties.

This ideal organization bears striking resemblance to what Boltanski and Chiapello identified as "the new spirit of capitalism"—flexible, networked, project-based, purpose-driven, collaborative. It is precisely the kind of organization that contemporary capitalism requires: adaptive enough to survive turbulent markets, innovative enough to create new value, purposeful enough to attract talent, collaborative enough to leverage networks, resilient enough to absorb crisis.

The framework thus helps produce organizations that are optimally suited to operating within existing structures rather than transforming them. These organizations are sophisticated, capable, even admirable in many ways. But their very sophistication enables them to function more effectively within systems that remain fundamentally extractive, unequal, and unsustainable.

## Technologies of the Self, Technologies of the Collective

The IDG framework operates through multiple technologies that shape both individual and collective subjects. Training programs and workshops transmit the framework's categories and techniques, teaching people and organizations to understand themselves through its lens. Assessment tools measure development against the framework's qualities, creating standards of normality and development. Coaching and consulting help individuals and organizations work on their deficiencies relative to these standards. Communities of practice reinforce the framework's importance and create peer pressure for development.

These technologies do not operate through coercion but through what Foucault called "governmental rationality"—they make certain ways of being seem rational, desirable, even necessary. Who would argue against developing self-awareness or systems thinking? What organization would reject collective intelligence or network care? The framework's qualities appear so self-evidently valuable that questioning them seems absurd.

Yet this apparent self-evidence masks how these technologies produce particular kinds of subjects while foreclosing other possibilities. An individual shaped by the IDG framework may develop sophisticated self-awareness but not structural awareness. An organization shaped by it may develop collective systems thinking but not systemic resistance. The framework pro-

duces development within existing paradigms while making paradigmatic transformation seem unnecessary or impossible.

## **The Instrumentalization of Purpose and Meaning**

One of the IDG framework's most seductive qualities is its emphasis on purpose, meaning, and values. It speaks of inner compass, authentic action, and serving the good of the whole. For individuals and organizations exhausted by meaningless work and empty rhetoric, this promise of purpose-driven development appears genuinely transformative. Yet Critical Management Studies reveals how purpose itself has become a sophisticated means of control in contemporary organizations.

### **Purpose as Management Technology**

Alvesson and Willmott document how organizations increasingly manage through meaning rather than through rules. By articulating inspiring purposes and values, organizations create what Fleming calls "aspirational control"—workers regulate themselves to live up to idealized organizational purposes. This form of control is particularly effective with knowledge workers who resist direct supervision but eagerly embrace meaningful work.

The IDG framework provides sophisticated tools for this purposeful management. Inner compass becomes alignment with organizational mission. Integrity means consistency with corporate values. Long-term orientation translates into commitment to organizational strategy. Connectedness manifests as identification with organizational purpose. These qualities, presented as personal development, become means through which organizations colonize workers' sense of meaning and purpose.

But the framework's recognition of collective capabilities extends this instrumentalization to new levels. Now organizations themselves must have authentic purpose, collective inner compass, and institutional integrity. This creates what might be called "purpose laundering"—organizations adopt sophisticated purpose statements and values frameworks that obscure their fundamental participation in extractive systems.

Consider a multinational corporation that adopts the IDG framework. It develops elaborate statements of purpose about serving humanity and planet. It invests in developing collective capabilities for sustainability. It creates beautiful expressions of organizational values and commitment to transformation. Yet it continues to operate within and reinforce the very systems driving ecological and social crisis. Its sophisticated purpose work becomes a form of what Marcuse called "repressive tolerance"—allowing enough expression of values to prevent rebellion while maintaining fundamental structures.

### **The Colonization of Meaning**

The framework's emphasis on meaning-making capabilities—sense-making, perspective-taking, visioning—appears to honor human need for meaningful existence. Yet these capabilities are developed within and for organizational purposes. Employees learn to make meaning of their work in ways that align with organizational needs. They develop perspective-taking that helps them understand stakeholders and markets. They cultivate visioning that imagines organizational futures.

This colonization of meaning extends to collective levels. Organizations develop collective sense-making capabilities that help them interpret market signals and strategic opportunities. They build perspective-taking capacity to understand diverse stakeholders and contexts. They cultivate visioning processes that imagine organizational evolution. These collective meaning-making capabilities, while sophisticated, operate within taken-for-granted frameworks about what organizations are for, how they should operate, and what constitutes success.

The tragedy is that genuine human need for meaning and purpose gets captured and channeled into organizational forms that may ultimately undermine the very flourishing they promise to serve. Workers who deeply desire to contribute to planetary wellbeing find themselves developing capabilities that make their organizations more effective at greenwashing. Leaders who genuinely care about social justice find themselves building collective capabilities that enable more sophisticated corporate social responsibility programs that obscure continued exploitation.

## **Soft Power and the Wellness Syndrome**

Carl Cederström and André Spicer's analysis of "the wellness syndrome" reveals how health and wellbeing have become moral imperatives in contemporary society. We are obligated not just to be productive but to be well, happy, and fulfilled. This obligation operates as a form of soft power that appears to care for us while actually demanding ever more intensive work on ourselves. The IDG framework, with its comprehensive catalog of qualities to develop, potentially contributes to this syndrome at both individual and collective levels.

### **The Burden of Development**

The framework's twenty-five qualities create an overwhelming developmental agenda. Individuals must work on their self-awareness, inner compass, presence, integrity, openness, systems thinking, critical thinking, complexity awareness, perspective skills, creativity, long-term orientation, connectedness, empathy, compassion, humility, communication skills, relationship-building skills, co-creation skills, inclusive mindset, mobilization skills, courage, resilience, optimism, and proactivity. Each quality contains multiple sub-dimensions requiring attention. The work of development becomes infinite, exhausting, impossible to complete.

But the framework's recognition of collective capabilities doubles this burden. Organizations must also develop collective versions of all these qualities. They need organizational self-awareness, institutional integrity, collective presence, distributed intelligence, network care, and so on. The developmental agenda becomes even more overwhelming when extended to organizational scale.

This creates what Han calls "the terror of positivity"—the exhausting demand to constantly improve, develop, and optimize. Unlike traditional oppression that says "you may not," this form of power says "you can" and "you should." You can develop these capabilities. You should become more aware, more systemic, more compassionate. The inability to fully develop all qualities becomes personal and organizational failure rather than structural impossibility.

## The Individualization and Organizationalization of Systemic Failure

When individuals and organizations inevitably fail to develop all the capabilities the framework identifies, this failure is attributed to insufficient effort, wrong methods, or lack of commitment rather than to structural constraints. An individual who cannot maintain presence while working three jobs to survive is seen as lacking development rather than facing impossible circumstances. An organization that cannot develop collective systems thinking while struggling for financial survival is viewed as capability-deficient rather than structurally constrained.

This attribution of systemic failure to individual and organizational deficits serves important ideological functions. It maintains the illusion that transformation is possible through development alone. It justifies continued inequality by suggesting those with resources have developed superior capabilities. It deflects attention from structural reforms by focusing on capability building. It creates infinite markets for training, coaching, consulting, and other developmental services.

The framework thus participates in what Ulrich Beck called "the individualization of social inequality"—structural problems are transformed into personal and organizational challenges to be addressed through development rather than political action. Climate change becomes a matter of developing our systems thinking rather than dismantling fossil fuel infrastructure. Inequality becomes about cultivating compassion rather than redistributing wealth. The scale shifts from individual to organizational, but the fundamental displacement of political questions remains.

## The Depoliticization of Organizational Transformation

Perhaps the most profound effect of the IDG framework's managerial capture is how it depoliticizes the very idea of organizational transformation. By framing change primarily in terms of capability development, it obscures questions of power, ownership, governance, and fundamental purpose that determine what organizations do and whom they serve.

### From Political to Technical Questions

The framework transforms political questions into technical ones. Instead of asking "Who owns this organization and why?" we ask "What capabilities does it need to develop?" Instead of questioning "Whose interests does this organization serve?" we explore "What is its evolutionary purpose?" Instead of examining "How is power distributed here?" we assess "What is the organization's developmental stage?"

This technical framing appears more sophisticated and less confrontational than political analysis. It allows everyone to participate in developmental work without challenging fundamental structures. Managers and workers can collaborate on building collective capabilities without addressing hierarchical domination. Stakeholders can engage in dialogue about organizational purpose without questioning ownership structures. Communities can partner with corporations on sustainability initiatives without examining extractive relationships.

Consider how differently organizational transformation appears through political versus developmental lenses. A political analysis might reveal that an organization's problems stem from concentrated ownership, undemocratic governance, and structural pressure for profit maximization.

zation. Solutions would involve redistributing ownership, democratizing decision-making, and changing fundamental purpose from profit to wellbeing.

The IDG framework's developmental analysis instead identifies capability deficits—insufficient systems thinking, weak collaboration skills, limited collective intelligence. Solutions involve training programs, cultural change initiatives, and organizational development interventions. These may produce genuine improvements in how the organization functions, but they leave untouched the fundamental structures determining what it does and why.

## The Neutering of Radical Potential

The framework contains genuinely radical elements. Connectedness to all life challenges anthropocentrism. Systems thinking reveals interdependencies that undermine competitive individualism. Inner compass pointed toward collective wellbeing questions profit maximization. Courage to challenge existing structures threatens established power. These qualities, fully developed, would indeed be transformative.

Yet the framework's embedding in managerial discourse neutralizes this radical potential. Connectedness becomes stakeholder engagement. Systems thinking becomes strategic analysis. Inner compass becomes organizational values. Courage becomes innovation and risk-taking within acceptable bounds. The qualities are domesticated, tamed, made safe for organizational consumption.

This neutering happens through several mechanisms. First, the framework presents all qualities as equally important, obscuring how some directly challenge existing structures while others reinforce them. Second, it frames development as gradual, stage-based progression rather than potentially revolutionary transformation. Third, it embeds radical qualities within comprehensive lists that dilute their force. Fourth, it presents them as capabilities to develop rather than political commitments to make.

The result is that organizations can adopt the IDG framework, develop sophisticated individual and collective capabilities, and still function as instruments of extraction, exploitation, and ecological destruction. They become more sophisticated in their functioning, more capable in their operations, perhaps even more humane in their treatment of workers and communities. But they remain fundamentally oriented toward purposes and governed by structures that perpetuate the very crises the framework ostensibly addresses.

## Conclusion to Chapter One

The IDG framework's operation as managerial discourse reveals a fundamental contradiction at its heart. It promises transformation while providing tools for optimization within existing structures. It offers development as solution while obscuring how power shapes what development is possible and what purposes it serves. It expands from individual to collective capabilities while extending rather than resolving the logic of responsabilization.

This analysis does not diminish the genuine value of many qualities the framework identifies. Self-awareness, systems thinking, compassion, collaboration—these are indeed necessary capabilities. The question is whether developing them within and for existing organizational structures can produce transformation or merely more sophisticated forms of accommodation.

The framework's recent recognition of collective capabilities, rather than resolving this contradiction, potentially deepens it. Now organizations face even more comprehensive developmental demands while remaining structurally constrained in what changes they can create. They develop remarkable collective capabilities that enable them to function more effectively within systems that remain fundamentally extractive and unsustainable.

Understanding the framework's operation as managerial discourse is not cause for despair but for clarity. It helps us see why so many well-intentioned developmental efforts produce so little structural change. It reveals why organizations with sophisticated capabilities remain trapped within destructive systems. It explains why the proliferation of training, coaching, and organizational development has not produced the transformation our crises require.

This clarity opens space for different questions. Rather than asking "What capabilities do we need to develop?" we might ask "What structures need to change?" Instead of "How can we build collective intelligence?" we might explore "How can we redistribute power?" Rather than "What is our evolutionary purpose?" we might question "Who decides our purpose and why?"

These questions lead beyond managerial discourse toward genuinely political engagement with transformation. They require not just developing capabilities but changing the structures within which capabilities operate. They demand not just individual and collective development but systemic transformation. Chapter Two examines how power operates to keep such questions off the agenda, creating spaces for capability development that carefully exclude possibilities for structural change.

## **2. Mapping Power Through Gaventa's Cube**

### **The Architecture of Power**

John Gaventa's Power Cube provides a three-dimensional framework for analyzing how power operates in any given context. Rather than viewing power as a simple possession—something one has or lacks—the Power Cube reveals power as operating simultaneously through different forms (visible, hidden, invisible), in different spaces (closed, invited, claimed), and at different levels (local, national, global). This multidimensional analysis proves particularly revealing when applied to the Inner Development Guide framework, exposing how even sophisticated approaches to individual and collective capability development remain constrained within carefully bounded territories that preserve existing power relations.

The Power Cube's analytical strength lies in its ability to reveal not just where power operates but how different dimensions interact to maintain domination even when appearing to enable participation. A space may seem open and participatory while invisible power shapes what participants believe is possible. A process may address visible power conflicts while hidden power keeps crucial issues off the agenda. An intervention may create change at one level while leaving other levels untouched. These interactions help explain why the IDG framework, despite genuine intentions and sophisticated understanding of both individual and collective capabilities, may serve to reinforce rather than transform existing power structures.

What makes the Power Cube particularly relevant for analyzing the IDG framework is how it reveals the relationship between capability development and structural power. The framework promises to develop capabilities that enable people and organizations to address complex global challenges. Yet Gaventa's analysis suggests that capabilities alone cannot overcome structural power dynamics that determine what spaces are accessible, what issues can be raised, and what changes are possible. Indeed, capability development may serve power by creating an illusion of agency while operating within boundaries that ensure no fundamental challenge to existing structures.

### **Forms of Power in IDG Implementation**

#### **Visible Power: The Observable Politics of Development**

Visible power—the observable decision-making and conflict that shapes resource allocation, policy formation, and organizational direction—operates overtly in IDG implementation. This is the power we can see: who funds IDG initiatives, who decides which capabilities matter, who determines how they should be developed and measured, who evaluates success and failure.

At the most obvious level, visible power appears in funding relationships. Major foundations, government agencies, and corporations provide resources for IDG implementation, and their priorities inevitably shape what work is possible. A foundation focused on leadership development will fund different capabilities than one prioritizing systems change. A corporation sponsoring IDG training for employees will emphasize different qualities than a community organization building grassroots capacity. These funding decisions represent visible exercises of power that determine which aspects of the framework receive attention and resources.

The governance of IDG initiatives reveals another dimension of visible power. Who sits on boards and steering committees? Who designs implementation strategies? Who selects consultants and trainers? These positions, typically occupied by those with existing institutional power—executives, academics, consultants, philanthropists—shape how the framework is interpreted and applied. Their worldviews, assumptions, and interests inevitably influence which capabilities are prioritized, how development is understood, and what counts as success.

Visible power also operates through formal decision-making about organizational adoption of the IDG framework. When a corporation decides to implement IDG training, executives determine the scope, budget, and expectations. When a nonprofit adopts the framework for organizational development, board and senior leadership shape its application. When a network embraces collective capability building, those with formal authority guide the process. These decisions appear transparent and legitimate—after all, those with organizational authority naturally make organizational decisions—yet they ensure that IDG implementation remains aligned with existing power structures.

The measurement and evaluation of IDG development represents a particularly important site of visible power. Who decides what indicators demonstrate capability development? What assessment tools are used? Who interprets results? These technical-appearing decisions profoundly shape what gets developed and how. If funders require quantitative metrics, development focuses on measurable qualities. If evaluators prioritize individual assessment, collective capabilities receive less attention. If success is defined by organizational performance metrics, development serves organizational rather than transformative purposes.

Even the framework's expansion to recognize collective capabilities operates within visible power dynamics. The companion essay acknowledges that collective capabilities emerge from structures, processes, and cultures rather than individual competencies. Yet who determines what collective capabilities organizations should develop? Who decides whether an organization needs distributed intelligence versus centralized coordination? Who judges whether network care or competitive advantage matters more? These decisions, made by those with institutional power, shape what collective development occurs and what purposes it serves.

## Hidden Power: Keeping Transformation Off the Agenda

Hidden power operates through agenda control, determining what issues get discussed and what remains undiscussable. This form of power is particularly insidious in IDG contexts because it operates behind apparent openness and participation. Organizations may enthusiastically embrace capability development while hidden power ensures that questions about fundamental structure, ownership, and purpose never arise.

Consider what typically remains off the agenda in IDG implementation processes. Questions of ownership and economic democracy are rarely discussed. Who owns the organization and why? Should workers have ownership stakes? Should communities affected by organizational decisions have governance rights? These questions, fundamental to determining what an organization does and whom it serves, are systematically excluded from capability development conversations. Instead, the focus remains on developing capabilities within existing ownership structures, as if ownership and capability were unrelated.

Similarly, questions about the growth imperative rarely surface in IDG processes. Organizations work to develop systems thinking and long-term orientation while accepting without

question that they must grow continuously. They cultivate ecological connectedness while operating within economic systems demanding endless expansion. They build collective Intelligence about everything except the contradiction between growth and planetary boundaries. Hidden power keeps this contradiction off the agenda, ensuring that capability development works within rather than questions growth imperatives.

The distribution of wealth and resources represents another systematically excluded issue. IDG processes may address inequality by developing empathy, perspective-taking, and inclusive mindsets, but they rarely question why some organizations control vast resources while others struggle for survival. They don't ask why capability development is accessible primarily to those with existing resources. They don't examine how wealth concentration undermines the collective capabilities of entire communities. These questions remain hidden, replaced by discussions of how to develop capabilities within existing resource distributions.

Hidden power also shapes what is absent from the framework's recognition of collective capabilities. The companion essay thoroughly analyzes organizational self-awareness, distributed intelligence, and network care, but it doesn't examine collective resistance, organized opposition to domination, or coordinated refusal to participate in destructive systems. These forms of collective capability—arguably the most important for transformation—are simply absent from consideration. Their absence is not accidental but reflects hidden power operating to keep genuinely transformative collective capabilities off the developmental agenda.

The language used in IDG contexts reinforces these exclusions. We speak of "stakeholders" rather than "owners and workers," obscuring power relations. We discuss "partnerships" rather than "dependencies," hiding asymmetries. We explore "evolutionary purpose" rather than "imposed mission," masking who determines organizational direction. This linguistic filtering operates as hidden power, making certain discussions nearly impossible by removing the vocabulary needed to have them.

## Invisible Power: Shaping Consciousness Itself

Invisible power—the most insidious form—operates by shaping what people believe is possible, desirable, or normal. It works through internalized beliefs, cultural norms, and taken-for-granted assumptions that make existing arrangements seem natural and inevitable. In IDG contexts, invisible power shapes how participants understand development itself, what they aspire to become, and what they believe transformation means.

The framework's developmental stage theory provides a particularly powerful mechanism for invisible power. By presenting development as a natural progression through predetermined stages—from conformist to achiever to pluralist to integral—it creates a normative trajectory that shapes how people and organizations understand their own growth. Those at "earlier" stages internalize a sense of deficiency and aspire to qualities associated with "later" stages. Those at "later" stages develop a sense of superiority and responsibility for helping others develop. This hierarchical ordering, presented as natural and universal, shapes consciousness in ways that may actually prevent genuine transformation.

Invisible power also operates through the individualization and organizationalization of responsibility for development. Participants in IDG processes internalize the belief that they and their organizations are responsible for developing capabilities to address global challenges. They come to see capability deficits as the primary obstacle to transformation. They believe that if

they just develop enough self-awareness, systems thinking, and collaboration skills, they can create needed change. This internalized belief obscures how structural power prevents even highly capable individuals and organizations from creating transformation.

The framework's emphasis on positive qualities and constructive engagement shapes consciousness toward accommodation rather than resistance. Participants learn to value openness, humility, appreciation, and compassion—all genuine virtues—while qualities like anger, refusal, opposition, and disruption are absent or actively discouraged. This shapes consciousness toward working within existing systems rather than challenging them. Even courage is defined as "ability to stand up for values" rather than ability to resist domination or refuse participation in destructive systems.

At the collective level, invisible power shapes how organizations understand their own development. They internalize beliefs about what constitutes a "developed" organization—self-managing, purposeful, adaptive, collaborative. These beliefs, drawn from contemporary management discourse and reinforced by the IDG framework, shape organizational aspiration toward forms that serve existing power structures. Organizations strive to become "Teal" or "evolutionary" while never questioning whether these forms of organization, however sophisticated, can create transformation within unchanged systemic contexts.

Cultural norms about professionalism, rationality, and appropriate organizational behavior operate as invisible power shaping what kinds of capability development seem legitimate. Emotional expression, spiritual practice, indigenous wisdom, and radical politics are often excluded or marginalized as unprofessional, irrational, or inappropriate. This cultural filtering ensures that capability development remains within bounds acceptable to dominant culture, developing qualities that enhance rather than challenge existing arrangements.

Perhaps most fundamentally, invisible power shapes belief about change itself. Participants in IDG processes often internalize a theory of change that sees transformation as gradual, staged, and achievable through capability development. They believe that patient work on individual and collective qualities will eventually produce systemic change. This belief, while comforting and motivating, may actually prevent recognition of how power operates and what structural transformation requires. It creates what Gramsci called "cultural hegemony"—dominated groups participate in their own domination by accepting worldviews that serve dominant interests.

## **Spaces of IDG Practice**

### **Closed Spaces: Where Real Decisions Are Made**

Closed spaces—where decisions are made by limited groups without broader participation—determine the fundamental parameters within which IDG development occurs. These spaces, often invisible to those excluded from them, shape what capability development is possible, what purposes it serves, and what effects it can have.

Corporate boardrooms represent archetypal closed spaces where decisions about IDG implementation are actually made. When a corporation adopts the IDG framework, the real decisions—how much to invest, what changes are acceptable, what boundaries cannot be crossed—are made in board meetings and executive sessions. These closed spaces determine that

capability development must enhance profitability, cannot challenge hierarchy, and must fit within existing strategic plans. The entire elaborate apparatus of IDG implementation—training programs, coaching initiatives, organizational development processes—operates within parameters set in these closed spaces.

Foundation board meetings constitute another crucial closed space shaping IDG development. Major philanthropies funding IDG work make decisions about priorities, strategies, and acceptable approaches in closed sessions among wealthy donors and their representatives. They determine that capability development should focus on leadership rather than democracy, on innovation rather than redistribution, on scaling rather than transformation. These decisions, made without participation from those the development ostensibly serves, fundamentally shape what IDG work is possible.

Government ministries and agencies represent closed spaces where public policy about capability development is determined. Decisions about education curriculum, workforce development programs, and organizational capacity building are made by officials and experts without meaningful participation from communities affected. These closed spaces ensure that capability development serves economic competitiveness rather than wellbeing, maintains existing institutions rather than transforming them, and produces compliant citizens rather than empowered agents of change.

Even within organizations embracing participatory approaches to IDG implementation, crucial decisions often occur in closed spaces. Senior leadership teams determine the scope of participation, the boundaries of acceptable change, and the criteria for success. Human resources departments design implementation plans that fit within existing policies and procedures. Consultant teams develop strategies based on their own frameworks and assumptions. These closed spaces, operating alongside visible participatory processes, ensure that capability development remains within acceptable bounds.

The expansion to collective capabilities doesn't escape these closed space dynamics. Decisions about what collective capabilities to develop, how to develop them, and how to measure success are typically made by organizational leadership, boards, and funders rather than by all those who constitute the collective. The companion essay acknowledges that collective capabilities require structural change, but decisions about what structural changes are acceptable occur in closed spaces where existing power holders maintain control.

## Invited Spaces: The Illusion of Participation

Invited spaces—where authorities invite participation within predetermined boundaries—represent the primary arena for IDG implementation. These spaces appear open and participatory, creating legitimacy and buy-in, while carefully constraining what can be discussed, decided, or changed.

Organizational training programs and workshops represent typical invited spaces for individual capability development. Employees are invited to develop self-awareness, systems thinking, and collaboration skills, but within frameworks determined by management. They can explore their inner compass as long as it points toward organizational objectives. They can develop critical thinking that improves organizational effectiveness but not critical thinking that questions organizational purpose. The invitation to develop is real, but its boundaries ensure development serves organizational rather than transformative ends.

Multi-stakeholder consultations about collective capability development create invited spaces at organizational and network levels. Organizations invite diverse stakeholders to help identify needed capabilities, design development strategies, and evaluate progress. These processes appear inclusive and participatory. Yet stakeholders are invited to contribute within predetermined frameworks—they can influence how capabilities are developed but not whether capability development is the right approach. They can shape implementation but not question fundamental strategies. They can provide input but not make decisions.

Communities of practice around IDG implementation create invited spaces for peer learning and support. Practitioners gather to share experiences, exchange methods, and develop collective understanding. These communities provide genuine value—emotional support, practical knowledge, professional development. Yet they operate within boundaries that exclude political analysis, structural critique, and organized resistance. Participants are invited to improve their practice but not to question whether their practice serves transformation or accommodation.

Even seemingly radical invited spaces operate within invisible boundaries. An organization might invite employees to reimagine organizational purpose through collective visioning processes. A network might invite participants to redesign governance structures through collaborative deliberation. A community might invite members to identify collective capabilities through participatory research. These invitations appear transformative, yet they typically operate within assumptions about what kinds of purpose, governance, or capabilities are acceptable. The invitation extends to the content but not the framework, to the what but not the why, to the means but not the ends.

The most sophisticated invited spaces acknowledge power dynamics and attempt to address them. They use careful facilitation to ensure diverse voices are heard. They provide resources to enable marginalized groups to participate. They create safer spaces for difficult conversations. They may even explicitly discuss power and work to redistribute it within the process. Yet these invited spaces still operate within larger structures that remain unchanged. Participants may experience genuine empowerment within the process while remaining structurally powerless to change the systems within which the process operates.

## Claimed Spaces: Where Genuine Transformation Might Emerge

Claimed spaces—created by less powerful groups demanding participation—represent the only spaces where genuine transformation might emerge. These spaces, created through organizing, resistance, and collective action, operate outside the boundaries established by existing power structures. They are where people and organizations might develop capabilities for transformation rather than accommodation.

Worker organizing represents a crucial claimed space relevant to IDG development. When workers organize unions, they create space to collectively determine their own development priorities rather than accepting those imposed by management. They might prioritize capabilities for solidarity, collective bargaining, and coordinated action rather than individual self-management and organizational alignment. They might develop critical consciousness about exploitation rather than appreciation for corporate purpose. These claimed spaces threaten existing power precisely because they enable different kinds of capability development oriented toward different purposes.

Social movements create claimed spaces where alternative forms of collective capability can emerge. The climate justice movement develops capabilities for direct action, system disruption, and sustained resistance. The indigenous rights movement cultivates capabilities for land defense, cultural preservation, and decolonization. The economic democracy movement builds capabilities for cooperative governance, mutual aid, and commons management. These movements create spaces where collective capabilities directly challenge rather than serve existing power structures.

Community organizing generates claimed spaces at local levels where people develop capabilities for collective power. Tenant unions build capabilities for rent strikes and eviction defense. Neighborhood assemblies develop capabilities for participatory budgeting and direct democracy. Mutual aid networks cultivate capabilities for survival and solidarity outside market systems. These claimed spaces enable capability development that builds power for transformation rather than capabilities for operating within existing structures.

Yet claimed spaces face constant threat from co-optation, repression, and exhaustion. Power operates to recapture claimed spaces, transforming them into invited spaces with acceptable boundaries. Radical movements get channeled into nonprofit organizations dependent on foundation funding. Worker organizing gets constrained by labor law that limits solidarity and direct action. Community organizing gets redirected toward service provision rather than power building. The history of social movements is partly a history of claimed spaces being reclaimed by power.

The IDG framework, as currently constituted, operates almost entirely in invited rather than claimed spaces. Its implementation occurs through organizational initiatives, funded programs, and professional networks—all invited spaces with predetermined boundaries. Even when it acknowledges collective capabilities, it focuses on capabilities that organizations and networks invite rather than capabilities that oppressed groups claim. This positioning within invited spaces fundamentally limits its transformative potential, regardless of the sophistication of its analysis or the genuineness of its intentions.

## **Levels and Scale: The Organizational Trap**

### **Individual Level: The Persistent Focus**

Despite recognition of collective capabilities, much IDG implementation remains focused on individual development. This happens not through ignorance but through structural dynamics that make individual-level intervention more manageable, measurable, and marketable than systemic change.

Individual development fits within existing organizational structures without requiring fundamental change. Organizations can send employees to training, provide coaching, and measure individual progress without altering hierarchy, governance, or purpose. Individual development can be packaged as products—workshops, assessments, certifications—that generate revenue for consultants and legitimacy for organizations. Individual development appears politically neutral, avoiding contentious questions about power, ownership, and structure.

The companion essay's sophisticated analysis of collective capabilities hasn't fundamentally altered this individual focus. Organizations reading about collective self-awareness, distributed

intelligence, and network care still primarily respond by training individuals in these concepts rather than transforming structures to enable these collective properties. The knowledge about collective capabilities gets transmitted through individual learning rather than structural change.

This individual-level focus serves power by maintaining the illusion that transformation is possible through personal development. If individuals just develop enough capabilities, they can create change. This belief sustains hope while preventing recognition of structural barriers. It generates endless demand for development while avoiding political confrontation. It creates sophisticated individuals who remain structurally powerless.

## Organizational Level: The Limit of Imagination

The framework's expansion to organizational collective capabilities appears to transcend individual limitations. The companion essay persuasively argues that organizational properties like collective intelligence and institutional courage cannot be reduced to individual capabilities. It provides detailed analysis of how organizations can develop these collective properties through structural change, cultural transformation, and systemic intervention.

Yet this organizational focus, while more sophisticated than pure individual development, still operates within a fundamentally limited horizon. Organizations are treated as the relevant unit for transformation, as if changing organizations could somehow change the systems within which they operate. This organizational imagination cannot see beyond institutional boundaries to the political-economic structures that determine what organizations can do and become.

An organization may develop sophisticated collective systems thinking, but if it operates within market structures demanding competitive advantage, that systems thinking serves competition rather than collaboration. An organization may cultivate deep network care, but if it exists within legal structures privileging shareholder value, that care remains subordinate to profit. An organization may build genuine collective intelligence, but if it functions within political structures concentrating power, that intelligence cannot challenge fundamental arrangements.

The organizational level trap is particularly seductive because it feels actionable. We can change our organizations even if we cannot immediately change larger systems. We can develop collective capabilities even if we cannot redistribute power. We can transform our institutions even if we cannot transform society. This actionable quality makes organizational development attractive to pragmatic change agents who want to do something rather than wait for revolution. Yet this pragmatism may ultimately serve power by channeling transformative energy into organizational improvement that leaves systemic structures unchanged.

## System Level: The Absent Transformation

The crucial absence in both the IDG framework and its expansion to collective capabilities is genuine system-level transformation. The framework acknowledges systems thinking and complexity awareness as important capabilities but doesn't extend this recognition to system-level intervention. It develops capabilities for understanding systems but not for changing them.

System-level transformation would require capabilities for organized resistance to destructive systems, coordinated non-cooperation with exploitation, collective building of alternative

structures, mass mobilization for structural change, and sustained confrontation with concentrated power. These capabilities—arguably the most important for addressing global challenges—are simply absent from the framework. Their absence reveals how power operates to constrain imagination even in sophisticated frameworks that claim to address systemic issues.

When system-level issues do appear in IDG discourse, they are typically framed as contexts requiring adaptation rather than structures requiring transformation. Climate change appears as a complex challenge requiring new capabilities rather than a consequence of capitalism requiring system change. Inequality appears as a problem requiring empathy and inclusion rather than a structure requiring redistribution. Ecological destruction appears as an issue requiring systems thinking rather than a result of growth imperatives requiring economic transformation.

This absence of system-level transformation is not accidental oversight but reflects the operation of power across all three dimensions of Gaventa's cube. Visible power ensures that those making decisions about IDG implementation have stakes in existing systems. Hidden power keeps system transformation off the agenda of capability development. Invisible power shapes consciousness to see system change as impossible, unrealistic, or undesirable. The framework operates within these power dynamics, developing capabilities for system adaptation rather than system transformation.

## **The Interaction of Dimensions: How Power Maintains Itself**

The true sophistication of power's operation appears in how different dimensions of the Power Cube interact to maintain domination even when appearing to enable participation and development. These interactions create what Gaventa calls "power traps"—situations where apparent opportunities for change actually reinforce existing arrangements.

Visible decisions made in closed spaces shape what can happen in invited spaces. When a corporate board decides in closed session to implement IDG training within existing structures, all subsequent invited participation operates within those predetermined boundaries. Hidden power operating in invited spaces determines what capacities get developed. When certain capabilities remain off the agenda in organizational development processes, participants cannot develop capacities for resistance or transformation. Invisible power shapes what people bring to claimed spaces. Even when groups create autonomous spaces for development, participants may carry internalized beliefs that limit what seems possible.

These interactions help explain why even sophisticated frameworks recognizing collective capabilities produce limited transformation. The IDG framework operates primarily in invited spaces at organizational levels with individual focus, shaped by decisions in closed spaces, constrained by hidden agenda control, and limited by internalized beliefs about what development means. Even when it acknowledges collective dimensions and systemic thinking, these acknowledgments occur within power dynamics that prevent genuine system-level transformation.

## **Conclusion to Chapter Two**

Gaventa's Power Cube reveals how the IDG framework, despite sophisticated recognition of both individual and collective capabilities, remains trapped within power dynamics that prevent

genuine transformation. The framework operates primarily through invited spaces that appear participatory while maintaining careful boundaries. It focuses on levels—individual and organizational—where change seems possible while avoiding system-level transformation. It develops capabilities that existing power structures can accommodate rather than capabilities that might challenge those structures.

The expansion to collective capabilities, rather than escaping these power dynamics, potentially deepens them. Organizations are invited to develop collective properties within unchanged systemic contexts. Hidden power keeps questions of ownership, governance, and fundamental purpose off the developmental agenda. Invisible power shapes organizational aspirations toward sophisticated forms that serve rather than challenge existing arrangements.

This analysis reveals why capability development, however sophisticated, cannot substitute for political struggle to transform power relations. The capabilities the IDG framework identifies may indeed be necessary, but they are radically insufficient without changes in who makes decisions, what can be discussed, and what is believed possible. These changes cannot be achieved through training or organizational development but require building power in claimed spaces, challenging agenda control, and transforming consciousness about what is possible and necessary.

Chapter Three examines how these power dynamics operate specifically through what Steven Lukes identified as the three dimensions of power, revealing how the framework may shape preferences and beliefs in ways that make people and organizations complicit in their own limitation.

## **3. The Three Dimensions of Power in IDG Work**

### **Lukes' Radical View of Power**

Steven Lukes' "three-dimensional" analysis of power provides a framework for understanding how domination operates not just through observable force but through increasingly subtle mechanisms that shape what gets decided and, most insidiously, what people want. His first dimension examines visible conflicts where power prevails in decision-making. His second dimension reveals how power operates through non-decisions—keeping certain issues off the agenda entirely. His third dimension exposes how power shapes preferences themselves, creating situations where dominated groups actively desire what serves dominant interests.

Applied to the Inner Development Guide framework, Lukes' analysis reveals how power operates at each dimension to constrain transformation while appearing to enable it. The framework becomes a site where visible conflicts over development priorities mask deeper operations of agenda control, which themselves obscure the most fundamental operation of power: shaping what people and organizations believe they need and want. The recent expansion to collective capabilities, rather than escaping these power dynamics, creates new terrains for their operation at each dimensional level.

This analysis matters because it reveals why even genuine commitment to capability development may serve power rather than challenge it. When individuals and organizations enthusiastically embrace the IDG framework, believing it offers a path to transformation, they may be manifesting the third dimension of power—wanting what power wants them to want. When certain capabilities are developed while others are systematically ignored, we see the second dimension at work. When conflicts over implementation are resolved in favor of existing structures, we witness the first dimension. Together, these dimensions create a comprehensive system of power that captures even sophisticated efforts at transformation.

### **First Dimension: Observable Power and Decision-Making**

#### **The Visible Politics of IDG Adoption**

The first dimension of power operates through observable conflicts where different interests compete and some prevail over others. In IDG contexts, these conflicts appear in decisions about adoption, implementation, resource allocation, and evaluation. While these conflicts may seem technical or pragmatic, they reveal fundamental power dynamics shaping what kind of development occurs and whom it serves.

When organizations decide whether to adopt the IDG framework, visible conflicts emerge between different constituencies. Progressive staff members may advocate for comprehensive implementation including radical qualities like courage to challenge structures and connectedness that questions anthropocentrism. Conservative leadership may insist on selective adoption focusing on qualities that enhance performance like systems thinking and collaboration skills. Middle managers may resist any adoption that threatens their positional authority. These conflicts, typically resolved in favor of those with formal organizational power, determine not whether development occurs but what kind of development is permitted.

Resource allocation battles reveal first-dimensional power in stark terms. A sustainability organization secures funding for IDG implementation and must decide how to allocate limited resources. Should resources go toward individual coaching for leaders or collective capability building for the entire organization? Should investment focus on developing sophisticated systems thinking or basic material security that enables any development? Should funds support internal development or network-wide capacity building? These allocation decisions, invariably influenced by those controlling resources, shape what development is possible. Typically, resources flow toward forms of development that serve existing power—leadership coaching rather than democratization, individual skills rather than collective capabilities, performance enhancement rather than structural transformation.

The evaluation and measurement of development represents another arena of visible conflict. What metrics demonstrate successful capability development? Should evaluation focus on individual behavioral change or collective structural transformation? Should success be measured by organizational performance indicators or by contribution to systemic change? These seemingly technical decisions involve power struggles between different worldviews and interests. Funders demand quantifiable returns on investment. Consultants promote frameworks that justify their services. Leaders seek metrics that validate their leadership. Workers want measures that capture their lived experience. The resolution of these conflicts—almost always in favor of those with institutional power—determines what counts as development and therefore what gets developed.

## The Battle Over Collective Capabilities

The framework's expansion to recognize collective capabilities has created new terrains for first-dimensional power conflicts. The companion essay thoroughly documents how collective properties like organizational self-awareness and distributed intelligence cannot be reduced to individual capabilities. This recognition might seem to challenge traditional power structures by suggesting that development requires structural transformation rather than just individual training. Yet examining actual conflicts over collective capability development reveals how first-dimensional power operates to contain this potentially radical insight.

When organizations attempt to develop collective capabilities, conflicts immediately emerge about what this means and how to proceed. Progressive voices argue for genuine structural transformation—flattening hierarchies, redistributing decision-making power, democratizing governance. Conservative forces insist that collective capabilities can be developed within existing structures through better coordination, communication, and collaboration. These conflicts are not merely differences of opinion but power struggles over the fundamental nature of organizational transformation.

Consider a technology company that embraces the need for collective intelligence. Engineers argue this requires open access to information, transparent decision-making, and distributed authority over technical choices. Management insists it means better knowledge management systems, more effective meetings, and improved coordination mechanisms—all within existing hierarchical structures. The conflict is resolved through management's structural power to define implementation. The company develops sophisticated knowledge-sharing platforms and collaborative tools that indeed improve collective intelligence, but only within parameters that preserve management control over strategic decisions. The collective capability is developed, but in a form that serves rather than challenges existing power.

Similar conflicts emerge around other collective capabilities. When organizations try to develop institutional courage, struggles arise between those wanting courage to challenge market imperatives versus those defining courage as bold market competition. When developing network care, battles occur between those seeking genuine mutual aid versus those promoting strategic stakeholder management. When building organizational self-awareness, conflicts emerge between those wanting honest examination of power dynamics versus those preferring comfortable assessments of team dynamics. In each case, structural power determines which version of collective capability gets developed.

## Who Funds and Why

Following the money reveals first-dimensional power in its most concrete form. The funding of IDG initiatives—whether individual or collective—involves visible decisions about what forms of development deserve resources. These decisions, made by those controlling wealth, fundamentally shape what development is possible.

Major foundations funding IDG work make strategic choices about priorities that reflect their theories of change and, more fundamentally, their position in existing power structures. A foundation endowed with corporate wealth typically funds leadership development that creates more effective executives rather than worker empowerment that might challenge corporate power. A government agency funds capability building that enhances economic competitiveness rather than capabilities for economic democracy. A corporate sponsor supports individual resilience training that helps employees manage stress rather than collective organizing that might address stress's structural causes.

Even progressive funders operate within first-dimensional power dynamics. They may genuinely support transformative capability development but require grantees to demonstrate impact through metrics that reinforce existing paradigms. They may fund collective capability building but only for organizations with established track records and professional management. They may support structural transformation but only through incremental, non-threatening approaches. These requirements, shaped by funders' own institutional constraints and worldviews, determine what kinds of capability development receive resources.

The recent proliferation of IDG initiatives has created a competitive funding environment where organizations must position their capability development work to attract resources. This competition itself becomes an exercise of first-dimensional power, rewarding those who can speak the language of power, meet the metrics of power, and promise the outcomes power desires. Organizations skilled at grant writing, impact measurement, and strategic communication secure resources, while grassroots groups developing genuine transformative capabilities through community organizing struggle for support.

## **Second Dimension: Agenda Control and Non-Decisions**

### The Power of Non-Decision Making

Lukes' second dimension reveals how power operates not just through winning conflicts but through preventing certain conflicts from arising at all. This "non-decision making" keeps threatening issues off the agenda, ensuring they never become matters for decision. In IDG contexts, this dimension is particularly powerful because it operates behind apparent openness

to comprehensive development, systematically excluding capabilities and approaches that might genuinely challenge existing structures.

The process of non-decision making is often invisible because it operates through taken-for-granted assumptions about what is relevant, realistic, or appropriate for capability development. When organizations convene stakeholders to identify development priorities, certain possibilities never enter consideration. When frameworks are designed to map necessary capabilities, some capabilities are simply absent. When implementation strategies are developed, certain approaches are dismissed as impractical before being seriously examined. This systematic exclusion happens not through conspiracy but through the normal operation of institutional and cultural filters that reflect existing power relations.

## What the Framework Cannot See

Examining what is absent from the IDG framework reveals second-dimensional power in operation. Despite its comprehensive appearance—twenty-five qualities across five dimensions—the framework systematically excludes capabilities that directly challenge power structures.

The framework does not include capabilities for collective resistance. There is no mention of organizing skills, strike capacity, boycott coordination, or civil disobedience. The ability to collectively refuse participation in destructive systems, to coordinate non-cooperation with exploitation, to disrupt business as usual—these capabilities, essential for historical transformations, are simply absent. Even courage is defined as "standing up for values" rather than organized opposition to domination.

Similarly absent are capabilities for building alternative economic structures. The framework doesn't address capabilities for creating cooperatives, establishing mutual aid networks, developing gift economies, or building commons. The ability to create economic relationships based on principles other than profit maximization and private property—capabilities that might enable genuine alternatives to capitalism—remain off the agenda. Systems thinking is present, but not the capability to build different systems.

The framework excludes capabilities for direct democracy and self-governance beyond organizational boundaries. There's no mention of consensus process, spokescouncil structures, federated decision-making, or other forms of radical democracy that might challenge representative systems. Collaboration is valued, but not the capability to make collective decisions without hierarchical authority. The inclusive mindset is promoted, but not the capability to abolish the structures that create exclusion.

Capabilities for revolutionary imagination are notably absent. The ability to envision fundamentally different worlds, to think beyond reform to transformation, to imagine postcapitalist, post-growth, post-colonial futures—these capacities for radical imagination don't appear. Long-term orientation and visioning are included, but only within taken-for-granted assumptions about what kind of future is possible. Creativity is valued, but not the creativity to imagine entirely different social arrangements.

Even the framework's expansion to collective capabilities maintains these exclusions. The companion essay analyzes collective self-awareness, distributed intelligence, and network care, but not collective resistance, organized opposition, or coordinated system replacement. Organiza-

tions are imagined developing sophisticated collective capabilities for operating within existing systems but not for transforming or replacing those systems.

## How Issues Stay Off the Agenda

The mechanisms through which these exclusions are maintained reveal the subtle operation of second-dimensional power. These mechanisms operate not through explicit prohibition but through institutional and discursive processes that make certain issues seem irrelevant, unrealistic, or inappropriate for consideration.

Professionalization serves as a powerful mechanism of exclusion. The IDG framework emerges from and operates within professional contexts—consultancies, foundations, NGOs, corporations, academic institutions. These contexts have implicit and explicit norms about what constitutes legitimate knowledge, appropriate intervention, and professional practice. Capabilities associated with radical politics, grassroots organizing, or revolutionary imagination fall outside professional boundaries. They are not explicitly rejected but simply never enter professional consideration. The very fact that capability development is framed as professional work rather than political struggle ensures certain capabilities remain off the agenda.

The language of the framework itself performs exclusions. By speaking of "development," "growth," "evolution," and "maturation," it invokes biological metaphors that suggest natural, gradual, inevitable progression. This linguistic framing makes revolutionary transformation—sudden, deliberate, structural rupture—literally unspeakable within the framework's terms. We can discuss developing courage but not organizing resistance. We can explore building systems thinking but not destroying oppressive systems. The vocabulary available shapes what can be thought and therefore what can be proposed.

Funding structures systematically filter what gets onto the developmental agenda. Foundations, governments, and corporations funding IDG work have explicit and implicit criteria that exclude threatening possibilities. They fund "capacity building" but not "power building." They support "leadership development" but not "organizing training." They invest in "social innovation" but not "revolutionary preparation." These funding filters operate as non-decision mechanisms, ensuring that certain forms of capability development never receive resources and therefore never become real possibilities.

The requirement for "evidence-based" and "measurable" outcomes excludes capabilities that resist quantification or whose effects are systemic rather than traceable. How do you measure the development of revolutionary imagination? What metrics capture the capability for collective refusal? How do you evaluate readiness for system transformation? The impossibility of satisfying measurement requirements ensures these capabilities remain off agendas dominated by evidence-based discourse.

## Organizational Implications of Absent Capabilities

When organizations adopt the IDG framework for collective capability development, second-dimensional power shapes what organizational transformation is possible. The companion essay's analysis of collective capabilities, while sophisticated, operates entirely within boundaries established by non-decision making.

Organizations developing collective self-awareness examine their patterns, cultures, and shadows, but not their fundamental complicity in oppressive systems. They develop awareness of internal dynamics but not of how they serve capital accumulation, state power, or cultural hegemony. They can see their organizational shadows but not the shadow of the system they're embedded in.

Organizations building distributed intelligence create sophisticated information flows and collaborative sense-making, but only about issues within acceptable bounds. They develop collective intelligence about markets, stakeholders, and opportunities, but not about exploitation, domination, and alternatives. They can think systemically about everything except the system itself.

Organizations cultivating network care attend to stakeholder wellbeing and partnership health, but only within existing relational structures. They develop care for those within their recognized network but not solidarity with those struggling against the systems the organization depends on. They can care for their supply chain workers but not support their organizing. They can attend to community wellbeing but not enable community control.

The absence of these more radical collective capabilities is not accidental oversight but systematic exclusion. Organizations operating within capitalist markets, hierarchical governance, and professional norms cannot develop capabilities that fundamentally challenge these structures without threatening their own existence. Second-dimensional power ensures these threatening capabilities never make it onto organizational development agendas, no matter how comprehensive those agendas appear.

## **Third Dimension: Internalized Compliance**

### **The Production of Developmental Desires**

The third dimension of power—the most insidious—operates by shaping preferences themselves so that dominated groups come to want what serves dominant interests. In IDG contexts, this manifests as individuals and organizations genuinely desiring forms of development that ultimately reinforce rather than challenge existing power structures. They don't feel coerced into capability development; they enthusiastically embrace it, believing it serves their authentic interests and values.

This preference-shaping occurs through multiple mechanisms that make certain forms of development appear naturally desirable while others seem impossible, irrelevant, or even undesirable. The result is that people and organizations actively pursue capability development that enhances their functioning within oppressive systems while never developing capabilities to transform those systems.

Consider how individuals come to desire the specific capabilities the IDG framework promotes. Through educational institutions, professional training, media representations, and cultural narratives, people learn that self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and collaboration skills are markers of development, maturity, and success. They internalize these standards and experience genuine desire to develop these capabilities. The desire feels authentic and self-generated, but it has been shaped by social processes that reflect existing power relations.

The framework's developmental stage theory intensifies this preference-shaping by creating hierarchical orderings that people internalize as natural progression. Individuals at "conventional" stages learn to see themselves as underdeveloped and aspire to qualities associated with "post-conventional" stages. They desire to become more systems-thinking, more integral, more evolutionary. This desire drives genuine effort and investment in development, but always along trajectories that the framework has already defined as legitimate. The possibility of developing in directions not mapped by the framework—toward revolutionary consciousness, collective resistance, or system refusal—doesn't even arise as desire.

## Organizational Aspiration and Self-Subjugation

At the organizational level, third-dimensional power shapes what collectives aspire to become. Through management literature, consulting frameworks, best practice examples, and peer pressure, organizations learn to desire particular forms of collective capability. They want to become "learning organizations," "Teal organizations," "evolutionary purpose-driven organizations." These aspirations feel progressive and transformative, but they operate entirely within paradigms that serve existing power.

The companion essay's thorough analysis of collective capabilities inadvertently reveals this preference-shaping. Organizations reading about collective self-awareness, distributed intelligence, and network care immediately desire these capabilities. They seem self-evidently valuable—who wouldn't want their organization to be more self-aware, intelligent, and caring? But this desire has been shaped to focus on capabilities that enhance organizational effectiveness within existing systems rather than capabilities that might challenge those systems.

An organization develops genuine desire to build collective systems thinking that helps it navigate complex markets, but not collective resistance capacity that might challenge market logic. It aspires to institutional courage that enables bold innovation, but not institutional courage to refuse participation in destructive industries. It wants network care that enhances stakeholder relationships, but not network solidarity that might support stakeholder organizing against organizational interests.

This preference-shaping is particularly powerful because it operates through positive aspiration rather than negative prohibition. Organizations aren't told they cannot develop revolutionary capabilities; they simply never develop desire for such capabilities. The entire universe of organizational aspiration is shaped toward forms of development that enhance rather than threaten existing arrangements. Even seemingly radical aspirations—becoming self-managing, purpose-driven, evolutionary—are contained within frameworks that ensure compatibility with capitalism, hierarchy, and professional norms.

## The Internalization of Developmental Imperatives

The third dimension of power operates not just by shaping what capabilities people and organizations desire but by creating internalized imperatives for perpetual development. The need to constantly develop, grow, and evolve becomes an unquestioned assumption, a moral imperative that drives behavior without external coercion.

Individuals internalize the belief that they are never developed enough. There are always more capabilities to build, more awareness to develop, more skills to master. This creates what Han

calls "auto-exploitation"—people drive themselves toward ever more intensive development without anyone forcing them. They feel guilty when not actively developing, anxious about falling behind in capability building, ashamed of their developmental deficits. The framework's twenty-five qualities become an internalized standard against which people constantly measure and find themselves lacking.

Organizations similarly internalize developmental imperatives that become Part of their identity and culture. They must be "learning organizations" that constantly evolve. They must develop ever more sophisticated collective capabilities to remain relevant. They must transform themselves to meet changing contexts. This internalized imperative drives enormous investment in organizational development, change management, and capability building. Organizations that resist this constant development are seen as stagnant, obsolete, dying. The choice appears to be develop or die, with no recognition that the entire developmental paradigm might be questioned.

The expansion to collective capabilities intensifies these internalized imperatives. Now organizations must develop not just individual capabilities but emergent collective properties. They need not just skilled individuals but collective intelligence. They require not just good leadership but distributed leadership. They must manifest not just coordination but genuine co-creation. The developmental agenda becomes even more overwhelming, the sense of deficit even more acute, the imperative for development even more internalized.

## When Resistance Becomes Unthinkable

The most profound effect of third-dimensional power is making resistance to the entire developmental paradigm literally unthinkable. People and organizations become so thoroughly shaped by developmental thinking that they cannot imagine alternatives to capability building as the path to transformation.

When faced with systemic crises, the reflexive response is to identify capability deficits and design developmental interventions. Climate change? We need better systems thinking. Inequality? We need more empathy and inclusion. Democratic breakdown? We need stronger collaboration skills. The possibility that these crises might require not capability development but structural transformation, not individual and organizational growth but systemic rupture, not evolution but revolution—these possibilities don't enter consideration because they have become unthinkable.

Even critical voices operate within developmental paradigms. They may critique which capabilities are prioritized, how development is implemented, who has access to developmental resources. But they rarely question whether capability development itself is the appropriate response to systemic oppression. They may advocate for different forms of development, more inclusive development, more radical development—but still development. The possibility of refusing development, of organizing resistance instead of building capabilities, of destroying systems rather than developing within them—these possibilities have been excluded from the realm of thinkable thought.

The IDG framework, by providing such comprehensive and sophisticated articulation of developmental possibilities, potentially intensifies this unthinkability. It offers so many capabilities to develop, so many dimensions to explore, so many levels to consider—individual and now collective—that the work of development appears infinite. There is always more to develop, always another capability to build, always a higher stage to reach. This infinite developmental

horizon ensures that energy and resources remain focused on capability building rather than system transformation.

## The Production of Compliant Capabilities

When third-dimensional power successfully shapes preferences, the capabilities that do get developed serve power even when they appear transformative. People and organizations develop genuine capabilities, experience real growth, achieve authentic development—but always in directions that reinforce rather than challenge existing structures.

Self-awareness develops, but as therapeutic self-management rather than critical consciousness about oppression. Systems thinking emerges, but as strategic analysis rather than revolutionary understanding. Compassion grows, but as individual kindness rather than collective solidarity. Collaboration skills improve, but within competitive structures rather than against them. These capabilities are real and valuable, but they have been shaped by power to serve system maintenance rather than system transformation.

At the collective level, organizations develop sophisticated capabilities that make them more effective operators within destructive systems. Collective intelligence helps them navigate market complexity rather than question market logic. Distributed leadership enables flexible response to change rather than resistance to destructive change. Network care maintains stakeholder relationships rather than enabling stakeholder rebellion. Organizational courage pursues bold strategies rather than refusing complicity. These collective capabilities represent genuine development, but development shaped by power toward compliance rather than resistance.

## The Interaction of Dimensions: Total Subsumption

The three dimensions of power don't operate independently but interact to create what might be called total subsumption of developmental possibilities within existing power structures. Observable conflicts are resolved in favor of power (first dimension) within agendas that exclude threatening possibilities (second dimension) among people and organizations whose preferences have been shaped to desire power-compatible development (third dimension).

When an organization decides to develop collective capabilities, this interaction ensures the outcome. Conflicts over what capabilities to develop are resolved in favor of performance enhancement over democratic transformation (first dimension). Capabilities for resistance, alternatives, and system change never enter consideration (second dimension). The organization genuinely desires to become a sophisticated, evolved, purpose-driven entity operating successfully within existing systems (third dimension). The result is an organization with highly developed collective capabilities that serves power more effectively than an organization without such capabilities.

The IDG framework, despite genuine intentions and sophisticated analysis, operates within this three-dimensional matrix of power. It provides language and structure for conflicts over development (first dimension) that occur within professionally bounded agendas (second dimension) among people and organizations whose developmental desires have been shaped by existing power relations (third dimension). Even its expansion to collective capabilities doesn't

escape but potentially deepens this matrix by extending all three dimensions to organizational levels.

## **Conclusion to Chapter Three**

Lukes' three-dimensional analysis reveals how power operates through the IDG framework to ensure that capability development serves rather than challenges existing structures. The framework becomes a site where visible conflicts over development mask deeper operations of agenda control, which themselves obscure the most fundamental operation of power: shaping what people and organizations want to become.

This analysis doesn't deny the genuine value of capabilities the framework identifies or the authentic desire for development it articulates. Rather, it reveals how even genuine values and authentic desires can be captured by power, channeled toward forms of development that enhance rather than transform oppressive systems. The capabilities are real, the development is genuine, the desire is authentic—but all have been shaped by power toward compliance rather than resistance.

Understanding these three dimensions of power is essential for anyone committed to genuine transformation. It reveals why capability development, however sophisticated, cannot substitute for political struggle. It explains why even organizations with highly developed collective capabilities remain trapped within destructive systems. It shows why the expansion from individual to collective development, while analytically sophisticated, doesn't escape power's constraints but potentially extends them.

The question is not whether to abandon capability development but how to develop capabilities that power doesn't want us to develop—capabilities for resistance, refusal, and system transformation that have been excluded from our agendas and desires. This requires recognizing and resisting power's operation across all three dimensions, creating conflicts over what development means, forcing excluded capabilities onto agendas, and reshaping our own preferences toward genuinely transformative rather than accommodating development. Chapter Four examines how Foucault's analysis of power as productive rather than merely repressive helps us understand the even more fundamental ways the IDG framework participates in contemporary governance.

## **4. Foucauldian Analysis - Knowledge, Power, and the Self**

### **Power as Productive Force**

Michel Foucault's analytics of power fundamentally challenges how we understand the IDG framework's operation. Rather than viewing power as repressive force that prohibits and constrains, Foucault reveals power as productive—creating knowledge, discourse, subjects, and desires. Power doesn't simply say "no" to certain forms of development; it actively produces the forms of development that serve its purposes. It doesn't merely prevent transformation; it produces particular kinds of transformation that reinforce rather than challenge existing arrangements.

This productive understanding of power proves especially relevant for analyzing the IDG framework because the framework itself is fundamentally productive. It doesn't prohibit development but actively produces it. It creates new categories for understanding human capability, new standards for measuring development, new technologies for self-improvement, and new forms of individual and collective subjectivity. The framework operates not by limiting what people can become but by actively shaping what they aspire to become and providing technologies for that becoming.

The recent expansion to collective capabilities extends this productive power to new domains. The framework now produces not just individual subjects but organizational subjects—entities that understand themselves through developmental categories, measure themselves against capability standards, and work to transform themselves through prescribed technologies. This represents an intensification rather than a mitigation of power's productive force, creating new territories for governmental intervention and new forms of collective subjectification.

Understanding power as productive reveals why the IDG framework can simultaneously appear liberating and serve governmental functions. It genuinely produces new capabilities, authentic development, and real transformation—but transformation of a particular kind that makes individuals and organizations more governable rather than more free. The framework doesn't repress human potential; it channels that potential in directions that serve contemporary governance requirements.

### **IDG as Discourse Formation**

#### **The Creation of New Truth Regimes**

Foucault's concept of discourse reveals how the IDG framework operates as more than mere ideas or recommendations. It constitutes what Foucault calls a "regime of truth"—a system that determines what can be said, who can speak, what counts as true or false, and what effects these truth claims have. The framework creates new categories of normal and pathological, developed and underdeveloped, evolutionary and stagnant that shape how individuals and organizations understand themselves and are understood by others.

The framework's twenty-five qualities become a grid of intelligibility through which human development is interpreted and evaluated. These are not neutral descriptions of pre-existing capabilities but active constructions that bring certain forms of subjectivity into being. Before the framework, people didn't lack "complexity awareness" or "perspective skills"—these categories didn't exist as specific developmental targets. The framework creates these categories and simultaneously creates the possibility of lacking them, of being deficient, of needing development.

This discourse formation operates through what Foucault calls "dividing practices"—mechanisms that separate and classify populations. The framework divides people into those with and without certain capabilities, organizations into developmental stages, collectives into evolved and conventional. These divisions appear to be based on objective assessment, but they actively produce the differences they claim to merely describe. Once classified as lacking systems thinking or collective intelligence, individuals and organizations experience themselves as deficient and requiring intervention.

The companion essay on collective capabilities extends this discourse formation to organizational domains. It creates new categories—collective self-awareness, distributed intelligence, institutional courage—that become standards against which organizations measure themselves. These categories don't describe pre-existing organizational properties but actively construct new ways for organizations to understand and experience themselves. An organization that never thought about "collective presence" or "network care" suddenly discovers itself lacking these capabilities and requiring development.

## The Normalization of Development

The IDG framework participates in what Foucault identifies as the fundamental operation of modern power: normalization. Rather than establishing absolute rules that must be obeyed, normalization creates standards of normality around which variation is distributed and toward which correction is directed. The framework doesn't command "you must develop these capabilities" but establishes these capabilities as normal, healthy, evolved—making their absence appear as deviation requiring remediation.

This normalization operates through multiple mechanisms that make developmental standards appear natural and universal rather than constructed and particular. Scientific language lends authority to the framework's categories, making them seem like discoveries rather than inventions. Research and evidence base the framework in empirical studies, suggesting its qualities are found rather than created. Global consultation processes universalize the framework across cultures, obscuring its particular origins in Western psychological and management discourse. Professional networks reinforce the framework's categories through training, certification, and practice.

The effect is comprehensive normalization where the framework's qualities become the taken-for-granted standard for human and organizational development. People internalize these standards and judge themselves against them. Organizations adopt them as performance indicators. Funders require them as outcome measures. Consultants use them as diagnostic tools. The framework becomes what Foucault calls "a normalizing judgment"—a continuous assessment that produces hierarchies of development and creates pressure toward normalization.

Even critics operate within this normalized discourse. They may argue about which capabilities matter most, how development should be measured, who has access to developmental resources—but they rarely question the fundamental assumption that development toward these capabilities is normal and necessary. The discourse has become so naturalized that alternatives become literally unspeakable. One cannot easily argue against self-awareness or systems thinking without appearing irrational or pathological.

## The Production of Developmental Knowledge

The IDG framework generates what Foucault calls "power/knowledge"—the inseparable relationship between power relations and knowledge production. The framework doesn't simply describe capabilities; it produces knowledge about them through assessment tools, research studies, case examples, and practice communities. This knowledge then justifies and enables further interventions, creating a self-reinforcing cycle where power produces knowledge that extends power.

Assessment instruments represent a crucial technology of knowledge production. Tools for measuring self-awareness, systems thinking, or collective intelligence don't simply evaluate pre-existing capabilities; they actively construct what these capabilities are and how they should manifest. The questions asked, the scales used, the indicators selected—all shape what becomes visible and therefore real. An organization assessed as having low collective intelligence doesn't just receive information; it becomes constituted as deficient in ways that require intervention.

Research on IDG implementation generates knowledge that appears neutral and scientific while serving governmental functions. Studies showing correlations between capability development and organizational performance justify further investment in training programs. Research on developmental stages provides frameworks for classifying and ranking individuals and organizations. Evaluation reports demonstrating successful interventions legitimize the framework and expand its application. This knowledge production isn't false or manipulative; it generates genuine insights while simultaneously extending governmental power.

Communities of practice around IDG implementation create what Foucault calls "subjugated knowledges"—local, particular ways of understanding that become subordinated to the framework's universal categories. Practitioners develop contextual understanding of how capabilities manifest in specific settings, but this knowledge must be translated into the framework's terms to be recognized as legitimate. Indigenous ways of knowing, alternative developmental traditions, and local wisdom become either excluded or absorbed into the framework's categories, losing their specificity and potential challenge to dominant discourse.

## Governance Through Self-Governance

### Technologies of the Self

Foucault's concept of "technologies of the self"—practices through which individuals work on themselves to achieve certain states of wisdom, purity, or perfection—provides crucial insight into how the IDG framework operates. The framework offers comprehensive technologies through which individuals and organizations can know, evaluate, and transform themselves. These technologies appear as tools for liberation and self-actualization while functioning as mechanisms of governance that produce self-regulating subjects.

Individual technologies promoted by the framework include self-assessment exercises that teach people to examine themselves through the framework's categories, reflective practices that internalize developmental standards, coaching relationships that guide transformation toward normalized capabilities, training programs that transmit techniques for self-improvement, and peer groups that reinforce developmental imperatives. These technologies don't force development but enable individuals to work on themselves in ways that produce governmental desired forms of subjectivity.

The expansion to collective capabilities extends these technologies to organizational levels. Organizations engage in cultural assessments examining themselves through collective capability lenses, strategic planning processes that internalize developmental goals, consulting relationships that guide organizational transformation, capacity building programs that transmit collective development techniques, and network communities that reinforce organizational developmental imperatives. These technologies enable organizations to govern themselves in alignment with governmental requirements while experiencing this as autonomous self-improvement.

What makes these technologies particularly powerful is their voluntary nature. People choose to engage in self-assessment, seek coaching, attend training. Organizations decide to pursue capability development, hire consultants, join learning networks. This voluntary engagement creates strong identification with developmental goals and investment in outcomes. The subject of development becomes simultaneously the object of development, governing themselves more intensively than any external authority could achieve.

## The Confession and the Examination

Foucault identifies confession and examination as fundamental technologies through which modern power operates. The IDG framework mobilizes both, creating requirements for individuals and organizations to articulate their developmental status and submit to expert evaluation.

Confession operates through the framework's emphasis on self-awareness and authentic expression. Individuals are encouraged to articulate their inner states, acknowledge their developmental deficits, and express their growth aspirations. This isn't forced confession but voluntary self-disclosure that feels therapeutic and growth-enabling. Coaching sessions become confessional spaces where people reveal their struggles with presence or inner compass. Training workshops invite participants to share their challenges with systems thinking or collaboration. These confessions don't just reveal pre-existing truths but actively produce the subjects who confess, shaping how they understand themselves and their development.

Organizations engage in collective forms of confession through cultural assessments where they articulate their shadows and limitations, stakeholder consultations where they acknowledge their impacts and failures, public reporting where they disclose their developmental progress, and strategic reviews where they confess their capability gaps. These organizational confessions produce the organization as a particular kind of subject—transparent, accountable, developmentally oriented—that can be known and governed.

Examination operates through the framework's assessment and evaluation mechanisms. Individuals submit to capability assessments that measure their development against normalized standards. Organizations undergo evaluations that judge their collective capabilities. These examinations don't simply measure existing qualities but actively produce developmental

subjects who understand themselves through the grid of examination. The examined subject internalizes the examiner's gaze, becoming self-examining, constantly assessing their own development against internalized standards.

The combination of confession and examination creates what Foucault calls "pastoral power"—a form of governance that operates through care for individual and collective development. The framework positions itself as caring for human flourishing, helping people and organizations achieve their potential. This pastoral orientation makes governance appear as service, control as support, and subjection as development. Those governing through the framework—consultants, coaches, trainers, facilitators—appear as helpers rather than authorities, guides rather than controllers, servants rather than masters.

## Disciplinary Power and Organizational Docility

Foucault's analysis of disciplinary power—the form of power that produces "docile bodies" useful for modern institutions—extends naturally to organizational contexts where the IDG framework operates. The framework doesn't simply develop capabilities; it produces particular kinds of organizations that are simultaneously more capable and more governable.

The companion essay's analysis of collective capabilities inadvertently reveals this production of organizational docility. Organizations developing collective self-awareness become transparent to governance, their internal operations visible and assessable. Organizations building distributed intelligence become more flexible and adaptive, better able to respond to market signals and policy requirements. Organizations cultivating network care maintain stakeholder relationships that ensure social license while preventing radical disruption.

These developments genuinely enhance organizational capability while simultaneously making organizations more docile—more responsive to external requirements, more aligned with governmental objectives, more integrated into systems of governance. An organization with sophisticated collective capabilities is more useful to contemporary capitalism than one without such capabilities, better able to navigate complexity while remaining fundamentally oriented toward systemic reproduction rather than transformation.

The framework achieves this through what Foucault calls "disciplinary normalization"—not forcing organizations into rigid molds but enabling them to develop along normalized trajectories. Organizations aren't commanded to become learning organizations or evolutionary purpose-driven entities; they are provided technologies for this becoming and rewards for achieving it. The discipline operates through organizational desire rather than external force, through aspiration rather than compulsion, through development rather than restriction.

## The Productive Nature of IDG Power

### Producing Subjects, Not Repressing Them

The fundamental Foucauldian insight about the IDG framework is that it doesn't repress human or organizational potential but actively produces particular forms of potential that serve governmental purposes. The framework creates new possibilities for being—self-aware, systemically thinking, collectively intelligent—that didn't exist as specific targets before its articulation. These aren't false or oppressive forms of being; they represent genuine development that people

and organizations authentically value. Yet they are forms of development shaped by and serving contemporary governance requirements.

Consider how the framework produces the subject of the "conscious change agent"—someone with developed self-awareness, systems thinking, collaborative skills, and purposeful action. This subject doesn't pre-exist the framework but is actively produced through its categories and technologies. The conscious change agent represents a genuine form of human development, capable of understanding and responding to complex challenges. Yet this is also precisely the kind of subject contemporary governance requires—self-managing rather than requiring external discipline, systemically aware rather than mechanistically thinking, collaborative rather than conflictual, purposeful rather than resistant.

At the organizational level, the framework produces "evolutionary organizations"—collectives with self-awareness, distributed intelligence, adaptive capacity, and purposeful direction. These organizations represent genuine advancement over rigid, hierarchical, mechanistic forms. They are more capable, creative, and responsive. Yet they are also precisely what contemporary capitalism requires—flexible rather than rigid, self-organizing rather than requiring central control, innovative rather than traditional, purposeful rather than merely profit-seeking. The framework produces organizational forms that serve systemic requirements while appearing to transcend them.

## The Ambiguity of Liberation

This productive power creates profound ambiguity about liberation and subjection. The capabilities the framework develops are genuinely valuable. Self-awareness does enable better life choices. Systems thinking does reveal important connections. Collective intelligence does enhance organizational capacity. People and organizations developing these capabilities experience real growth, authentic development, genuine transformation. This isn't false consciousness or manipulation but actual enhancement of human and organizational potential.

Yet this development occurs within and serves governmental frameworks that channel potential toward system maintenance rather than system transformation. The self-awareness developed is therapeutic rather than critical. The systems thinking acquired is strategic rather than revolutionary. The collective intelligence built is operational rather than oppositional. The framework produces liberation of a particular kind—liberation to become more capable subjects within existing systems rather than liberation from those systems themselves.

This ambiguity makes the framework's governmental function particularly difficult to resist. How does one argue against self-awareness or systems thinking? How does one oppose organizational learning or collective intelligence? The framework offers genuine goods that people rightfully desire. Opposition appears as opposition to human development itself rather than to particular governmental forms of development. This is the genius of productive power—it makes resistance seem like resistance to one's own flourishing.

## The Proliferation of Developmental Selves

The framework's productive power operates through proliferation rather than restriction. It doesn't establish a single model of developed person or organization but generates multiple

developmental selves and organizational forms—each genuine, each valuable, each serving governmental purposes in different ways.

At the individual level, the framework produces the mindful practitioner developing presence and awareness; the systems thinker grasping complexity and interconnection; the compassionate leader operating from care and service; the creative innovator imagining new possibilities; and the collaborative facilitator enabling collective action. Each represents authentic development, each serves different organizational and social needs, each channels human potential in governmentally useful directions.

At the organizational level, the framework produces learning organizations constantly adapting and evolving; purpose-driven organizations aligned with social values; self-managing organizations distributing authority and initiative; networked organizations collaborating across boundaries; and regenerative organizations contributing to systemic health. Each form represents genuine organizational advancement, each serves different systemic functions, each channels collective potential toward systemic reproduction rather than transformation.

This proliferation creates what Foucault calls "polymorphous techniques of power"—multiple forms of governance operating simultaneously through different developmental channels. The framework doesn't impose uniform development but enables diverse developments that all serve governmental purposes. This diversity makes the framework appear liberating and inclusive while ensuring comprehensive capture of developmental possibilities within governmental frameworks.

## **Collective Subjectification and Evolutionary Purpose**

### **The Organization as Subject**

The framework's expansion to collective capabilities represents a crucial extension of subjectification from individuals to organizations. Organizations become subjects in Foucault's sense—entities that understand themselves through particular categories, work on themselves through specific technologies, and govern themselves toward normalized goals. This organizational subjectification doesn't replace individual subjectification but adds another layer of governmental intervention.

The companion essay's detailed analysis of collective capabilities provides the discursive framework for this organizational subjectification. Organizations learn to understand themselves as possessing or lacking collective self-awareness, distributed intelligence, institutional courage, network care. They assess themselves against these categories, discover deficiencies, and undertake development. They become subjects of and subject to collective capability discourse.

This matters because organizational subjectification enables governance at new scales and intensities. Rather than governing millions of individuals separately, governmental power can operate through thousands of organizations that govern themselves and their members. Organizations become what Foucault calls "governmental relays"—intermediate points through which power flows and amplifies. They translate governmental objectives into organizational purposes, governmental categories into organizational assessments, governmental technologies into organizational practices.

## Evolutionary Purpose as Totalizing Discourse

The concept of "evolutionary purpose" that appears in advanced frameworks like Laloux's Teal organizations and implicitly in the IDG framework represents what Foucault would recognize as totalizing discourse. It presents organizational development as natural evolution toward higher forms, making current arrangements appear as temporary stages in inevitable progression toward more evolved states.

This evolutionary framing serves crucial governmental functions. It makes patience with existing systems appear as wisdom rather than resignation—we are evolving toward better forms rather than needing revolution. It makes incremental development seem sufficient—we are progressing along natural developmental trajectories rather than requiring structural rupture. It makes inequality appear temporary—organizations at different developmental stages are simply at different points in natural evolution rather than structurally positioned in hierarchies of domination.

The evolutionary metaphor also naturalizes particular developmental trajectories while excluding others. Evolution in these frameworks always moves toward greater complexity, integration, and consciousness—never toward simplification, separation, or strategic unconsciousness. It always progresses through stages of individual and organizational development—never through collective resistance, systemic refusal, or revolutionary transformation. The evolutionary purpose that emerges is always compatible with existing systems—never requiring their destruction or replacement.

Organizations embracing evolutionary purpose understand themselves as serving something beyond profit or growth, as participating in humanity's or consciousness's evolution. This provides meaning and motivation while ensuring that organizational energy goes toward capability development rather than system challenge. The organization evolves, develops, transforms—but always within trajectories that serve rather than threaten governmental requirements.

## The Intensification of Self-Management

The framework's vision of developed organizations—whether called Teal, evolutionary, or simply mature—emphasizes self-management as an ideal. Organizations should be self-aware, self-organizing, self-directing. This vision appears liberating, freeing organizations from external control and hierarchical domination. Yet Foucault's analysis reveals self-management as potentially the most intensive form of governance.

When organizations become self-managing, they internalize governmental functions rather than escaping them. They monitor themselves more continuously than any external authority could achieve. They discipline themselves more thoroughly than any supervisor could impose. They optimize themselves more relentlessly than any manager could demand. The self-managing organization becomes what Foucault calls "the entrepreneur of itself"—simultaneously sovereign and subject, governor and governed, free and controlled.

The companion essay's analysis of collective capabilities required for self-management reveals this intensification. Organizations need collective self-awareness—constant monitoring of cultural patterns and shadows. They need distributed intelligence—comprehensive information flows and analysis. They need institutional courage—willingness to disrupt themselves. They

need network care—attention to all stakeholder relationships. They need resilience—capacity to sustain through difficulties. Each capability represents additional self-governmental function the organization must perform.

This doesn't mean self-management is simply disguised control. Self-managing organizations do experience greater autonomy, creativity, and satisfaction. People working in them often feel more free, engaged, and purposeful. These experiences are genuine. Yet they occur within frameworks where freedom means freedom to govern oneself more intensively, engagement means investment in organizational purposes, and purpose means alignment with systemic requirements. The organization becomes simultaneously more free and more governed, more autonomous and more aligned, more capable and more docile.

## **The Production of Docile Organizations**

### **Useful and Compliant Capabilities**

Foucault's concept of "docile bodies"—bodies that are simultaneously more useful and more obedient—extends powerfully to organizational contexts. The IDG framework produces organizations that are simultaneously more capable and more compliant, more sophisticated and more governable, more developed and more docile.

An organization with highly developed collective capabilities is genuinely more useful to contemporary systems. It can navigate complexity more skillfully, adapt to change more quickly, innovate more creatively, collaborate more effectively. It produces more value, generates more innovation, solves more problems. These enhanced capabilities are real and valuable. Yet they are also precisely what makes the organization more useful to capitalism, more aligned with governmental objectives, more integrated into systemic reproduction.

Simultaneously, the developed organization becomes more compliant—not through external force but through internalized alignment. Its collective self-awareness makes it transparent to governance. Its distributed intelligence makes it responsive to systemic signals. Its network care maintains relationships that ensure stability. Its institutional courage operates within acceptable bounds. Its evolutionary purpose aligns with systemic evolution. The organization becomes docile not in the sense of passive or weak but in Foucault's sense of shaped, directed, optimized for systemic purposes.

This production of useful and compliant capabilities explains why even radical organizations developing IDG capabilities may find themselves increasingly integrated into systems they originally opposed. As they develop collective intelligence, they become better at understanding and navigating existing systems. As they build network care, they develop relationships that constrain radical action. As they cultivate evolutionary purpose, they adopt longer time-frames that defer transformation. The capabilities that were supposed to enable transformation instead enable more sophisticated accommodation.

### **The Paradox of Empowerment**

The IDG framework operates through what might be called the paradox of empowerment—it genuinely empowers individuals and organizations while ensuring this empowerment serves governmental purposes. People developing IDG capabilities experience real growth in agency,

capacity, and effectiveness. Organizations building collective capabilities achieve genuine enhancement of their power to act. This empowerment is not illusory but actual.

Yet this empowerment occurs within channels that direct it toward systemic maintenance rather than transformation. Individuals become empowered to manage themselves more effectively within existing structures. Organizations become empowered to operate more successfully within current systems. The framework empowers subjects to become better subjects, organizations to become better organizations, systems to function more effectively. It doesn't empower resistance to subjectification, opposition to organizational forms, or transformation of systems.

This paradox appears clearly in the framework's treatment of courage, agency, and mobilization. These capabilities seem to directly challenge power, enabling people and organizations to stand up, act autonomously, and create change. The companion essay emphasizes organizational courage, collective agency, and mobilization capacity as crucial for transformation. Yet examination reveals these capabilities are always already contained within governmental frameworks. Courage means standing up for values that align with systemic values. Agency means capacity to act within existing structures. Mobilization means organizing others toward acceptable goals.

Even when the framework promotes challenging existing structures, this challenge is contained within developmental discourse that ensures it serves governmental purposes. Organizations are encouraged to disrupt themselves, transform their cultures, evolve their purposes—but always along trajectories that enhance rather than threaten systemic functioning. They become more capable of change while becoming less capable of changing anything fundamental.

## **Conclusion to Chapter Four**

Foucault's analytics reveal the IDG framework as a sophisticated technology of contemporary governance that operates not by repressing human and organizational potential but by producing particular forms of potential that serve systemic requirements. The framework creates new categories of development, new standards of normality, new technologies of self-governance, and new forms of individual and collective subjectivity that appear liberating while ensuring comprehensive governmental capture.

The expansion to collective capabilities, rather than escaping these governmental functions, extends and intensifies them. Organizations become subjects that understand and govern themselves through developmental categories. They adopt evolutionary purposes that align with systemic evolution. They become self-managing in ways that internalize governmental functions. They develop capabilities that make them simultaneously more sophisticated and more docile, more empowered and more compliant, more transformed and more integrated into existing systems.

This analysis doesn't diminish the genuine value of capabilities the framework identifies or the authentic development it enables. People and organizations engaging with the IDG framework experience real growth, meaningful transformation, and enhanced capacity. These experiences are not false or manipulated but genuine effects of the framework's productive power. The question is not whether development occurs but what kind of development and serving what purposes.

Understanding the framework's governmental function through Foucault's lens reveals why capability development, however sophisticated, cannot substitute for political transformation of power relations. The framework produces developed subjects and organizations that serve existing systems more effectively rather than subjects and organizations capable of transforming those systems. It channels potential toward systemic optimization rather than systemic opposition. It governs through development rather than against it.

Chapter Five examines how these governmental functions play out in concrete organizational realities, analyzing specific cases where sophisticated capabilities confront structural limits and revealing patterns of how capability development serves to manage rather than resolve systemic contradictions.

## **5. Organizational Realities and Structural Limits**

### **The Gap Between Capability and Power**

The preceding theoretical analysis through lenses of Critical Management Studies, Gaventa, Lukes, and Foucault has revealed how the IDG framework operates within and reinforces existing power structures despite its transformative aspirations. This final analytical section examines how these dynamics manifest in concrete organizational realities, exploring specific patterns of how sophisticated capabilities confront structural limits and ultimately serve to manage rather than resolve systemic contradictions.

The central pattern that emerges across diverse organizational contexts is a profound disconnection between capability and power. Organizations may develop remarkable individual and collective capabilities—sophisticated systems thinking, genuine network care, authentic collaborative capacity, even the distributed intelligence and evolutionary purpose described in the companion essay—yet remain structurally powerless to create the transformations these capabilities reveal as necessary. This gap between seeing and doing, between understanding and acting, between capability and power, creates particular forms of organizational suffering and specific patterns of accommodation that deserve careful analysis.

### **The Corporate Capture of Transformation**

#### **Case Pattern: The Sustainable Corporation**

Consider a multinational corporation that has genuinely embraced sustainability and adopted the IDG framework to develop necessary capabilities. This is not a greenwashing exercise—leadership genuinely believes in sustainability, employees are deeply committed, and the organization invests significantly in capability development. Through extensive training and organizational development, the company builds impressive capabilities. Individuals develop systems thinking that grasps the interconnections between business operations and ecological systems. Teams cultivate collaboration skills enabling work across silos toward sustainability goals. The organization develops collective intelligence about its environmental and social impacts, sophisticated stakeholder engagement processes, and even begins manifesting the network care and distributed decision-making described in the companion essay.

Yet this sophisticated capability development occurs within structural constraints that fundamentally limit what transformation is possible. The corporation operates within capital markets demanding quarterly returns and continuous growth. It exists within legal frameworks mandating shareholder value maximization. It competes within industries where sustainability costs create competitive disadvantage. It depends on supply chains embedded in extractive relationships. These structural realities don't disappear because the organization develops capabilities; instead, the capabilities must operate within and ultimately serve these structures.

The result is a tragic form of sophisticated ineffectiveness. The organization can see systemically—understanding how its operations contribute to climate change, inequality, and ecological destruction. It can think long-term—grasping the unsustainability of current trajectories. It can care authentically—genuinely concerned for stakeholder wellbeing and planetary health. But it cannot act on these capabilities in ways that would threaten profitability, growth, or

competitive position. The systems thinking gets channeled into optimizing within unsustainable systems. The long-term orientation gets compressed into five-year strategic plans. The care gets expressed through corporate social responsibility programs that ameliorate but don't transform.

Employees with developed IDG capabilities experience particular forms of suffering in these contexts. They have cultivated the awareness to see what needs to change but lack the power to change it. They understand systemically but must act departmentally. They think long-term but must deliver quarterly. They care deeply but must prioritize profit. This creates what might be called "capability dissonance"—the psychological strain of possessing capabilities that cannot be fully exercised. Many respond by leaving for social enterprises or nonprofits, but these organizations often prove similarly constrained, just by different structural limits.

## The Innovation Trap

Another pattern appears in technology companies that embrace IDG principles to foster innovation and address global challenges. These organizations often develop remarkable collective capabilities—creative cultures fostering breakthrough thinking, collaborative processes enabling rapid innovation, agile structures supporting experimentation, and purpose-driven orientations toward solving world problems. They may even achieve some of the organizational evolutionary characteristics described in the companion essay—self-management, distributed authority, emergent strategy.

Yet their innovations must ultimately serve market logics that determine what problems get solved and how. The collective creativity gets directed toward marketable solutions rather than necessary ones. The breakthrough thinking must generate intellectual property rather than open knowledge. The agile experimentation must produce scalable profits rather than appropriate technologies. The purpose-driven orientation must align with venture capital expectations rather than community needs.

A social media company might develop sophisticated collective capabilities for understanding human connection and community building, yet these capabilities get deployed to maximize engagement and data extraction. A financial technology firm might build remarkable systems thinking about economic flows and inclusion, but channel this into products that deepen financialization rather than economic democracy. A health technology company might cultivate genuine care and empathy, but express this through apps that individualize structural health problems.

The tragedy is not that these organizations lack capabilities or commitment. Many are staffed by brilliant, caring people who genuinely want to address global challenges. They have developed sophisticated individual and collective capabilities far exceeding traditional corporations. But these capabilities operate within innovation ecosystems structured by venture capital, intellectual property regimes, and market dynamics that fundamentally constrain what innovations are possible and valuable. The capability development enables them to be more sophisticated servants of these systems rather than transformers of them.

# The Nonprofit Paradox

## Sophisticated Dependence

Nonprofit organizations working on sustainability and social justice often embrace the IDG framework enthusiastically, seeing it as aligned with their values and missions. These organizations frequently develop impressive capabilities—deep systems thinking about root causes, authentic care for communities and ecosystems, collaborative skills for partnership and coalition building, long-term orientation toward systemic change. They may also develop the collective capabilities emphasized in the companion essay—organizational self-awareness about their role and limitations, distributed intelligence drawing on diverse perspectives, network care maintaining relationships across difference.

Yet these sophisticated capabilities operate within structural dependencies that fundamentally constrain their transformative potential. Nonprofits depend on funding from foundations, governments, and donors whose priorities shape what work is possible. They operate within legal frameworks limiting political activity and requiring demonstration of charitable purpose. They compete for resources in philanthropic markets rewarding measurable outcomes and innovative programs. They exist within broader political economies where their role is to ameliorate problems caused by systems they cannot fundamentally challenge.

A climate justice organization might develop extraordinary systems thinking about the connections between fossil fuel extraction, colonialism, and inequality. But its funding comes from foundations whose wealth derives from the very systems causing climate change. Its legal status prohibits the kind of political organizing that might challenge those systems. Its need for continued funding requires framing work in ways acceptable to donors. The sophisticated understanding generated by capability development must be channeled into programs and campaigns that work within rather than against fundamental structures.

This creates what might be called the "nonprofit paradox"—the more capable these organizations become at understanding systemic problems, the more clearly they see their own structural limitations, yet the more invested they become in maintaining organizational survival within those limitations. The capability development that was supposed to enable transformation instead enables more sophisticated accommodation to structural constraints.

## The Service Trap

Many nonprofits respond to structural limitations by focusing on service provision—directly addressing immediate needs while advocating for systemic change. This seems to balance pragmatic help with transformative vision. Organizations develop capabilities for both service and advocacy—empathy and care for direct service, systems thinking for policy work, collaboration skills for coalition building, mobilization capacity for campaigns.

But the service trap operates precisely through this apparent balance. As organizations develop greater capabilities for service provision, they become increasingly important for managing the consequences of systemic failures. Governments depend on them to provide services abdicated by the public sector. Communities depend on them for basic needs unmet by economic systems. Funders reward them for measurable service outcomes rather than uncertain systemic change. The organization becomes what Foucault would recognize as part of the governmental

apparatus—managing populations and problems in ways that enable systems to continue functioning despite their failures.

The capability development enables this governmental function. Enhanced empathy and care make the organization better at service provision. Improved collaboration skills enable more efficient service delivery through partnerships. Systems thinking helps optimize service models. Collective intelligence enables rapid response to emerging needs. These are genuine capabilities providing real value to communities. Yet they also enable the organization to more effectively manage systemic contradictions rather than resolve them, to provide relief valves that prevent explosion rather than transformation.

## **The Movement Dilemma**

### **From Resistance to Capacity**

Social movements that begin with radical system critique often evolve toward capability development as they institutionalize and seek sustainability. The Occupy movement's evolution provides a telling example. Beginning with fundamental challenge to economic inequality and corporate power, many Occupy groups evolved into organizations focused on capability building—teaching financial literacy, developing cooperative enterprises, building community resilience. This evolution wasn't betrayal or co-optation but pragmatic response to the need to sustain work beyond protest.

The IDG framework, or similar capability-oriented approaches, often enters at this transition point, offering structure and legitimacy for the movement's evolution into capacity building. Activists develop facilitation skills for better meetings. Organizations build collaborative processes for more effective campaigns. Networks create learning systems for sharing strategies. These capabilities genuinely improve movement effectiveness in important ways.

Yet something fundamental shifts in this transition from resistance to capacity. The movement's energy gets channeled from confronting power to building alternatives within existing systems. Its focus shifts from demanding structural change to developing capabilities for navigating current structures. Its participants transform from rebels challenging systems to developers of capacity within them. The capabilities developed are real and valuable, but they serve different purposes than the resistance that sparked the movement.

This pattern repeats across diverse movements. Environmental movements evolve from blocking pipelines to building renewable energy capacity. Housing movements shift from rent strikes to developing community land trusts. Labor movements transition from workplace organizing to leadership development programs. In each case, valuable capabilities are developed, real alternatives are created, and important work continues. But the fundamental challenge to existing power structures gets transformed into capability development within those structures.

### **The Scale Problem**

Movements that maintain radical critique while developing capabilities encounter the scale problem—the mismatch between the scale of capabilities they can develop and the scale of systems they seek to transform. A movement can develop sophisticated collective intelligence

about capitalism's contradictions, but this capability remains confined to movement spaces while capitalism operates at planetary scale. It can build remarkable practices of participatory democracy, but these operate in small communities while hierarchical governance dominates at societal levels. It can cultivate profound ecological consciousness, but this exists in pockets while extractive mindsets drive global systems.

The companion essay's analysis of collective capabilities illustrates but doesn't resolve this scale problem. An organization or network can indeed develop collective self-awareness, distributed intelligence, and evolutionary purpose. But these collective capabilities remain bounded by the organization or network's limits. They don't automatically scale to societal or global levels where transformation is needed. The capability exists at one scale while power operates at another, creating sophisticated understanding that cannot translate into systemic action.

Some movements respond by focusing on "prefigurative politics"—developing capabilities and structures that prefigure desired futures. This has value in demonstrating alternatives and maintaining vision. But prefiguration can become what Bourdieu might call "the consolation of utopia"—creating satisfying alternative spaces that make current systems more bearable rather than transforming them. The capability development enables creation of alternative worlds in microcosm while leaving dominant systems intact.

## **Structural Violence Through Capability Expectations**

### **The Extraction of Capability**

The expectation that organizations should develop sophisticated capabilities while operating within severe resource constraints constitutes a form of structural violence. This violence operates precisely through the language of empowerment and development that the IDG framework employs. Organizations are told they need to develop twenty-five individual qualities and corresponding collective capabilities to address complex challenges, but they're not provided the structural conditions that would make such development possible.

Consider a community organization in a marginalized neighborhood working on environmental justice. The community faces multiple overlapping crises—pollution, poverty, police violence, displacement. The organization operates with minimal funding, volunteer labor, and donated space. Its members work multiple jobs to survive, struggle with health impacts of environmental racism, and navigate daily structural violence. Yet this organization is told it needs to develop systems thinking, long-term visioning, collaborative skills, emotional intelligence, and now also collective capabilities like distributed intelligence and network care.

The demand for capability development under these conditions is not neutral or benevolent—it's extractive. It demands that those with the least resources somehow develop the most capabilities. It requires those suffering from systemic violence to develop capabilities for navigating that violence rather than resources to escape it. It expects those excluded from power to develop sophisticated ways of operating within systems that exclude them rather than power to change those systems.

This extraction operates through multiple mechanisms. Funders require capability assessments and developmental plans as conditions for minimal support. Consultants offer capability training that consumes scarce resources while leaving structural conditions unchanged. Partner

organizations expect sophisticated collaborative capabilities despite vast power differentials. Policy makers demand evidence of capability before providing resources that would enable capability development. The organization must constantly perform developmental progress while struggling for basic survival.

## Capability as Barrier

The emphasis on capability development can become a barrier preventing marginalized organizations from accessing resources and opportunities. Grant applications require demonstration of existing capabilities—strategic thinking, evaluation capacity, financial management systems, collaborative partnerships. Organizations lacking these capabilities due to structural exclusion cannot access resources that might enable their development. Those with capabilities gain more capability-building resources while those without remain excluded—a classic Matthew effect where advantage accumulates to the already advantaged.

The companion essay's framework of collective capabilities potentially intensifies these barriers. Now organizations must demonstrate not just individual capabilities but collective properties—organizational self-awareness, institutional integrity, distributed intelligence. These collective capabilities require significant organizational development that presumes certain levels of stability, resources, and power. A grassroots organization struggling for survival cannot develop the kind of collective self-awareness described in the essay when it lacks time for reflection, space for dialogue, and stability for organizational learning.

This creates what might be called "capability credentialism"—a system where sophisticated capabilities become credentials required for legitimacy and resources. Just as educational credentials exclude those without access to education, capability credentials exclude those without access to capability development. The framework that was supposed to enable transformation becomes a sorting mechanism that reinforces existing hierarchies.

## The Reproduction of Elite Formations

### The New Developmental Aristocracy

The IDG framework, particularly as expanded to include collective capabilities, contributes to formation of what might be called a "developmental aristocracy"—organizations and networks that accumulate capability-building resources, connections, and legitimacy. These elite formations don't necessarily intend exclusion; they often genuinely commit to inclusion and equity. Yet structural dynamics create accumulating advantages that reproduce and intensify inequality.

Elite universities, major foundations, international NGOs, and successful social enterprises have resources to invest seriously in capability development. They can hire consultants, attend trainings, participate in learning networks, and experiment with organizational innovations. They develop sophisticated individual and collective capabilities that position them as leaders in sustainability and social change fields. Their capability development attracts more funding, better talent, and greater influence, creating virtuous cycles of accumulating advantage.

These organizations often become exemplars and teachers for the broader field. They write case studies, offer trainings, and provide technical assistance to less-resourced organizations. This

appears as generous knowledge sharing and capacity building. Yet it also establishes hierarchies where some organizations are positioned as developed and developing while others are positioned as underdeveloped and requiring development. The framework that was supposed to democratize capability becomes a mechanism for establishing and legitimizing organizational hierarchies.

The companion essay's analysis inadvertently provides sophisticated language for these hierarchies. Organizations can now be classified as having or lacking collective self-awareness, as manifesting or failing to manifest distributed intelligence, as achieving or not achieving evolutionary purpose. These classifications appear neutral and meritocratic—based on capability rather than traditional markers of status. Yet they create new forms of distinction that legitimate inequality. An organization with sophisticated collective capabilities appears deserving of resources and influence, while one lacking such capabilities appears deficient and requiring intervention.

## Network Effects and Closure

The development of collective capabilities often occurs through networks—learning communities, communities of practice, innovation labs, and collaborative initiatives where organizations develop together. These networks can generate powerful collective learning and mutual support. Yet they also tend toward closure—becoming increasingly exclusive as they develop shared language, practices, and standards that create barriers to entry.

Organizations already possessing sophisticated capabilities find it easier to participate in these networks. They speak the language, understand the frameworks, and have resources for participation. They benefit from network learning and connections, further developing their capabilities. Meanwhile, organizations lacking foundational capabilities struggle to participate meaningfully. They cannot afford membership fees, travel costs, or time for participation. They lack the conceptual frameworks to engage with sophisticated discussions. They feel inadequate compared to more developed participants.

Over time, these networks become what Bourdieu called "fields of cultural production"—spaces where particular forms of capital (in this case, developmental capability) are produced, exchanged, and valued. Those within the field accumulate capability capital that provides advantage within and beyond the network. Those outside remain excluded from both the capital and the advantages it confers. The network that was supposed to democratize capability development becomes a mechanism for elite formation and reproduction.

## The Consultancy Complex

The IDG framework's implementation has generated what might be called a "consultancy complex"—an ecosystem of consultants, trainers, coaches, and advisors who translate the framework into organizational practice. This complex plays important roles in disseminating knowledge and supporting development. Yet it also creates particular dynamics that reinforce rather than challenge existing power structures.

Consultants who successfully deliver IDG-related services tend to come from elite backgrounds—advanced degrees, corporate experience, professional networks. They translate the framework through their own cultural lenses and organizational experiences, often uncon-

sciously embedding assumptions about what development looks like and how organizations should function. Their services are priced for organizations with substantial resources, making sophisticated capability development accessible primarily to those who can afford it.

The consultancy complex also shapes what counts as legitimate capability development. Formal trainings, structured assessments, and professionalized interventions become the recognized means of development. Indigenous practices, grassroots methods, and community-based approaches that might develop different capabilities in different ways are marginalized as informal or unprofessional. The framework gets encoded in particular methodologies and tools that advantage those fluent in professional discourse while excluding other ways of knowing and developing.

Furthermore, the consultancy complex has material interests in maintaining the framework's importance and extending its application. Consultants benefit from organizational anxiety about capability deficits. They profit from the constantly expanding developmental agenda as individual capabilities extend to collective capabilities. They have incentives to problematize organizational functioning in ways that require their continued intervention. This doesn't require conscious manipulation—it's the structural logic of a professional field organized around capability development.

## **The Capability-Power Disconnection**

### **Sophisticated Ineffectiveness**

The most profound organizational reality revealed by examining IDG implementation is the persistent disconnection between capability and power. Organizations may develop remarkable individual and collective capabilities yet remain structurally powerless to create needed transformations. This creates a particular form of organizational suffering—sophisticated ineffectiveness—where the ability to see systemically is matched by inability to act systemically.

A global environmental organization might develop extraordinary systems thinking about planetary boundaries, tipping points, and transformation pathways. It might build sophisticated collective intelligence integrating scientific knowledge, indigenous wisdom, and community experience. It might manifest genuine network care, maintaining relationships across extraordinary diversity. Yet it remains powerless to actually transform the economic systems driving ecological destruction. Its sophisticated capabilities enable it to document collapse more precisely, model catastrophe more accurately, and articulate alternatives more eloquently—but not to prevent the collapse, avoid the catastrophe, or implement the alternatives.

This sophisticated ineffectiveness is not failure of capability but revelation of capability's limits. The organization hasn't failed to develop systems thinking; it has discovered that systems thinking alone cannot change systems. It hasn't failed to build collective intelligence; it has learned that intelligence without power remains academic. It hasn't failed to cultivate network care; it has found that care cannot overcome structural violence. The capabilities are real, valuable, and necessary—but radically insufficient without structural power to act on what they reveal.

## The Management of Contradictions

Organizations with developed IDG capabilities become sophisticated managers of systemic contradictions rather than resolvers of them. They develop capabilities for navigating the tensions between profit and purpose, growth and sustainability, competition and collaboration, efficiency and equity. These capabilities enable them to function despite contradictions, to maintain coherence despite incoherence, to sustain hope despite impossibility.

A social enterprise might develop remarkable capacity for balancing social mission with financial sustainability. Through sophisticated stakeholder engagement, innovative business models, and careful impact measurement, it manages to serve marginalized communities while generating revenue. This is genuine achievement requiring real capabilities. Yet it also normalizes the contradiction that essential social services must generate profit, that community wellbeing depends on market viability, that justice must be financially sustainable. The capability development enables the organization to manage this contradiction so effectively that the contradiction itself becomes invisible, accepted, unquestioned.

The companion essay's emphasis on collective capabilities potentially intensifies this contradiction management. Organizations develop collective self-awareness that helps them recognize their contradictions, distributed intelligence that enables navigating them, evolutionary purpose that transcends them—all while remaining embedded in systems that generate and require these contradictions. The collective capabilities become sophisticated means of living with contradictions rather than resolving them, of functioning within impossible systems rather than transforming them.

## Conclusion to Chapter Five

The examination of organizational realities reveals consistent patterns across diverse contexts. Organizations developing sophisticated individual and collective IDG capabilities encounter structural limits that prevent transformation of the systems they're embedded in. These capabilities enable more effective operation within existing structures—corporations become more sustainable without challenging capitalism, nonprofits provide better services without transforming systems that create need for services, movements build alternatives without displacing dominant systems.

This is not failure of the capabilities themselves, which are genuinely valuable and necessary. Rather, it reveals the fundamental disconnection between capability and power that the IDG framework cannot address because it operates within the very power structures that create this disconnection. The framework provides sophisticated tools for developing capabilities that help organizations navigate, adapt to, and manage systemic contradictions—but not for developing the forms of power necessary to resolve those contradictions.

The structural violence of demanding capability development from those lacking resources for it, the formation of new developmental elites who accumulate capability-building advantages, and the persistent gap between sophisticated understanding and structural power to act—these patterns reveal how capability development can serve to reinforce rather than transform existing power structures. Organizations with the most developed capabilities may become the most sophisticated servants of systems they intellectually understand must be transformed.

Understanding these organizational realities and structural limits is not cause for despair but for clarity about what genuine transformation requires. It reveals why capability development, however sophisticated and however collective, cannot substitute for the fundamental redistribution of power, resources, and structural position that would enable capabilities to serve transformation rather than accommodation. The conclusion explores what this means for those committed to genuine rather than cosmetic change.

# Conclusion: Toward a Politics of Genuine Transformation

## The Diagnostic Summary

This essay has subjected the Inner Development Guide framework to sustained critical examination through complementary lenses of Critical Management Studies, Gaventa's Power Cube, Lukes' three dimensions of power, and Foucauldian analysis of knowledge, power, and subjectivation. The diagnosis that emerges is neither simple condemnation nor cynical dismissal but rather the identification of systematic blind spots and structural limitations that may prevent the framework from achieving its transformative aspirations.

The critical analysis reveals a consistent pattern across each theoretical lens. The IDG framework, despite its genuine sophistication and authentic concern for human development, operates within and potentially reinforces existing power structures through mechanisms that remain largely invisible to both its architects and its practitioners. This is not a failure of intention but a consequence of how power operates in contemporary capitalism—co-opting even the most sincere transformative efforts and channeling them into forms that maintain rather than challenge fundamental arrangements.

Through Critical Management Studies, we observed how the framework participates in the evolution of organizational control from external coercion to internal self-governance. The qualities it cultivates—self-awareness, inner compass, systems thinking, collaborative capacity—produce subjects who govern themselves in alignment with organizational imperatives while experiencing this governance as personal growth and authentic self-expression. The individual bears an impossible burden of perpetual development, transforming what should be structural critique into personal responsibility for self-improvement. The expanded attention to collective capabilities, rather than escaping this logic, extends it to the organizational level, creating what we termed "meta-responsibilization"—holding organizations responsible for developing sophisticated collective capabilities while leaving unchanged the structural conditions that prevent these capabilities from achieving genuine transformation.

Through Gaventa's Power Cube, we mapped how the framework operates primarily within invited spaces—carefully bounded territories where reflection and development are permitted but where fundamental questioning of structures, ownership, and power remains off-limits. Visible power continues to be exercised in closed spaces where real decisions about strategy, resources, and priorities are made. Hidden power keeps certain questions—about capitalism itself, about ownership structures, about redistribution—systematically off the agenda. Invisible power shapes what feels natural, appropriate, and possible, so that even highly developed individuals and organizations come to want forms of development that serve existing arrangements. The framework largely ignores claimed spaces where genuine transformation might emerge through organizing, resistance, and the construction of counter-power.

Through Lukes' three dimensions, we analyzed how power operates through observable conflicts over development priorities (first dimension), through control over what gets decided and what remains undiscussable (second dimension), and most insidiously through shaping preferences so that people and organizations internalize developmental imperatives aligned with dominant interests (third dimension). The third dimension proves most relevant to

understanding the IDG framework's limitations—it shapes what people believe they need and want, producing alignment between individual aspirations and systemic requirements that feels authentic rather than imposed.

Through Foucault, we examined how the framework constitutes new discourses of maturity, self-awareness, conscious leadership, and evolutionary purpose that produce particular kinds of subjects suited to contemporary governance. Developmental stage theory creates new hierarchies and normalizations, distinguishing the developed from the undeveloped in ways that can reproduce existing inequalities. The confession and examination—core practices of IDG work—extend surveillance while appearing as liberation. Self-management and organizational self-governance intensify rather than reduce disciplinary pressure, creating organizations that are simultaneously more autonomous and more compliant.

Through concrete organizational examples, we revealed how even sophisticated capabilities confront structural limits that prevent transformation. Corporations with genuine sustainability commitments remain trapped within market imperatives. Nonprofits develop impressive capacities while remaining structurally dependent on systems they critique. Social movements evolve from resistance to capacity-building, their energy channeled from confronting power to building alternatives within existing arrangements. The gap between capability and power—between seeing systemically and acting systemically—creates particular forms of organizational suffering and specific patterns of accommodation that deserve recognition.

## **The Fundamental Problematic**

The analysis reveals a fundamental problematic: the Inner Development Guide framework, like many contemporary approaches to sustainability and social change, offers capability development as a response to challenges that are fundamentally about power. It provides sophisticated tools for individual and collective development while leaving unchanged the structures that determine whether and how these capabilities can be exercised. It creates highly developed subjects and organizations that remain structurally powerless to create the transformations they now understand as necessary.

This is not unique to the IDG framework but characterizes a broad category of contemporary interventions that might be termed "developmental solutionism"—the belief that developing sufficient human capabilities will enable addressing challenges that are actually about the distribution of power, resources, and structural position. Just as "technological solutionism" imagines technical fixes for fundamentally political problems, developmental solutionism imagines that developing better humans and more sophisticated organizations will address challenges rooted in who controls resources, who makes decisions, and whose interests are served by existing arrangements.

The problematic is compounded by the framework's depoliticizing effect. By framing challenges as requiring capability development rather than power struggle, the IDG framework transforms political questions into technical ones. It substitutes the question "who should have power?" with the question "what capabilities do we need?" It replaces confrontation with cultivation, redistribution with development, structural change with personal and organizational growth. This substitution is not innocent—it systematically advantages those who benefit from existing arrangements by channeling transformative energy into forms that do not threaten fundamental structures.

## **The Necessity of Politicization**

If the IDG framework depoliticizes what should remain political, genuine transformation requires repoliticizing what the framework has rendered technical. This means insisting on questions that capability development alone cannot answer.

First, it requires asking whose interests are served by the current distribution of power and resources. The climate crisis, biodiversity collapse, and social inequality that motivate the IDG framework are not merely the result of insufficient human development. They are consequences of particular arrangements of power that serve identifiable interests. Fossil fuel corporations, financial institutions, and the wealthy individuals who control them have actively prevented the transformations that developed capabilities would reveal as necessary. No amount of inner development will change this unless it is accompanied by direct confrontation with these interests.

Second, it requires asking what structural changes would be necessary for capabilities to translate into transformation. Highly developed individuals and organizations remain constrained by ownership structures, governance systems, market dynamics, and political arrangements that determine what is possible regardless of capability. A corporation cannot transcend its fiduciary duties to shareholders through inner development. A nonprofit cannot escape its dependence on foundation funding through organizational sophistication. A government cannot overcome capture by corporate interests through civil service training. Structural change—of ownership, governance, law, and political power—is necessary for capabilities to realize their transformative potential.

Third, it requires asking what kinds of collective action could create the structural changes that capability development alone cannot achieve. History suggests that fundamental transformations in power arrangements result not from the gradual development of enlightened consciousness but from organized collective action that directly challenges existing structures. Labor movements, civil rights movements, anticolonial struggles, feminist movements—all achieved structural transformation through confrontation, not merely through developing superior capabilities. The IDG framework, with its emphasis on individual and organizational development, provides little guidance for such collective action and may actually inhibit it by channeling energy into developmental work rather than organizing.

Fourth, it requires honestly examining who benefits from the framework's success and who might be harmed by its failure. The IDG framework emerges from and primarily serves constituencies in the global North and professional-managerial classes. Its success may reinforce existing hierarchies between the developed and undeveloped, creating new forms of credential-based exclusion. Its framing of development as universal obscures how different constituencies have different interests and how "development" for some may mean continued subordination for others. Genuine politicization requires centering the interests of those most harmed by current arrangements rather than assuming universal benefit from enhanced capabilities.

## **Power Redistribution as Precondition**

The critical analysis suggests that power redistribution—not capability development—is the precondition for genuine transformation. This is not to deny the value of human development

but to insist on its proper ordering. Capabilities matter, but only within structural conditions that allow their exercise. The question is not whether to develop capabilities but whether capability development without power redistribution can achieve anything beyond more sophisticated accommodation.

This reframing has significant implications for practice. It suggests that those genuinely committed to transformation should prioritize building power—organizing marginalized communities, creating counter-institutions, supporting social movements, engaging in political struggle—over developing capabilities. Where capability development occurs, it should be in service of power-building rather than as substitute for it. The relevant question becomes not "what capabilities do we need?" but "what capabilities would enhance our power to create structural change?"

Such a reframing also requires different orientations toward existing institutions. The IDG framework implicitly accepts existing organizations—corporations, nonprofits, governments—as the agents of transformation, seeking to develop their capabilities for better functioning. A power-centered approach would be more skeptical of these institutions, recognizing that many exist precisely to maintain current arrangements and cannot be transformed through development alone. It would attend more carefully to creating alternative institutions—cooperatives, commons, solidarity networks, mutual aid organizations—that embody different power relations rather than simply developing capabilities within existing structures.

Furthermore, it requires acknowledging conflict as necessary rather than regrettable. The IDG framework, with its emphasis on collaboration, dialogue, and co-creation, implicitly suggests that transformation can occur through consensual processes if only participants are sufficiently developed. But genuine transformation involves redistribution of power and resources, which creates winners and losers. Those who benefit from current arrangements will not willingly cede their position regardless of how developmentally sophisticated the request. Conflict—strategic, organized, sustained—is necessary for structural change and cannot be bypassed through enhanced capability for collaboration.

## **What Would Change**

Centering power rather than capability would transform how we approach the challenges that motivate the IDG framework. Instead of asking how to develop people and organizations for sustainability, we would ask how to redistribute power so that sustainability becomes structurally possible. Instead of training individuals in systems thinking, we would organize to change the systems. Instead of cultivating inner compass, we would build collective capacity to act on shared values. Instead of enhancing collaboration skills, we would create structural conditions where collaboration serves transformation rather than accommodation.

This does not mean abandoning human development. People engaged in power struggle also develop—often more profoundly than those in developmental programs. Organizing builds solidarity. Resistance builds courage. Collective action builds perspective-taking across difference. Political education develops systems thinking. The difference is that development becomes a byproduct and enabler of collective action rather than a substitute for it. Capabilities emerge from struggle rather than preceding it.

Nor does it mean adopting naïve voluntarism that ignores the real constraints on transformation. Power redistribution is extraordinarily difficult, opposed by powerful interests with vast

resources for maintaining their position. Existing structures have remarkable capacity to absorb, co-opt, and neutralize challenges. Social movements regularly fail, are defeated, or are captured. There is no guarantee that centering power will succeed where capability development has not.

But centering power at least addresses the actual challenge—the distribution of resources, decision-making authority, and structural position that determines outcomes regardless of individual or organizational capability. It refuses the seductive promise that sufficient development will somehow bypass the difficult work of confronting entrenched interests. It insists on the political nature of transformation and the necessity of collective action to achieve it.

## **The Paradox of Critical Analysis**

There is a paradox in this critical analysis that deserves acknowledgment. The capacities required to understand and articulate this critique—systems thinking, perspective-taking, critical reflection, the ability to see how power operates—are precisely the capacities that the IDG framework seeks to develop. The critique depends on development even as it questions development's sufficiency.

This paradox does not invalidate the analysis but rather clarifies its proper scope. The argument is not that capability development is worthless but that it is insufficient. Developed capabilities enable seeing what must be done; they do not provide the power to do it. Critical consciousness is necessary but not sufficient for transformation. Understanding how power operates does not change how power operates. At some point, analysis must give way to action—and specifically to the kind of organized collective action that creates power rather than merely developing capability.

The paradox also points toward a more nuanced relationship between development and politics. Capability development that serves power-building—that supports organizing, strengthens movements, enhances strategic capacity for collective action—is qualitatively different from capability development as substitute for political engagement. The question is always development for what and in service of whom. Development that enables more sophisticated accommodation is different from development that enhances capacity for resistance and transformation.

## **An Invitation to Praxis**

This essay concludes not with answers but with an invitation—to take seriously the limitations revealed by critical analysis and to orient practice accordingly. For those genuinely committed to addressing the crises that motivate the IDG framework, this means several things.

First, it means honest acknowledgment that capability development alone will not be sufficient. This is difficult for those whose professional identity and livelihood depend on developmental interventions. But integrity requires recognizing when our preferred approaches cannot deliver what is needed. The world does not need more sophisticated accommodators. It needs effective challengers of existing arrangements.

Second, it means connecting developmental work to power-building. Where capability development occurs, it should be in explicit service of organizing, movement-building, and political struggle. Development programs might be redesigned to include political education, organizing skills, and direct engagement with power structures. Individual coaching might orient toward supporting leaders in social movements rather than corporate executives. Organizational development might prioritize creating alternative institutions rather than optimizing existing ones.

Third, it means supporting those already engaged in power struggle. Social movements, labor unions, community organizations, and political formations that directly challenge existing arrangements deserve resources, capabilities, and solidarity. Their work is more likely to create structural change than developmental programs for those who benefit from current arrangements. Redirecting resources from corporate leadership development to movement support would be a concrete expression of these priorities.

Fourth, it means embracing conflict as necessary dimension of transformation. The preference for consensus, collaboration, and win-win solutions that pervades developmental work reflects the interests of those who benefit from existing arrangements. Genuine transformation requires willingness to create losers as well as winners, to redistribute rather than merely grow, to confront rather than merely develop. This is uncomfortable for those socialized in developmental professions but necessary for honest engagement with what transformation requires.

Fifth, it means maintaining critical reflexivity about our own position and interests. Those of us who engage in analysis and intervention are not outside the power dynamics we critique. We have professional interests, class positions, and institutional locations that shape what we can see and say. The critique offered here is also partial, limited by its own blind spots and investments. Genuine praxis requires continuous critical examination of our own complicity in the structures we claim to oppose.

## **The Stakes**

The stakes of this analysis could not be higher. We face converging crises—climate disruption, ecological collapse, social fragmentation, political breakdown—that threaten human civilization and much of life on Earth. These crises result not from insufficient human development but from particular arrangements of power that serve particular interests at the expense of collective wellbeing and planetary survival. Addressing them requires not just enhanced capabilities but fundamental redistribution of power, resources, and structural position.

If our responses to these crises are captured by existing power structures—if developmental interventions produce more sophisticated accommodators rather than effective transformers—we may find ourselves with highly developed individuals and organizations that remain structurally unable to create the changes our survival requires. The seductive promise of capability development may absorb transformative energy that should be directed toward confronting power.

Understanding how power operates through development is thus not academic exercise but urgent practical necessity. It enables us to work more skillfully, to avoid the traps of co-optation and accommodation, and to orient practice toward what transformation actually requires. It clarifies that the challenge is not developing better people but building power sufficient to create structural change.

This recognition is not cause for despair but for clarity. It reveals the actual work that needs to be done and liberates us from the fantasy that sufficient development will somehow bypass the difficult necessity of political struggle. It honors the genuine contributions of developmental work while insisting on their proper ordering. It invites us toward the difficult, necessary work of building power for transformation.

The Inner Development Guide framework identifies real capabilities that genuinely matter. But capabilities alone will not save us. Only power—organized, strategic, confrontational power wielded by those committed to structural transformation—can create the changes our survival requires. The invitation is to move from development to struggle, from capability to power, from accommodation to transformation. The future depends on whether enough of us accept this invitation.

## Appendix

# Strategic Recommendations for the Inner Development Guide Initiative: Toward a Power-Conscious Approach to Human Development

## A Critical Friend's Perspective

*These recommendations emerge from sustained critical engagement with the IDG framework through lenses of Critical Management Studies, power analysis (Gaventa, Lukes), and Foucauldian thought. They are offered in the spirit of what might be called "critical friendship"—recognizing the genuine value and sincere intentions of the initiative while insisting on engagement with dimensions the current framework systematically obscures.*

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## Preamble: The Nature of These Recommendations

I write as someone who has subjected the IDG framework to rigorous critical analysis and found it wanting in specific, identifiable ways—not because it lacks sophistication or sincerity, but because it operates within assumptions about development and change that may prevent it from achieving its stated aims. The framework identifies real capabilities that genuinely matter for addressing complex challenges. But capabilities alone, however sophisticated, cannot create transformation without attention to the power dynamics that determine whether and how capabilities can be exercised.

These recommendations do not ask the IDG initiative to abandon its core work but to expand it—to complement capability development with explicit attention to power, to recognize the political nature of transformation, and to position developmental work within a broader strategy that includes confronting rather than merely accommodating existing structures.

I am aware that some of these recommendations may seem to exceed the initiative's mandate or expertise. This is intentional. The critique suggests that staying within conventional boundaries of "development work" ensures the initiative will achieve sophisticated accommodation rather than genuine transformation. Expanding the mandate is not mission creep but mission fulfillment.

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## Part I: Foundational Reorientations

### Recommendation 1: Make Power an Explicit Dimension of the Framework

**The Problem:** The current framework identifies five dimensions—Being, Thinking, Relating, Collaborating, and Acting—but power appears nowhere as an explicit category. This absence

is not neutral. It reflects and reinforces the depoliticizing tendency that renders the framework safe for adoption by organizations that benefit from existing arrangements.

**The Recommendation:** Add a sixth dimension explicitly addressing power—the capacity to analyze how power operates, to build collective power, and to exercise power strategically for transformation. This dimension might include qualities such as:

- **Power literacy:** The ability to identify how visible, hidden, and invisible power operates in any given context
- **Structural analysis:** The capacity to see how institutional arrangements, ownership structures, and governance systems shape what is possible regardless of individual capability
- **Organizing capacity:** Skills for building collective power through movement-building, coalition formation, and strategic alliance
- **Strategic confrontation:** The ability to challenge existing arrangements directly when necessary, accepting conflict as a legitimate dimension of change
- **Counter-institution building:** Capacity to create alternative structures that embody different power relations

**Implementation:** This would require developing new assessment tools, training materials, and practitioner guidance. It would also require acknowledging that some current partners and funders may resist this reorientation because it threatens their interests.

## Recommendation 2: Distinguish Accommodation from Transformation

**The Problem:** The current framework does not distinguish between development that enables more sophisticated functioning within existing systems and development that enables challenging and changing those systems. This conflation allows organizations to claim developmental success while achieving only enhanced accommodation.

**The Recommendation:** Develop explicit criteria for distinguishing accommodative from transformative development, and make this distinction central to how the framework is applied and evaluated.

Accommodative development produces individuals and organizations that:

- Function more effectively within existing structures
- Experience less friction with dominant systems
- Achieve success as currently defined by those systems
- Manage contradictions rather than resolve them

Transformative development produces individuals and organizations that:

- Challenge existing structures and create alternatives
- Experience productive friction with dominant systems
- Redefine success in terms that may conflict with current arrangements
- Work to resolve contradictions through structural change

**Implementation:** Assessment tools should explicitly distinguish these orientations. Case studies and exemplars should highlight transformative rather than merely accommodative

applications. Success metrics should include evidence of structural change, not just capability enhancement.

### Recommendation 3: Center the Marginalized Rather Than the Privileged

**The Problem:** The framework emerges from and primarily serves constituencies in the global North and professional-managerial classes. Its language, concepts, and applications reflect these origins. This creates several problems: it may impose culturally specific notions of development as universal; it concentrates developmental resources among those who already have most; and it may reinforce hierarchies between the "developed" and "undeveloped."

**The Recommendation:** Deliberately center the interests, perspectives, and leadership of those most marginalized by current arrangements. This means:

- **Governance transformation:** Ensure that those most affected by the crises the framework addresses—frontline communities, global South populations, indigenous peoples, working-class communities—have genuine decision-making power in the initiative's governance, not merely consultation
- **Resource reallocation:** Redirect resources from corporate leadership development and elite institutions toward community organizing, social movements, and grassroots formations
- **Epistemological humility:** Recognize that marginalized communities often possess sophisticated understanding of power dynamics and survival strategies that the framework's current formulation lacks
- **Accountability reversal:** Make the initiative accountable to those at the margins rather than to funders and professional partners

**Implementation:** This requires fundamental changes to the initiative's governance, funding model, and partnerships. It will be uncomfortable for current stakeholders. This discomfort is diagnostic—resistance to centering the marginalized reveals how current arrangements serve existing privilege.

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## Part II: Strategic Redirections

### Recommendation 4: Connect Capability Development to Power-Building

**The Problem:** The current framework treats capability development as valuable in itself, without asking what these capabilities are for or in whose service they operate. This abstraction allows developmental work to serve any master—including those whose interests oppose transformation.

**The Recommendation:** Explicitly connect all capability development to power-building for transformation. Every developmental intervention should answer the questions: How does this build power for those currently marginalized? How does this enhance capacity for structural change? How does this strengthen movements for transformation?

This means:

- **Movement orientation:** Design developmental programs in partnership with and in service of social movements—labor, environmental, racial justice, feminist, indigenous rights movements
- **Organizing integration:** Integrate organizing skills and political education into all developmental work, so that enhanced capabilities translate into enhanced collective power
- **Strategic clarity:** Help participants identify who benefits from current arrangements, what structural changes are necessary, and what strategies might achieve them
- **Solidarity building:** Use developmental work to build relationships across difference that can sustain collective action

**Implementation:** This requires new partnerships—with organizers, movement leaders, and political formations rather than only coaches, consultants, and corporate sponsors. It requires redesigning programs to include explicit power analysis and organizing components. It requires accepting that some current partners will withdraw because this orientation threatens their interests.

## Recommendation 5: Support Claimed Spaces, Not Just Invited Ones

**The Problem:** The framework operates primarily within what Gaventa calls "invited spaces"—forums created by those with power where participation is permitted within careful boundaries. Genuine transformation more often emerges from "claimed spaces"—arenas that marginalized groups create through their own organizing, where they set the agenda and define the terms.

**The Recommendation:** Redirect resources and attention toward supporting claimed spaces rather than proliferating invited ones.

This means:

- **Supporting autonomous organizing:** Fund and resource community organizing, movement building, and grassroots formations that operate outside established institutional channels
- **Protecting space for resistance:** Defend the right to protest, organize, and resist—including against partners and funders of the initiative itself
- **Refusing co-optation:** Resist efforts by powerful institutions to use the framework to manage or channel dissent into safe developmental programs
- **Creating counter-institutions:** Support the development of alternative economic, political, and social structures—cooperatives, commons, solidarity networks—that embody different power relations

**Implementation:** This requires the initiative to position itself in tension with some established institutions rather than seeking their approval. It requires accepting that genuine transformation work may be less fundable, less professionally prestigious, and more conflictual than conventional development work.

## Recommendation 6: Embrace Conflict as Necessary

**The Problem:** The framework emphasizes collaboration, dialogue, co-creation, and constructive engagement. These orientations implicitly suggest that transformation can occur through

consensual processes if participants are sufficiently developed. But genuine transformation involves redistribution of power and resources, which creates winners and losers. Those who benefit from current arrangements will not willingly cede their position regardless of developmental sophistication.

**The Recommendation:** Explicitly acknowledge conflict as a necessary and legitimate dimension of transformation, and develop capabilities for strategic confrontation alongside capabilities for collaboration.

This means:

- **Conflict literacy:** Help participants understand when collaboration serves transformation and when it serves accommodation—and develop capacity to engage in strategic conflict when necessary
- **Power mapping:** Teach systematic analysis of who benefits from current arrangements, who opposes change, and what strategies might overcome their resistance
- **Campaign skills:** Develop capabilities for running campaigns that apply pressure to decision-makers—including confrontational tactics like boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, and public shaming
- **Resilience for struggle:** Support the emotional and psychological capacities needed to sustain long-term engagement with conflictual change processes

**Implementation:** This represents a significant expansion of the framework's scope and may alienate partners and funders who prefer consensual approaches. This alienation is informative—it reveals the limits of what can be achieved within comfortable developmental frames.

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## Part III: Practical Modifications

### Recommendation 7: Develop Power-Focused Assessment Tools

**The Problem:** Current assessment approaches focus on individual and organizational capability without examining the structural conditions that shape whether capabilities can be exercised. This produces evidence of developmental success that may mask continued structural powerlessness.

**The Recommendation:** Develop assessment tools that examine:

- **Structural position:** How has the individual's or organization's position in relevant power structures changed?
- **Collective power:** What capacity for collective action has been built?
- **Institutional change:** What structural changes have occurred as a result of developmental work?
- **Opposition encountered:** What resistance from powerful actors has been provoked? (Absence of opposition may indicate accommodation rather than transformation)
- **Resource redistribution:** Have resources actually moved from privileged to marginalized constituencies?

**Implementation:** This requires developing new assessment methodologies, likely in partnership with scholars and practitioners experienced in power analysis and movement evaluation. Success metrics should include evidence of structural change and opposition encountered, not just capability enhancement and stakeholder satisfaction.

## Recommendation 8: Create Transparency About Co-optation Risks

**The Problem:** The framework currently lacks explicit analysis of how developmental initiatives get co-opted by the interests they should be challenging. This silence allows co-optation to proceed unexamined.

**The Recommendation:** Develop and disseminate explicit analysis of co-optation mechanisms and warning signs. Help practitioners recognize when:

- Developmental work is substituting for structural change
- Organizations are using the framework for reputation management without substantive transformation
- Capabilities are being developed in service of accommodation rather than transformation
- Resources are flowing to privileged constituencies while marginalized ones remain excluded
- Conflict is being avoided when it should be embraced
- The framework is being used to manage rather than support genuine movements for change

**Implementation:** Create practitioner guides, case studies, and training materials explicitly addressing co-optation dynamics. Establish mechanisms for practitioners to flag and discuss co-optation concerns. Accept that some organizations will discontinue their association with the framework when these dynamics are made explicit.

## Recommendation 9: Establish Structural Conditions for Practitioner Integrity

**The Problem:** Practitioners operating within the framework face structural pressures—from employers, funders, clients—to deliver accommodative rather than transformative work. Individual integrity cannot overcome structural incentives.

**The Recommendation:** Create structural conditions that support practitioner integrity:

- **Alternative funding streams:** Develop funding sources not dependent on corporate or foundation philanthropy that might constrain transformative work
- **Practitioner solidarity:** Build networks of practitioners committed to transformative application who can support each other in resisting co-optation pressures
- **Transparent practice norms:** Establish explicit norms about what practitioners should and should not do, including willingness to decline engagements that would serve accommodation rather than transformation
- **Accountability structures:** Create mechanisms for practitioners to be accountable to marginalized communities, not only to paying clients

**Implementation:** This requires institutional innovation—creating new organizational forms, funding mechanisms, and accountability structures. It may require the initiative to accept reduced scale in favor of increased integrity.

## Recommendation 10: Politicize the Initiative's Own Governance and Funding

**The Problem:** The initiative's current governance and funding arrangements likely reflect the very power dynamics the framework should help participants see and challenge. This creates a performative contradiction that undermines credibility.

**The Recommendation:** Subject the initiative's own structures to the same critical analysis it recommends for others:

- **Governance audit:** Who actually makes decisions? Whose interests are represented? Who is excluded?
- **Funding analysis:** Where does money come from? What strings are attached? Whose interests does the funding model serve?
- **Structural transformation:** Make changes to governance and funding that embody the power redistribution the framework should support

This might mean:

- Moving to governance structures controlled by marginalized communities rather than professional experts and funders
- Refusing funding from sources whose interests oppose transformation (fossil fuel companies, extractive industries, financial institutions that profit from inequality)
- Developing alternative funding models (membership dues, community investment, public funding) that don't create dependence on problematic sources
- Establishing transparent accountability to movements for transformation

**Implementation:** This is perhaps the most challenging recommendation because it requires those currently holding power within the initiative to cede it. Resistance to this recommendation from within the initiative would be diagnostic of the dynamics the critical analysis reveals.

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## Part IV: Strategic Positioning

### Recommendation 11: Position the Framework as Necessary But Insufficient

**The Problem:** The framework is currently positioned as if capability development were sufficient for addressing complex challenges. This positioning sets unrealistic expectations and obscures the necessity of power struggle.

**The Recommendation:** Explicitly position capability development as necessary but insufficient—as one component of a broader strategy that must also include organizing, movement-building, and direct confrontation with power.

This means:

- **Honest communication:** Acknowledge clearly and publicly that capability development alone cannot create transformation
- **Strategic humility:** Position the framework as serving broader movements for change rather than as a complete solution
- **Alliance orientation:** Actively seek alliance with organizing traditions, social movements, and political formations that pursue structural change
- **Complementary positioning:** Identify what the framework can and cannot contribute, and support other approaches for what it cannot do

**Implementation:** This requires a communication strategy that is honest about limitations—which may reduce appeal to organizations seeking quick solutions. This reduction is appropriate; organizations unwilling to engage with the framework's actual scope and limits are unlikely to use it transformatively.

## Recommendation 12: Develop Theory of Change That Includes Power

**The Problem:** The implicit theory of change underlying the framework is that developing sufficient capability will enable addressing complex challenges. This theory is inadequate because it ignores how power determines whether capabilities can be exercised.

**The Recommendation:** Develop an explicit theory of change that:

- Identifies the structural conditions that must change for sustainable transformation
- Analyzes the power dynamics that maintain current arrangements
- Specifies what kinds of collective action might shift those dynamics
- Positions capability development within this broader change strategy
- Establishes clear hypotheses about how the framework contributes to structural change (not just capability enhancement)

**Implementation:** This requires serious strategic thinking in partnership with those experienced in power analysis and social movement strategy. The resulting theory of change should be public, subject to critique, and updated based on evidence.

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## Concluding Reflections

These recommendations ask a great deal of the IDG initiative—perhaps more than any single initiative can deliver. They ask for fundamental reorientation, uncomfortable confrontations with existing partners and funders, and willingness to operate in ways that may reduce prestige, resources, and professional approval.

I offer them not because I expect full implementation but because they reveal what genuine engagement with power dynamics would require. Partial implementation would be valuable; full implementation would be transformative. The degree to which these recommendations are adopted—or resisted—will itself be informative about the initiative's actual relationship to power.

The recommendations also implicitly pose a question: Is the IDG initiative willing to become genuinely transformative, with all the difficulty and conflict that entails? Or will it remain a sophisticated form of developmental work that helps people and organizations accommodate more skillfully to arrangements that should be challenged and changed?

This is not a rhetorical question. The answer is not predetermined. Initiatives can evolve, can be pushed by their own participants and partners toward more transformative orientations. The critical analysis I have offered is intended not to condemn but to create possibilities for such evolution.

The crises we face—climate disruption, ecological collapse, inequality, political breakdown—are not developmental problems requiring enhanced capability. They are power problems requiring redistribution and structural change. If the IDG initiative can orient itself toward these actual challenges, it might contribute to genuine transformation. If it remains within conventional developmental frames, it will produce more sophisticated accommodators while the crises deepen.

I hope for the former. These recommendations indicate what it would require.

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*Submitted in critical solidarity,*

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