

MARXISM AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: AN INTRODUCTION

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A Case for a Marxist Revival?

This book starts from a paradox.

On the one hand, Marxism is a body of theory that developed from and was crafted for social movements. The work of Marx and Engels represents a distillation of the experiences, debates, theories and conflicts faced by the popular movements of the nineteenth century, that sought in turn to contribute to those movements' further development. Subsequent developments of Marxist theory in the twentieth century were intimately linked to the development of oppositional political projects across the globe, ranging from revolutionary struggles against imperialist wars and capitalism itself to anti-colonial movements and the emergence of new forms of popular assertion in the post-WWII era.

On the other hand, if the main figures of 'classical Marxism' all *used* the term 'movement', none seems to have developed any explicit theorization of the term. Moreover, while Marxists have produced ground-breaking studies of specific movements, they have apparently not produced an explicit 'theory of movements' – that is, a theory which specifically explains the emergence, character and development of social movements. Nor have they explored how the concept of 'movement' might be interwoven with other foundational concepts in Marxist theory like class struggle, hegemony and revolution or human species being, alienation and praxis.

There is, in short, a distinct lack of work – scholarly or activist - devoted to thinking through what an integrated Marxist theory of social movements might look like, and what its impact on Marxist theory itself might be. This situation is compounded by the fact that mainstream social movement theory – whether it emerges from American or European academia – consistently avoids debate with Marxist perspectives, although they constitute by some margin the largest alternative body of research on popular movements. Instead, what can only be described as caricatures or straw-man versions of Marxist theory are as widespread in scholarship as in some forms of anti-Marxist activism.

This is, we believe, detrimental for those scholars who are interested in pursuing what Bevington and Dixon have called ‘movement-relevant research’¹ – research that is attuned to and addresses the knowledge interests of activists, as opposed to merely scholastic dissections of the character and dynamics of collective action – and especially for activists concerned with the progressive development of their oppositional political projects. The present time is increasingly starting to look like one of those decisive moments in history when ‘a chain reaction of insurrections and revolts’ give rise to ‘new forms of power ... in opposition to the established order, and new visions of the meaning of freedom [are] formulated in the actions of millions of people’.²

For the current conjuncture is saturated with protest, with massive demonstrations and sometimes armed conflict erupting across North Africa and the Middle East, Europe and Latin America, with significant echoes elsewhere. It seems appropriate, therefore, to ask whether there are significant connections between these eruptions of popular protest. Large numbers of those actively participating, from Cairo to Athens, from New York to Santiago, think there are. And the connections they draw concern a combination of austerity, rising inequality, dispossession of rights and entitlements and a democratic deficit which enables the imposition of all these by tiny elites, against a background of the world economy’s biggest crisis since the 1930s.

There is, in short, ‘a system’ against which so many of today’s protests are pitched, even if they are not articulated solely, or even at all, in the language of ‘class’. Yet, there seems to be little recognition of this in contemporary literature on social movements. Indeed, as Gabriel Hetland and Jeff Goodwin document in their contribution to this volume, the very term ‘capitalism’ has largely disappeared from contemporary social movement theory. Does this mean that social movement scholars must always treat these struggles as discrete and disconnected instances of protest? Or should we perhaps try to understand these protests as a ‘wave’ or an upswing in a ‘cycle of contention’, and to trace the mechanisms of their regional and even global ‘contagion’? If we did, it would seem odd, at the very least, not to inquire if the world capitalist system is not somehow responsible for generating them.³

Marxism, as an integrating perspective on social relations, does at least have the merit of being able to pose such questions. It does also invite us to think about a number of matters of some significance. How are crises linked together? What potentials are there

¹ Bevington and Dixon 1995.

² Katsiaficas 1987, p. 6.

³ Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989.

for movements from below to learn and gain strength from each other? How are ‘movements from above’, as Alf Gunvald Nilsen and Laurence Cox suggest in their chapter, attempting to restore or extend the social power of ruling elites in the face of these crises? If movements from below were to succeed in some sense, what kinds of demands ought they to raise, who should they be seeking to mobilize, and how, and what kinds of organizations should they be trying to develop? Were they to succeed, what would success look like?

Such questions arise fairly naturally from a Marxist perspective, and potentially connect more closely with the concerns of movement participants than does much of contemporary academic social movement theory. However, the task still remains to develop a specifically *Marxist theory* of social movements. We do not claim to address this task in its entirety in this volume, but we do seek to identify and fill out some of the gaps, and to start the intellectual and political working-through which is clearly called for.

Marxism and Mainstream Movement Theory: Never the Twain Shall Meet?

If social movement theorists no longer seem to engage seriously with Marxism, this was not always the case. We can, cautiously, identify two patterns emerging in the 1970s and early 1980s. The story is fairly familiar.

In the USA, one outcome of the struggles of the 1960s was that academic theorists sought to construct an alternative to ‘collective behaviour’ accounts of popular protest. Liberals and leftists, who had participated in or at least sympathised with the Civil Rights Movement, the student movement or the opposition to the American war in Vietnam, rejected the predominant ‘collective behaviour’ case that movements were, bluntly, ‘irrational’ in their motivations. Marxism was one intellectual resource where some correctives to this dismissal could be found.⁴

Charles Tilly’s work of the late 1970s and early 1980s was crucially informed by and explicitly developed in dialogue with Marxist analysis. In *From Mobilization to Revolution*, for example, the relation he posited between ‘groupness’ and the capacity to protest

⁴ It was not the only possible resource. Some founders of ‘Resource Mobilization Theory’ were so focused on establishing the rationality of protest that, as Charles Perrow 1979, p. 202, quipped in an early critique, they ‘removed Freud, but replaced him not with Marx or Lenin but with Milton Friedman.’ We note, too, that in this collection of influential essays on resource mobilization, this is the only reference to Marx or Marxism. Nor is this unusual: a recent, widely read reader on social movements by Goodwin and Jasper 2002 contains no references to Marx or Marxism at all, as does a well-regarded work on social movements and culture by Johnston and Klandermans 1995. This is typical of collections by major scholars in the field: any mention of Marxism is often dismissive or cursory.

closely mirrors discussions within Marxist circles about the ways that urbanisation and workplace concentration enable proletarian organisation. In *The Contentious French*, his insistence that 'repertoires of contention' - i.e., routine ways of acting collectively - are linked to the realities of everyday existence would also be familiar to anyone conversant with Marxist cultural analysis, and more specifically the work of British and French Marxist historians. Doug McAdam's influential *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, also sought to incorporate crucial Marxist insights about the potentials for self-organization of the powerless. Sidney Tarrow's work in the 1980s discussed a milieu of crisis and tumult of Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, where Marxisms were being actively debated; and his classic *Power in Movement* used Marx, Lenin, and Gramsci as opening figures in order to frame the key questions facing analysts of social movements (for example, the relationships among large-scale social change, strategy, and symbolic and organizational struggle).⁵

More recently, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly argued for a re-formatting of theory by insisting that movements are but one *form* of 'contentious politics', and seeking to reintegrate revolutions, strikes, and other forms of contention within a more general formal political sociology; one motivating impulse has been a recognition that existing research paradigms have forgotten a key concern at the heart of Marxist theory – that is, the relation of parts to wholes.⁶ Social movement theory, it seems, has taken the long route around to arrive at the Marxist commonplace that everyday resistance, popular movements and revolutionary situations are not utterly separate, but that one can at times turn into the other.

In mainland Europe, where Stalinism and dissident Marxisms were still quite dominant on the Left, both engaged writers like André Gorz, Alain Touraine or Rudolf Bahro and academics like Alberto Melucci – who championed 'New Social Movements' (NSMs) – took a great deal from the general framework of Marxist analysis, aiming to refashion it for what they understood as the fundamentally changed macro-historical circumstances of developed welfare-state capitalism or 'post-industrial' society.⁷ In the wake of the events of 1968 and the rise of feminist, ecological and peace movements through the 1970s a growing chorus of authors came to argue that structural changes in society, politics and economy were displacing 'the working class' as a key actor in social transformation, and that new kinds of issues and of actors alike were emerging to contest the future shape of society. The defeats experienced by 'organized labour' in the

⁵ Tilly 1978 and 1986; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1989 and 1994.

⁶ McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2002.

⁷ Gorz 1973; Touraine 1981; Bahro 1985; Melucci 1989.

later 1970s and 1980s, and the increasingly conservative face of Stalinist and social democratic parties and their associated trade union hierarchies, contributed to the appeal of such approaches.⁸

Closely related to this trend, in the English-speaking world, was the argument that 'class politics' had been replaced by 'identity politics' – that is, a politics centred on the assertion of subjugated identities and differences based on race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality as opposed to the class-based interest politics of yesteryear.⁹ As the 1980s and 1990s proceeded, this argument was increasingly shaped by the institutionalisation of much of the women's movement, along with gay liberation, black and other ethnic minority organisations within the legal system, the Labour and Democratic parties, and radical academia - and by the specifically Anglophone 'culture wars' initiated by the Thatcherite and Reaganite right, which sought to mobilise against these movement gains.

One result of these various developments has been a narrowing of the understanding of movements and their place in large-scale processes of social change. Playing down the larger picture of global power relations and the shifting character of socio-economic policy also meant ignoring the role of grievances generated by these larger-scale changes. Labour movements were, to be sure, rather quiescent, but theorists did not try to explain this historically or to ask how long it would last, given the scale of the onslaught on jobs, wages and conditions. Significant parts of 'the social movement as a whole' were, if not actually written off, certainly sidelined.

Academic and activist thinking narrowed its interests. The field could be narrowly delimited, so that both large-scale and micro-scale processes alike fell out of view.¹⁰ The result was a historical provincialism in which past struggles from below, and the reshaping of social relations from above, were alternately denied or assumed to be a feature *only* of the past. The present, it could be assumed, would remain without history.

This problem is also evident in the analytical severing of links between everyday forms of subaltern self-assertion and 'world-historical movements'¹¹ capable of effecting systemic transformations. In studies of revolutions, major studies like those by Skocpol, Tilly and Goodwin all showed little interest in the 'social movement' aspect of their development,

⁸ For a critical review of some of these, see Barker and Dale 1999.

⁹ Calhoun, 1993; Ross, 1989; Nicholson and Seidman, 1995; Young, 1990; Harvey, 1996.

¹⁰ See Harvey 1996.

¹¹ Katsiaficas 1987.

i.e. in the actual and potential role of popular self-activity in shaping their development.¹² However, the kinds of micro-scale cultures and practices of everyday resistance documented by a Paul Willis or a James C Scott equally fell out of the field of movement studies as ‘someone else’s problem’.¹³ If the ‘working class’ was largely written off, there was not much point in exploring the nitty-gritty of actual forms of current worker resistance as part of ‘social movement’ concerns. It could be left to ‘labour process’ specialists, along with strikes and forms of workshop resistance. This fragmentation was celebrated by Foucauldians and in cultural studies, where everyday resistance was valued but the prospect that it might escalate to something producing substantial structural *change* was anathema. At its worst, social movement studies could become what Touraine called a ‘natural sociology of [movement] elites’¹⁴, adequate to understand the routine operations of movement establishments - how NGOs seek to position themselves within the US media or the EU’s institutional labyrinth, for example - but with no ability to explain how and why these situations are reshaped and transformed.

The risk in all this is of a great impoverishing of sociological and political imaginations, a falling back from the kind of vision that enabled, say, the English historian E P Thompson to detect and decode emerging and developing forms of popular struggle in phenomena as varied as 18th century market riots, fence-breaking, poaching or ‘rough music’, that enabled Charles Tilly – in an extended dialogue with Thompson’s work – to locate a wholesale shift in the repertoires of struggle in the early decades of the 19th century, or that enabled Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker to show how the everyday resistance of sailors and slaves could form the ingredients of strikes, rebellions and revolutions which shook the Atlantic world.¹⁵

The parcelling out of trade unionism and strikes to ‘labour studies’ or ‘industrial relations’, of everyday resistance to ‘cultural studies’, or of revolutions to a specific branch of political science, ignores the ways that strikes may play crucial roles in social movements even today, that social movements draw on resistance ingrained in everyday modes of survival and coping, and that strikes, local cultures of resistance and social movements may indeed, as David McNally’s chapter indicates, play a part in popular revolutions. There is no place in this fragmented theory for the kind of coming together

¹² Barker 2009.

¹³ Willis 1977; Scott 1990.

¹⁴ Touraine 1985.

¹⁵ Thompson 1991; Tilly 1986; Linebaugh and Rediker 2002.

of popular struggles that we have seen across South America in the past decade or which we are currently seeing in many parts of the Arab world.

Politically, what is at risk is the ability to unearth ‘how struggles in different socio-spatial arenas and across spatial scales might link with one another’.¹⁶ David Harvey has argued strongly that the postmodern preoccupation with the particularity and singularity of resistance occludes the ways in which ‘militant particularisms’ are linked to wider social totalities. This preoccupation weakens any analytical and political ability to join the dots between the specific, concrete conflicts that social movements are embroiled in, and to see how they may ‘shift gears, transcend particularities, and arrive at some conception of a universal alternative to that social system which is the source of their difficulties’.¹⁷

Indeed, moving away from Marx has taken modern social movement theory away from the kinds of conversations in which its progenitors had found inspiration, and which still maintain some life within fields such as labour history. Social movement theory risks losing not only a sense of ‘the big picture’ and especially its economic aspects, but also a sense of ‘ordinary’ people’s potential to make their own history, to form and nurture oppositional cultures, and to contest – and of course sometimes to succumb to or support - dominant ideological and organizational ways of interpreting and acting in the world.

Marxism and Activists in the New Waves of Movement Struggles

What is to *count* as ‘Marxism’ is itself a disputed question. Twice, over the past century and more, a dominant interpretation emerged and was institutionalised, in forms that abandoned key ideas in the founders’ ideas. These ‘official Marxisms’ were also subjected to root-and-branch challenges that involved restating the revolutionary core of the tradition. Much of what passes for ‘Marxism’ in conventional academic discussion, however, has its roots in these institutionalisations.

After Marx and Engels died, European socialism divided over the very meaning of such core ideas as ‘class struggle’ and ‘state’. What Hal Draper termed ‘the two souls of socialism’ were fought over within the institutions of the workers’ movement.¹⁸

¹⁶ Hart 2002, p. 820.

¹⁷ Harvey 1996; Harvey 2000, p. 241.

¹⁸ Draper 1966.

On one side, one powerful trend of ‘socialism from above’ emerged among the leadership of the parties and unions of the Second International. The struggle for a new society came to be identified with the parliamentary struggle. Here existing state forms – not excluding colonial empires – were largely accepted, and the winning of votes in elections became the central point of politics. ‘Professional’ bureaucratic union leaders, heading what were often new mass workers’ organisations, became more concerned with negotiating with employers than seeking to expropriate them. If they and the social-democratic party leaders still held to ‘Marxism’, it was a sanitised, often ‘inevitabilist’ and statist version they adopted, disavowing its *revolutionary* and *dialectical* core.¹⁹

On the Left, representing ‘socialism from below’, one powerful current adopted one or other version of syndicalism, posing mass working-class insurgency apart from and against ‘party’ and ‘statist’ organizations.²⁰ Specifically Marxist criticism of the ‘revisionist’ currents within socialism was attempted by Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky and others, but not yet with the political heat (or the philosophical depth) that marked such criticism after 1914.

World War, and the revolutions it bred, irrevocably divided the forces of socialism, with those who were to become social democrats supporting the mass slaughter of the war. It also sharpened divisions over the very essence of Marxism. The young Gramsci registered part of the issues at stake when he celebrated the 1917 revolution in Russia as a ‘revolution against *Capital*'.²¹ The parties of Social Democracy, henceforth, remained committed to parliamentarism and, in practice, to maintaining the core of capitalist social relations. Some of them retained for a period some rhetorical attachment to Marxism, though subsequent development further weakened even this, as first Keynesianism and eventually neo-liberal ideas came to dominate their practical thought. These parties, however, retained widespread working-class support, thus setting up new strategic dilemmas for those who maintained revolutionary Marxism as the core of their thinking.

The revolutionary wave that ended the World War and brought down three empires both produced a wave of innovative new forms of struggle and occasioned a big revival and re-thinking of Marxist ideas. It enabled – for a period – new conjunctions between syndicalism and Marxism, a developing critique of the ‘inevitabilist’ strain in ‘Second International Marxism’ and a re-assertion of the ‘active side’, along with new linkages

¹⁹ Anatomised in e.g. Colletti 1976

²⁰ For a recent study, see Darlington 2008.

²¹ Gramsci 1977.

with struggles against colonial and other oppressions.²² The revolutionary wave manifested itself in a series of important developments in Marxist thinking across a wide range of fields of inquiry, from philosophy, jurisprudence and political economy to linguistics, aesthetics and psychology. Some of the fruits of those developments are still being assimilated and further developed across a broad spectrum of movement-relevant theories even today. (References in this volume to work by Lukács, Gramsci, Voloshinov, Bakhtin and Vygotsky offer witness to its continuing influence.)

But impulses towards rediscovery and innovation in Marxism were soon met by counter-impulses towards burying, reversal and silencing. The revolutionary wave fell back. In the one country, Russia, where astonishing advances had been made in 1917, isolation and the pressures of civil war all too soon promoted the conditions for what Trotsky and others termed 'degeneration' and 'bureaucratization'. By the end of the 1920s, Stalin's regime was promoting – in the name of 'Marxism' – a state-driven crash industrialization drive that demanded the expropriation of the peasantry, complete subordination of labour to 'communist' managers along with huge cuts in popular living standards, the formation of a vast enslaved workforce in the 'Gulags', medals for motherhood, the silencing of all forms of opposition, mass purges and murders. 'Marxism' was not so much stood on its head as hanged by its heels: Stalinism inverted its anti-state theory of self-emancipation from below into a top-down doctrine of state-worship and national accumulation.

The official Communist movement, after the disaster of Hitler's rise to power in Germany, adopted the policy of the 'Popular Front', hoping thereby to ally itself with 'progressive' forces against the fascist threat. That required the active renunciation of working-class revolution, a politics legitimised by reversion to a theory of 'stages' closer to classic 'Menshevism' than to the innovations of Bolshevism. In France and Spain in 1936, and after the war across western Europe and elsewhere, Communist Parties generated a new version of social-democratic practice, pursuing parliamentarist paths and acting in political crises as essentially conservative forces.

The two and a half decades of 'long boom' in world capitalism after World War Two offered an unfavourable climate for any widespread development of ideas about popular and especially working-class self-emancipation. East, West and South, states took a leading role in economic organisation, whether of a state-socialist, Keynesian or national-developmentalist kind. This situation, and the titanic struggles which had led to

²² One record of this is found in the documents of the early years of the new Communist International (Riddell 1986, 1993, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2011 and forthcoming).

the defeat of fascism, welfare-state gains and independence from imperial power in so many states, were also conducive to the identification of popular movements with state power, of socialism with nationalisation, and so on.

If this period saw revolutions a-plenty, as the old world empires were broken up by movements of national liberation, once in power they pursued state-led programmes of 'national development', all too soon marked by corruption and authoritarianism. Stalinist 'critical support' for bourgeois nationalism, and geo-political relations with the Soviet Union and later China, created 'Marxisms' which in practice were deeply complicit with the new majority world regimes. Eastern Europe was locked in Moscow's imperial embrace. Those who sought to promote a revolutionary socialist politics independent of Washington, Moscow or Beijing were tiny embattled minorities, preserving almost lost traditions - Trotskyist, council-communist, humanist etc. - and developing only a few new theoretical insights.

Not surprisingly, oppositional movements in Eastern Europe mostly developed anti-Marxist ideas, even if some of the highpoints of their practice - in the Hungarian workers' councils of 1956 or the Polish inter-factory committees of 1970-1 and 1980-1 - seemed to hark back to the structures of the Paris Commune or the 'soviets' of 1917-19. By the time of the new upsurge of movement activity in the 1960s, in France, Italy, Portugal, Chile, Spain and elsewhere the new emerging lefts partly defined their politics in radical opposition to both social-democratic and 'official communist' politics. However, the relative political quiescence of workers' movements in developed capitalism during the postwar period - and Stalinist hostility to independent working-class action in countries like France and Italy - encouraged ideas that the proletariat had been 'incorporated', and that any revolutionary impulses would tend to come from the 'margins', from oppressed blacks, from third-world peasants and lumpen-proletarians, from women, or from alienated students in the newly expanded university sectors. The politics of the new left of the 1960s and early 1970s were thus often a rather unstable melange of ideas and images drawn from Maoism, Guevarism, Trotskyism, syndicalism, the counter-culture and other sources. The same period witnessed a rise in the level of working-class combativity in Europe and North America, opening possibilities for linkages between the new left and militant trade unionism.

The new left was associated with an extensive rediscovery of original Marxist themes, signalled by a flourishing of Marxist publications that explored alienation, began to re-read Marx's critique of political economy in new and less 'economistic' ways, rediscovered and developed an emancipatory 'history from below', and began to identify

and revive a parallel 'politics from below'. Some impressive beginnings were made in terms of linkages between students and workers. However, actual experiences of popular *revolutions* were limited, even in spite of the important and impressive insurrections in Prague, Paris, and Derry, which were later followed by an actual revolutionary situation in Portugal. The result was an expansion both in the left's rhetoric of revolution and imagination of its possibilities, as well as in its understanding of who might be 'agents' of revolution.

Furthermore, the great revolt of 1968 'cut across the tripartite division of the world system at the time – the West, the Communist bloc, and the Third World'.²³ These uprisings ranged from successful popular wars for national liberation in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Vietnam followed by significant experiments with socialist models of development, the resurgence of popular social movements and guerrilla insurgency in many Latin American countries and in India, and, towards the close of the decade, the overthrow of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua.²⁴ Associated with these movements was 'a more radical, a more unambiguously socialist Third Worldism than the first generation Bandung regimes'²⁵ and a revitalisation of Marxian analyses of the political economy of the capitalist world system.²⁶

From the mid-1970s the wave of working-class militancy in western countries was first contained (not least by union leaderships) and then increasingly reversed, as the early assaults of neo-liberalism were launched against many of the strongest sectors of organised labour. Significant parts of the new left-wing organizations that had mushroomed in the 1960s and early 1970s fell apart; some of their radical support returned to the social-democratic fold, others turned to the identity politics that emerged to temporary dominance in the 1980s. So far as movements were concerned, it seemed that Marxism's second brief flourishing was over.

In the academic world, and especially in the social, historical and cultural fields that had greatest relevance for thinking about movements, post-modernism and post-structuralism seemed triumphant. Often the 'Marxism' against which they defined themselves was itself a version of the 'Marxisms' against which the best impulses of the new lefts had themselves struggled: a 'structuralist' rather than humanistic and

²³ Wallerstein 2006, p. 6; see also Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989.

²⁴ Prashad 2008.

²⁵ Berger 2004, p. 19.

²⁶ Seddon 2012; Leys 2009.

revolutionary set of impulses, sometimes associated with Althusserian theory.²⁷ Caricatures of Marxism remained prevalent within academic discourse, and this affected activists to the degree that university settings provided a main source of general ideas. Activists trained in the academy tend to come pre-inoculated against Marxism, albeit a Marxism which is substantially imaginary. They also come predisposed to accept powerful ‘grand narratives’ which explain why power, and explanation, are to be avoided at all costs.

In the real world, however, the neo-liberal assault, however, continued, and with ever more force, restructuring global production and with it the world working class, creating new forms of debt-dependence and undermining previous welfare systems. Oppositional movements began to cohere around new *anti-capitalist* projects and ideas. Themes of opposition to war *and* to capitalist dispossession took on new force into the new century, and especially as all the classic manifestations of large-scale economic crisis broke across the world from 2007. We are writing this introduction at the end of 2011 against the background of a huge new wave of protests across both the advanced capitalist world and in its peripheries, which call in question both dictatorial and undemocratic regimes (including those imposed by financiers) and the enormously expanded inequality that marks contemporary capitalism.

For Marxists, the situation is paradoxical. On the one hand, we are witnessing an exhilarating new flourishing of movement activity, a slowly resurgent opposition to the onslaughts of neo-liberalism in crisis by a globally expanded and recomposed working class, and the expression of widely popular ideological challenges to the fundamental principles of capitalist society. On the other hand, this is the first time since perhaps 1848 when specifically Marxist ideas are not the natural *lingua franca* of a rising movement.²⁸

The only Marxism that might gain serious purchase in the present period is one that is resolutely committed to popular emancipation ‘from below’. It still, we think, has some pressing things to offer, in urgent conversation with today’s movements.

²⁷ Althusserianism was a rather limited product of struggle within what was then a still influential French Communist Party, which was belatedly dragging itself out of the embrace of Stalinism and onto a ‘Euro-communist’ (i.e. avowedly parliamentarist) road. It contributed nothing to Marxism as a theory of emancipation.

²⁸ Marxism is not, however, absent from the movement: Marxist thinking has been important in the construction of alliances between movements around a shared analysis of, and hostility to, the current economic order as ‘neo-liberal’, in many of the new Latin American experiments, in explaining the roots of imperial warmaking since 2001 and in opposition to the austerity politics pursued by governments across the world.

That Marxism rests on a proposition and a wager. The proposition is that the core problem facing popular movements in the present epoch is the capitalist system. The wager²⁹ is that the working class is capable of transforming itself through collective action and organization to the point where that it can break capitalism apart and lay the foundations of a new cooperative world community. Together, the proposition and the wager provide Marxism with a standard by which to assess the whole panoply of popular forms of resistance to capitalist power in all its oppressive and divisive manifestations, and a reason to participate actively within them.

Marxism involves simultaneously a theory of the organization of power within modern society, a theory of popular agency, and a theory of transformation with strategic consequences. It is an argument *about* movements, and an argument *within* movements.

At the core of capitalism, a specific set of social relations provide an inescapable pattern to the development of social life across the globe, reshaping and subordinating everything to the predominant drive to competitive accumulation, itself fuelled by exploitation. These are the ‘social relations of production’, a term often misunderstood as defining simply the immediate relations between capitalist and worker ‘at the point of production’, but actually encompassing the whole world of production, exchange and distribution, of power and culture. If their decoding is the work of the critique of political economy, Marxism views them as a *historical* creation which we can, if we act appropriately, transcend.

Indeed, challenges to their implications are immanent within many kinds of movement practices and demands, whether these touch on the expansion of a variety of rights, access to and control over urban and rural land, claims to respect and opposition to manifold types of discrimination, increased control over decision-making, putting people’s needs before property’s claims, resistance to imperialist wars, redistribution of income and resources, or the re-making of humanity’s practical relationship with nature. It is part of Marxism’s work to trace and highlight the inter-connections between specific issues and particular repertoires of action, organization and understanding within movements and the broader social relations of production that – explicitly or implicitly – they confront.

Against the caricatured ‘structuralism’ so often taken in academic discourse, Marxism’s emphasis falls on agency, on people ‘making their own history’. The very social relations

²⁹ Goldmann 1964.

of production are themselves the product of ongoing agency, even if in alienating forms, on the part of those who currently suffer their continuation. Individuals acting alone possess little capacity to transform these social relations, but collective activity and organization contain the potential both to make immediate gains, to roll back some of the most exigent threats to human welfare, but also to lay the foundations of other ways of living and organizing society. There is no absolute line of division between movements seeking 'reforms' within existing structures and movements that threaten to surpass their limits. Rather, movements operate on the boundaries between forms of opposition that remain contained within the limits of the system, and those that potentially transgress them. Containment and transgression are tendencies present in most movements, more or less explicitly, and are registered in strategic and tactical arguments within them. The potential for these differences to become significant depend in part on scales of involvement, movements' capacity to draw together different particular interests and needs, the generality of demands, the scope and forms of movement-generated organization, and so forth. Potentials and limits are discovered, in practice, through victories and defeats, through confusions and clarifications, through intra-movement dialogues and movement reflexivity.

A key Marxist focus concerns the degree to which, and the organizational forms through which, movement repertoires include the construction of new institutions 'from below', both as means of conducting their struggles and as ways of replacing existing power setups with alternatives. Against those who argue that movements should *avoid* power, its case is that they can and should *create* radically new and more democratic forms as a necessary part of the remaking of social relationships, of reshaping the entire productive and exchange process and – an increasingly urgent question – of reconstructing humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Is there not, however, an unbridgeable gap between such visions and mundane present-day reality? Certainly, the rising and ebbing of Marxism's appeal in different periods rests on experiential feelings about such unbridgeability. Periods of defeat engender defeatist moods and a narrowing of aspiration and imagination, affecting academic as much as popular thought: images of containment and stability predominate, 'grand narratives' evoke mistrust. Small, fragmented reforms and struggles contained within 'proper channels' constitute the horizons of apparent possibility; the spokespeople of narrow 'realism' within movement life – whether in trade unions, political parties, NGOs or in more apparently informal settings – predominate. Yet, within such periods, it is easy to miss the fragility of apparent consensus and everyday conservatism. The most productive Marxist work on questions relating to 'ideology' – whether in Vološinov's

'dialogism' or Gramsci's 'contradictory consciousness' – catches the unsettled, probing and critical quality of all practical social thinking and speech. Seemingly fixed ideas and stances contain subversive and transformative potentials which deterministic accounts of ideology quite miss. Thinking and speech, as Vygotsky and Billig both emphasize³⁰, involve a complex dialectic of particularization and generalization which is always open to being re-formatted in the light of new experiences, of shocks and surprises, of practical blockages and dissonances, which permit and create urgent needs for re-thinking and re-organizing activity.³¹

In this view, existing forms of activity and organization (and of passivity and disorganization) need to be understood as transitory, inwardly contradictory, and open to large- or small-scale transformation. The real problems for Marxists concern how precisely to grasp this in a given situation, and *what to propose doing about it*. For – as a theory of and for movements – Marxism is only of value as a contribution to the processes of argumentation and transformation within those movements, as an engaged practice that itself develops and learns alongside those with whom it participates in the effort to change the world. It is necessarily 'critical', looking always at the distance between what a movement is doing and whom it is mobilizing and for what, and the potential to which it might realistically aspire.

In this sense, and as we think this book demonstrates, Marxism holds a particular strength as a movement theory. While feminist, ecological and anarchist thought all share its movement origins, none holds the same ability to connect the critique of structure with a strategic analysis of social movements both as they are and as they could be – to find within the limitations of the world as it is the potential to create a new world in the teeth of powerful opposition and structural constraints.

Along with this strategic vision, Marxism also contributes an emphasis on the connection between apparently disparate campaigns and issues: struggles over oil and gas, for

³⁰ Vygotsky 1986; Billig 1996

³¹ We cannot therefore agree with Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward when they write that the poor 'experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes, and it is the concrete experience that molds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets. Workers experience the factory, the speeding rhythm of the assembly line, the foreman, the spies and the guards, the owner and the paycheck. They do not experience monopoly capitalism. People on relief experience the shabby waiting rooms, the overseer or the caseworker, and the dole. They do not experience American social welfare policy ... In other words, it is the daily experience of people that shapes their grievances, establishes the measure of their demands, and points out the targets of their anger' (Piven and Cloward 1979, p. 20). That quite ignores the *thinking and making sense*, the practical *generalization*, which is quite as much a part of the experience of the poor or of workers as it is of academics. Gramsci's judgment seems sounder: *everyone is a philosopher*. It is not only Marxists who move between 'levels of analysis' in order to understand and act on the world.

example, can connect ecological questions with local concerns over health and safety, economic ones about the ownership of natural resources, cultural conflicts over the meaning of place, and indeed the politics of policing. It is precisely this mix, well handled, which can turn an isolated issue into a campaign capable of mobilising large numbers of people in difficult situations over long periods - and which can enable such a campaign to inspire others in the formation of a movement.

Like any practically oriented theory, Marxism's history shows its proneness to various kinds of pitfalls. Uncritical cheer-leading is one risk: the eruption of a new movement, the advent of a novel strategy, a sudden insurgency can renew optimism, but simple celebration is insufficient. Careful measure must be taken, not only of new potentials unveiled, but also of the distance still to be travelled, the social forces not yet mobilised, the strategic and organizational problems not yet solved. Marxists, however, can easily fall into an opposite trap, of only seeing the limits and difficulties, and thus missing the significance of the new, and the way that the class struggle is constantly reconfigured.

An academic or sectarian emphasis on theoretical superiority, an unwillingness to take the risks of direct involvement, and thus an inability to *learn* from a diverse, and always contradictory set of movement impulses have sometimes marked those who, until a shift in circumstances, might have seemed the 'vanguard'. Patience and readiness to engage with the unfamiliar have characterised all the interesting Marxists of the past. Passion and a capacity for strategic assessment are not alternatives. At any point in their development, movements – and especially their leading spokespeople - are prone to a degree of self-satisfaction at their achievements. Marxism, intransigently, insists we still have a *world to win*, that the movement still needs to reach and encompass the needs and active involvement of larger majorities, and that a whole totality of social forms still require reconstruction from below. Vital dots remain to be connected, strategic and organizational questions to be argued. Practical and theoretical questions abound for which Marxist thought – as against potential rivals – still offers a valuable arsenal of ideas.

Contesting Caricatures of Marxism in Scholarship and Activism

Defending Marxism's place in social movement theorizing is made difficult by the sheer weight of caricatured accounts that have to be overcome. One source of some of these is of course to be found among the defenders of various tyrannical regimes claiming to be 'Marxist', while another can be found among Marxism's own less skilled and more sectarian advocates.

Nevertheless, within social movement studies it is easier to locate caricatures of Marxist thought than evidence of serious engagement with its substantial critical potential. One such caricature revolves around the claim that Marxism is only capable of addressing the macro-structural aspects of a social movement, and frequently reduces the latter to an epiphenomenon of the former, without sufficient attention to the contingencies of how subjectivities and collective identities are formed. Thus, Alberto Melucci claims that Marxist theory ‘focuses on the “objective” social foundations of collective action. It also derives the meaning of action from its analysis of the social conditions which the actors appear to have in common.... Here collective action appears as *actors without action* – while the gap between “objective conditions” and the empirically observed collective behaviour proves impossible to explain.’³² Elsewhere he has characterized this ‘problem’ as follows:

This is an old Marxist problem, that of the passage from a class in itself to a class for itself, from the material roots of class interests in capitalist relationships to revolutionary action ... This immense chasm was inevitably filled by a kind of *deus ex machina* (the party, the intellectuals) that serves as the external supplier of that consciousness which is lacking.³³

Another well-known caricature is that which criticizes Marxism for conceiving of collective action in economically reductionist ways, and for focussing on a narrow range of movement issues to the exclusion of all others (paradoxically, this objection often goes hand in hand with the desire to exclude these same issues as now supposedly dead in the water for all time). Carl Boggs, for example, writes:

... it has become increasingly obvious that the new movements have posed important questions concerning bureaucracy, the family, feminism, culture, the ecological crisis, the arms race, and racism that Marxism has failed to confront adequately ... Such movements have further called into question the entire productivist framework of Marxism, including its primacy of the industrial working class.³⁴

Tarrow relates this problematic to the issue of ideology and consciousness in Marxist theory:

³² Melucci 1989, pp. 18, 8.

³³ Melucci 1992, p. 240.

³⁴ Boggs 1986, p. 9.

Concerned with the problem that the workers' movement could not succeed without the participation of a significant proportion of its members, [Marx] developed a theory of 'false' consciousness, by which he meant that if workers failed to act as 'History' dictated, it was because they remained cloaked in a shroud of ignorance woven by their class enemies. The theory was unsatisfactory because no one could say whose consciousness was false and whose was real.³⁵

It is in any case widely understood that Marxists are only interested in labour movements, that the only 'real' movements are workers' movements, narrowly defined, or those that 'directly address economic and political disenfranchisement'.³⁶ Indeed, it was for these reasons that Manuel Castells claimed that 'the concept of social movement as an agent of social transformation is strictly unthinkable in the Marxist theory'.³⁷

The problem, of course, is that actual Marxism consistently disappoints these caricatures. To be sure, Marxism *does* place the labour of producing our world at the centre of its theory of history, but this does not necessarily involve the narrow, producer-focused theoretical focus imputed to it by others. For human 'production' is not merely 'material', the making of *things*, but equally the production (or 'construction') of social relations and symbolic forms, and indeed the self-making of the very producers themselves.³⁸ Furthermore, the wealth of Marxist thought in such diverse areas as media and art, social psychology, language, law, ecology and other apparently 'superstructural' froth on the 'base' of labour-capital relations should illustrate some of the drawbacks of these caricatures.

More specifically, and beyond the metatheoretical plane, Melucci's criticism³⁹ of a lack of sensitivity to culture and subjectivity is flatly contradicted by the existence of a range of avowedly Marxist studies of collective action that trace the cultural dynamics of activism in highly sophisticated ways. For example, Rick Fantasia's study *Cultures of Solidarity* is pathbreaking in its unearthing of how latent oppositional sentiments among workers are

³⁵ Tarrow 1998, p. 11. It is not clear where this idea of 'false consciousness' came from. It's not a phrase Marx seems to have used. Lukács, perhaps one of the classic theorists who approaches it most closely, explicitly derived his own analysis of the process of class consciousness from Max Weber's notion of ideal types rather than from any Marxist source. Lukács changed his own perspectives in the course of writing *History and Class Consciousness* (1922), and the model has found few if any Marxist successors.

³⁶ Armstrong and Bernstein 2008, p. 82. These writers criticise Political Process approaches to social movements for being 'neo-Marxist' in inspiration.

³⁷ Castells 1983, p. 299.

³⁸ See Fracchia 1991 and 2005; McNally 2001. It is also, as generations of socialist feminists have observed, about the making of people in the most literal way, of bearing and rearing children, caring for the sick and old, and a host of other tasks (see Jaggar 1983).

³⁹ Shared with Jasper 2007.

transformed into organizational forms through contingent and open-ended activist praxis⁴⁰; the importance of cultural repertoires in popular collective action and the making of a working-class in itself is of course abundantly demonstrated in E. P. Thompson's work⁴¹; and more recently Marc Steinberg's work has demonstrated the usefulness of Marxist linguistic analysis in the study of cultures of protest among workers in nineteenth century England.⁴²

The claim that Marxism is somehow incapable of engaging with or recognizing the transformative potential of social movements that are not directly based on labour is of course belied by the presence of such magisterial works as Marx on *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Engels on *The Peasant War in Germany*, Gramsci's analysis of peasant life in the *Prison Notebooks*, James on *The Black Jacobins*, Hilton on *Bond Men Made Free*, Hill on radical religion in *The World Turned Upside Down*, Hobsbawm and Rudé on *Captain Swing*, Hobsbawm's work on social banditry in *Primitive Rebels* and *Bandits*, and Eric Wolf's *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*.⁴³

More recent authors who refuse to play by the rules of this caricature include James Holstun's literary reading of English revolutionary pamphlets in *Ehud's Dagger*, Linebaugh and Rediker's ground-breaking *Many-Headed Hydra*, Keith Flett's work on radical education in nineteenth century England, Peter Alexander on shanty-town organising in South Africa, Sandra Halperin on the making of European modernity, John Walton and David Seddon's work on food riots in Africa or Satnam Virdée on anti-racism.⁴⁴

Indeed our own work has routinely strayed far beyond the supposed confines of the labour movement: witness Colin Barker's work on community protest in England, Laurence Cox's research on counter-cultural milieux in Ireland, John Krinsky's study of anti-poverty and housing activism in New York, and Alf Gunvald Nilsen's account of adivasi and peasant mobilization against dams in contemporary India.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Fantasia 1988.

⁴¹ Thompson 1966, 1993.

⁴² Steinberg 1999.

⁴³ Marx 1984; Engels 1977; Gramsci 1998; James 2001; Hilton 2003; Hill 1991; Hobsbawm and Rudé 2001; Hobsbawm 1965, 2001; Wolf 1969.

⁴⁴ Holstun 2000; Linebaugh and Rediker 2002; Flett 2004; Alexander 2010; Halperin 2004; Walton and Seddon 1994; Virdée 2000 and 2010.

⁴⁵ Barker 2007; Cox 1999; Krinsky 2008; Nilsen 2010.

Among many contemporary activists, particularly in the Anglophone world, a slightly different set of caricatures are quite widespread. There is a nexus of influences at work: formerly dominant leftwing parties have declined because of their (self-) identification with Soviet power (as 'communists') or neoliberal capitalism (as 'social democrats'), while organised labour's response to the crisis of neo-liberalism has been slow, and often constrained by its alliances with 'centre-left' parties involved in managing the same crisis. There is also a general rise in bottom-up, grassroots or libertarian (in the European sense) modes of organising. These respond in part to the 'hollowing out of the state' in neoliberalism and the collapse of popular institutions which once held (somewhat) stronger positions in civil society than they now do - from trade unions and community organisations to left newspapers and radio stations. This 'grassroots turn' in left thinking and organising, in itself a welcome alternative to Stalinism and social democracy, variously benefits anarchists, Marxists and autonomists as well as radical democrats, radical Christians and some forms of ecological and feminist organising.

Anarchism - whether as conscious theory or a set of political styles of action - has gained strength globally. The results are diverse, but include the exclusion of *all* political parties and trade unions from a public presence in otherwise thrilling demonstrations in Spain in May 2011; the widespread injunction in self-declared radical circles to 'change the world without taking power'; and the view that, since 'Gramsci is dead', activists should replace the 'hegemony of hegemony' with a 'logic of affinity'. Movement activity should, intentionally, be temporally and spatially localised, and the state be effectively transformed by making it no longer culturally or socially relevant to new forms of social organization.⁴⁶ Efforts at building relatively permanent institutions are deeply suspect.⁴⁷

We should also mention the ambiguous history of autonomism in this context: starting as a Marxist tendency within, and subsequently outside, the Italian Communist Party of the 1960s, it became the most coherent theoretical voice of the new movements which the Party opposed, particularly during its 'historic compromise' with Christian Democracy. Migrating to Latin America, it was similarly attractive to thoughtful activists keen to retain a focus on class and engagement in popular struggles while distancing themselves from parties which were often irreparably tainted by their alliances with nationalist power at home or with Soviet and Chinese power. In the English-speaking

⁴⁶ See for example Holloway 2005 and Day 2005.

⁴⁷ Again, this is particularly true in those countries where the memory of popularly controlled institutions is weakest. By contrast, while strongly influenced by autonomist and anarchist *theory*, the Italian movement left (for example) has created an extensive institutional infrastructure of social centres, left-wing newspapers and radio stations, trade unions and political organisations which belies the rhetoric of institutionless resistance. Much the same is true for the indigenous nationalisms, community activism and working-class self-organisation at the heart of many contemporary South American struggles.

world, divorced from this *practical* relationship to working-class struggles, it has offered a starting-point for many sincere activists committed to contemporary struggles and concerned to link them to broader social conditions. The pity, again, is that this *practical* commitment to popular movements is not matched by any *theory* of movements⁴⁸; instead, books like those by Holloway and by Hardt and Negri *celebrate* popular insurgency while disavowing any constructive suggestions as to what such movements should *do*.⁴⁹

All too often, the practical upshot of autonomism is to undermine the rather important Marxist recognition that exploitation and oppression are underpinned by powerfully organised forces who will resist all serious attempts at structural change and who will, in some form, need to be taken on and defeated. Rightly recognising the ambiguities, defeats and failures of the last century of popular self-organisation, it fails to recognise that (for example) the assertion of formal democratic rights against absolute monarchies, fascist dictatorships and Stalinist regimes was a significant gain, as was the defeat of the imperialisms which until recently literally owned the vast majority of the globe - and as the shaking off of US hegemony and neoliberal power may yet prove to be for South American and Arab states.

Within living memory (but not that of autonomists), most contemporary states were violently opposed to the most basic forms of freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and freedom of political organisation, most states made no provision for the basic necessities of life, and a large majority of states were ruled from elsewhere. That this has changed - largely due to popular struggle - is no small fact; and it is only a sheltered perspective which could see matters otherwise:

The bones of our ancestors, and the stones of their works, are everywhere. Our liberties were won in wars and revolutions so terrible that we do not fear our governors: they fear us. Our children giggle and eat ice-cream in the palaces of past rulers. We snap our fingers at kings. We laugh at popes. When we have built up tyrants, we have brought them down.⁵⁰

The anarchist and autonomist hostility to 'organisation' is comprehensible as a response to the real dangers of cooptation and bureaucratisation.⁵¹ However, it also generates its

⁴⁸ Cox 2001.

⁴⁹ Holloway, 2005; Hardt and Negri 2000.

⁵⁰ Ken Macleod, USENET posting to rec.arts.sf.fandom, 28.9.2000.

⁵¹ 'Anarchism was not infrequently a kind of penalty for the opportunist sins of the working-class movement.' Lenin 1999, p. 38.

own problems. The idea of 'changing the world without taking power' is one that belongs not only to the politics of the left but also those of 'moderation'.⁵² Its effects can be to leave space for a movement's opponents to reorganize their forces and re-structure their domination. It makes the formation of a different world almost unthinkable, for how – to take an obvious example – is the world to be pulled back from a climate-induced catastrophe without a major exercise of *popular power*? This is a counsel of despair that to a substantial degree fails to imagine or anticipate the development of popular 'replacement power', the deliberate building of new and more democratic institutions 'from below' that might better express popular needs. In effect, the lesson it takes from past failures is to give up.⁵³

In Marxist theory, the issue of 'replacement power' focuses on the strategic necessity not simply of taking over the state, but of re-fashioning it from below in ways unthinkable in the liberal thought that underwrites state-centered social movements scholarship - as an extension of popular power in the workplace and the community, as in the Paris Commune and many subsequent revolutions, but also - as 1968 reminded us, in the theatre, the radio station or the university.⁵⁴ From its outset, Marxism has been concerned with the creation of an alternative order of political and social life.

The problem, then, with *not* taking Marxism seriously is that Marxism offers some perspectives that point in promising directions for the kinds of politics that many movement activists – and scholars – say they want. In the chapters that follow, the contributors to this volume take up key areas of Marxist thought that insist on the primacy of *processes* over *things*, on *transformation* over *stasis*, on *praxis* over *theory*, on the *complex relation of parts to wholes* over *structural determinism*, and on *contradiction* over *self-consistency*.

Of course, there's more to Marxism than this, and several chapters expose other key features. But for a body of thought that is alleged to be deterministic, crudely materialist, unchanging, and fixated on a select few features of social and political life, it is important to set the record straight. One *ought not* to think that all organizations act in the same way or that all political parties and trade unions act equally as barriers to political change. One *ought* to be able to contemplate broader social change that endures, rather than be resigned to personally satisfying utopian experiments that leave

⁵² It was Eduard Bernstein, founder of 'revisionism', who famously declared: 'What is generally called the ultimate goal of socialism is nothing to me; the movement to me is everything' (cited in Walecki 1997, p. 202).

⁵³ Magri 2011

⁵⁴ Bookchin 1996 - 2003; Mitchell 1970; Barker 1987; Fraser 1988.

in place capitalism's broader patterns of capitalist exploitation. One *ought* to be able to think about how modes of representation and political organization may become transformed in new circumstances, rather than assume they must always tend toward undemocratic rule. Equally, one *ought* to be able to think through the ways that existing political and 'civil society' organizations may simultaneously both challenge and support broader sets of exploitative and repressive social relations - and to fashion strategies for opening up the opportunities that such contradictory forms contain.

And, on the broader scale, one *ought* to be able to think, in William Morris' words, about the ways in which popular movements over the centuries *have* thrown up new modes of self-organisation, forced democratic and welfare concessions and reshaped the political landscape:

I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name ...⁵⁵

Marxist Silences

If we believe that thinking about social movements would be significantly enhanced by serious conversation with the Marxist tradition, the problems do not only concern existing social movement studies and practice. Marxism itself has a fractured and under-developed theory of social movements. Marx and Marxists have often talked about 'movements' (and even 'social movements'). However, they rarely stopped to ask what they meant by these terms, and how they might fit into their larger systems of thinking. There has been little explicitly Marxist engagement with the huge flourishing of social movement studies, or inquiry into whether anything might be useful in the battery of arguments, concepts and arguments which those studies have developed.

For Marx and Engels, the term 'social movement', as both Colin Barker and Laurence Cox suggest in their chapters, referred to a whole 'multi-organizational field'.⁵⁶ The movement was an amalgam of political parties, trade unions, clubs of various sorts, exile organizations, underground organizations, newspapers, enrolling and representing the serried ranks of the exploited and oppressed. These were by no means all proletarians in the Marxist sense - indeed it was Marxist historians who explored the multiplicity and

⁵⁵ Morris 2001, p. 31.

⁵⁶ Klandermans 1992,

diversity of the Parisian *sans-culottes* or showed that the working class was not a homogeneous mass but a complex construction. What Marx and Engels *did* argue was that within 'the social movement' the newly emerging proletariat had a unique significance, because its expansion, structural power and cultural development offered the prospect of a force capable of leading the complete revolutionary transformation of society. It might, for whole periods, fail to live up to its potential mission, while national and other divisions might divert it from its emancipatory path. Only in the course of huge struggles, and after major defeats as well as advances, might it *learn* to convert its potential into an actual taking and remaking of social power:

Working-class revolutions ... constantly criticise themselves, they continually interrupt their own course, return to what has apparently already been achieved to start it from scratch again. Cruelly and thoroughly they mock the shortcomings, weaknesses and pitiful nature of their first attempts; they seem to throw their opponent down, only for him to draw new strength from the earth and rise up once more against them, yet more gigantic than ever. They shrink back again and again in the face of the undetermined vastness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes any turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: 'Hic Rhodus, hic salta! Here is the rose, dance here!' ⁵⁷

The movement itself was the great self-educator, and its tempos and inner developments were the ultimately decisive factor in historical development. Some sense of the complexity of its learning processes can be seen in the letter from Marx about Ireland that Barker quotes in his chapter: the English workers, in effect, need to be educated out of anti-Irish prejudice, and the job can only be done by the predominantly peasant-based Irish liberation movement.

'In what relation do the communists stand to the proletarians as a whole?' asked Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*. 'They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement...The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.'⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Marx 1984, p. 5-6.

⁵⁸ Marx and Engels 1998, p. 50-1.

For Marxists, questions about leadership necessarily arose as part of their concerns about the relationship between their party organizations and the movement as a whole. Lenin and Luxemburg engaged in spirited polemics on this issue, with Luxemburg famously declaring that the ‘mistakes made by a really revolutionary working-class movement are infinitely, in historical perspective, more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of the most excellent central committee.’⁵⁹ Lenin, always with a more ‘interventionist’ view of the party’s ongoing dialogue with the Russian movement, expressed concern that Marxists’ enthusiasm for the ‘spontaneity’ of workers’ unrest could blind them to its ideological and organizational contradictions and limitations. The tasks, and indeed the very membership of the party, could and would alter with changing political conditions: in 1902, Lenin was for strict centralization; in 1905 for ‘opening the gates of the party’ to the spontaneously revolutionary workers. Gramsci, whose *Prison Notebooks* partly consist in extended meditations on adapting the politics of Lenin to the different conditions in western Europe and America, elaborated a distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals and their respective roles in upholding and challenging the dominant modes of organizing society, culture, and politics.

In the wake of the Russian Revolution, and later Stalin’s purges, doctrinaire ossification of Soviet Marxism, the post-World War Two expansion of European welfare states and the tearing down of colonial empires, Marxists could no longer take either ‘capitalism’ or ‘the movement’ as steady reference points. Both, separately and together, required theoretical renovation. ‘New Lefts’ struggled with the questions, with variable success. Hal Draper’s ‘Two souls of socialism’, expanded theoretically by his *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, represents one such attempt, as does Raya Dunayevskaya’s *Marxism and Freedom*, among many others.⁶⁰

The problem became acute from the later 1960s. In the west, official labour movements faced militant challenges from within their own ranks, from workforces who were being recomposed by migration and shifting power-balances in workplaces, at the same time that new demands were being voiced, demanding rights and freedoms for people who had been excluded from public political participation and social recognition, such as students, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and sexual minorities. Initially, many of these movements found inspiration and, indeed, key members among Marxists, the best of whom grasped the need to develop their theories of emancipation to catch up with the new forms of movement practice.

⁵⁹ Luxemburg cited in Frölich 2010, p. 86.

⁶⁰ Draper 1977, 1978, 1986 and 1990; Draper and Haberkern 2010; Dunayevskaya 2000.

From the mid-1970s, however, it was clear that the initiative within western trade unions was returning to the official leaderships, as workplace militancy declined. The way was prepared for a wave of significant defeats for workers in formerly core industries, as ruling circles – in response to the return of major crises to the world economy after the end of the long postwar boom – began to develop the new strategies and institutional frameworks that we know today as ‘neo-liberalism’.

Neo-liberalism’s institutionalisation required the taming and containment of popular resistance, the widening of social inequalities both nationally and internationally, the enlargement of debt financing and the subjection of many developing countries to ‘conditionalities’ attached to loans from the IMF and World Bank.

In the majority world, the decline of national-developmentism and the country-by-country imposition of IMF rules - against massive popular protest⁶¹ - was in itself a boon to Marxists, as more recent anti-capitalist movements have shown. What undermined the attractiveness of Marxism in this period was rather the managing of this neoliberal turn by elites which often (in China and India as in South Africa and Latin America) spoke the language of Marxism, in whole or in part.

In the Soviet bloc, this period saw a decline of the significance of socialist and Marxist ideas to intellectual dissidence and popular culture, as the memory of anti-fascist resistance faded, the identification of Marxism with the regime gained ground and the intellectual attraction of neo-liberal thinking increased.

In the North, the Marxist left that had grown in scale and self-confidence up to the early 1970s lacked the muscle to organize sufficient resistance to neo-liberalism, and was driven back, and in some cases fragmented and dispersed. It was in this setting that ideas about ‘new social movements’ and ‘post-modernism’ began to gain significant traction in the western academy. Part of this development involved a questioning of ‘class’ as an organizing category for radical thought, most notably within the field of social history. It was also the period in which several disciplines in the social sciences and humanities underwent a decisive ‘linguistic turn’. For social history, this meant a greater suspicion of received categories of ‘groupness’, in which affiliation could be ‘read off’ from ‘social structure’.

⁶¹ Walton and Seddon 1994.

Increasingly, ‘post-modern’ critiques of principally Marxist social history cast doubt on ‘class’ and ‘class struggle’. It was not simply that they discovered that ‘grand narratives’ were no longer valid; they argued, indeed, that grand narratives were *never* valid to begin with. It turns out that relatively few workers used the ‘language of class’ in ways commensurate with Marxism in the early decades of the 19th century when, according to Thompson, the working class was in the process of its ‘making’, or later.⁶² Defenders of Marxist historical analysis, even while embracing and developing some elements of the linguistic turn, argued that the post-modernists had bent the stick too far: while it was true that one could not read people’s political views directly from their social position (actually few Marxists ever actually seriously entertained this caricatured idea), it was unrealistic to expect workers of the 19th century to sound like Marxist historians, or even like Marx himself.⁶³ Nevertheless, they did acknowledge that the post-modern turn raised important questions about *how* large collectivities constitute themselves around certain descriptive categories and claim them as their own. That involved a set of questions to which social movement theorisation could have contributed. It didn’t follow, either, that all claims about ‘class’ and ‘workers’ tended toward emancipatory politics. In short, the linguistic and post-modern turns in history and historical social science challenged Marxists to think more generally about the constitution of social subjects and to specify the relations among the relative positions of a variety of social actors in relations of production and reproduction; the different experiences of individuals in those positions, especially as they change and as the structures of these relationships change; organisation, both of daily life and of protest; and the linguistic, cognitive, and emotional ways in and through which these relations and organisations are constituted.

Accordingly, within social history at least, Marxist thinkers did develop a kind of convergence with social movement theory, even if they did not tend to use its formal resources. Both sides were responding to similar sorts of stimuli (i.e., the decline of working-class militancy, the ‘linguistic’ turn in the humanities and social sciences), and were landing, by the early 1990s, with a similar set of problems: the relationship between larger scale social change and particular local events and processes, the nature of organization and networks, and language and cultural dynamics. While social movement studies developed each of these areas, Marxism and Marxists often steered clear of the increasingly scientific cast that some of the sociological literature took on, and particularly in the U.S.

⁶² Stedman Jones 1983.

⁶³ Meiksins Wood 1998.

Of course, there were figures such as Charles Tilly or Marc Steinberg who bridged the two worlds. Both, not coincidentally, became interested - Steinberg explicitly in his published work - in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his collaborators, who, in post-revolutionary Russia, sought to develop a 'dialogical' approach to language. Dialogical theory offered an alternative to approaches based in 'framing' or the ideas of Foucault. It avoided both the linguistic idealism that re-surfaced in post-modern critiques of social history and the crass materialism of Stalinist Marxism (which would become the default model of Marxism for its academic critics). Bakhtin and Vološinov developed a grounded, materialist, and relational theory that is compatible with many aspects of a non-reductionist reading of Marxism, and especially the work of Gramsci.⁶⁴ Several contributions to this volume highlight the work of the 'Bakhtin Circle' as a potential resource with two potential strengths. First, it can help to ground a processual conception of class and class formation, and, second, it can offer satisfactory ways of meeting social movement theory's demand for a way of talking about the development of political claims – and hence, too, of the public subjects who make them – as they move from context to context and speaker to speaker.

Discussion originating in Europe about the 'New Social Movements' also challenged the primacy of class, in ways both similar to and different from the post-modern challenge in social history. Alain Touraine's attention to social movements outside of the 'old' labour movement originated as a *materialist* critique of Marxism. He did not argue that there was no such thing as the working class; on the contrary, he argued that the moment when the working class could realistically provide the motive force in large-scale social change had passed, and that Marxists could not be true radicals unless they recognised this fact. Alberto Melucci argued – like the postmodernists – that the idea that 'social movements' or 'classes' existed was a reification and a poor ontological gamble. To be sure, the problems of aggregating actors' interests into what were clearly movements remained, but he argued for a more processual and culturally charged analysis that would highlight how and why people choose to engage in collective action.

Because the post-modern and NSM critiques are often conflated - a conflation that affected the way the original NSM theories were received, and even elaborated, in the United States and Britain - the charges of ahistoricism and idealism often stuck to both. But like the post-modern challenges in social history, as well as challenges to Marxist conceptions of class among feminist historians, the NSM critics, diverse as they were, forced similar questions on Marxists about the constitution of actors, the making of class, and the role of language and symbolic action in 'experience'.

⁶⁴ Brandist 1996; Ives 2003.

Rather than being – as some caricatures would have it – a fixed body of doctrine, Marxist thinking has, we think, continued to develop in productive and interesting ways. What, seemingly, no Marxist thinker has yet succeeded in doing is bringing together the insights gained over the past decades through ongoing *dialogue* with other trends and schools in a distinctively ‘Marxist branch of analysis of social movements’. This volume does not aim as high as that, but it does set out to suggest that such an enterprise would be a valuable one, and to demonstrate that the elements of a Marxist analysis of social movements can be shown to exist and be fruitful theoretically, empirically and politically across a wide range of movements, countries and periods.

The times are in a sense propitious for this challenge. Now, amid global financial collapse and the efflorescence of protest around the world, Marxism has begun to regain some of the credibility it appeared to have lost in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Within the field of political economy, even fairly cursory statements by Marxists are no longer dismissed out of hand. Within human geography, one of whose leading figures is David Harvey, a great deal of important work has had both a Marxist and an activist bent. Studies of community organising and workplace militancy, as well as new global organising strategies joining up such campaigns, have become an important part of the field of urban studies, and has allowed it to link up, though unevenly, with studies of labour organising which have recently come into their own in American sociology. Within the developing field of ‘labour and labour movements’ - now an official research section of the American Sociological Association – the study of ‘class’ has undergone a radical expansion. Academics have been catching up with the ongoing practical recomposition of the working class, represented in the activity of women and immigrants, workers excluded from formal bargaining rights under law, and workers in contingent jobs, who have been among those most energetically organising against their bosses, setting up new mutual aid structures, and addressing ‘intersectional’ or ‘co-constitutive’ oppressions of race and gender both inside or outside of formal trade union structures or alliances. More tentatively, ‘working-class studies’, has brought the lived experience of working-class people to the fore in ways that recall the early years of cultural studies.

As with social history, however, there has been fairly little linkage between current Marxist studies of movements and the body of work that has developed in social movement studies. Both sides could have a lot to learn from each other, if social movement studies were to abandon its general disinterest in the distinctive influence of capitalism on protest dynamics, and if labour researchers attend to the important

theoretical as well as practical questions involved in critical issues concerning consciousness, organisation, and strategy. It might be premature to say that we all have a world to win, but a more open critical dialogue could be widely beneficial.

Similar arguments can be made, we think, within social movements. The construction of the 'anti-capitalist' (or anti-corporate, alterglobalization, global justice etc.) movement has involved the construction and dissemination of extensive popular analyses of neo-liberalism, processes of commodification and dispossession, etc. These analyses - present theoretically in the Marxist work of academics ranging from David Harvey to Toni Negri, but also in a strong Marxist influence on more popular figures from Naomi Klein to Michael Moore - did not simply emerge from isolated writers. They are inherent in the production of new kinds of *movement alliances* between indigenous peasants resisting extractive industries, workers struggling against deindustrialisation and capital flight, creative workers trying to make space for non-commodified art, solidarity movements trying to challenge global debt structures, and so on. Such alliances, sometimes the product of long years of hard work, rely on the development of shared languages of contention - such as 'neo-liberalism' or indeed 'anti-capitalism' - which enable the messy but practical business of confronting the institutions and cultural power of global elites to be coordinated.

Broadly Marxist analyses of contemporary global capitalism are now current among movement activists in ways that would have been hard to imagine in the early 1990s. With all their divergences, the different movements contesting this regime have learned to work together sufficiently well to constitute a 'movement of movements.' Within this, activists rooted in a plurality of leftist traditions encounter and engage each other in contests for leadership and representation, debates over strategy and tactics, discussions of alliances and issues, and deliberations over the appropriateness of the form of movement institutions (such as the contrast between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' organization), and the direction that the continual development of collective oppositional action from below is taking. Moreover, and equally importantly, the 'movement of movements' has registered some significant achievements, such as forcing the abandonment of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, preventing any successful WTO trade round since 1999, scuppering the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas and substantially removing popular legitimacy in most western countries from the 'war on terror' announced in 2001.

Indeed the financial crash of 2008 itself was widely held to confirm the basic analysis of the ills of neo-liberalism. Although elites have regained confidence and attempted to

define the crash as the fault of excessive state spending rather than of unbridled finance capitalism, popular resistance to austerity measures - from Iceland to Greece and from Spain to the UK - suggests that this is a shallow hegemony indeed. Elsewhere, movements in Latin America have challenged US geopolitical hegemony and the Washington Consensus in a wide range of ways which go far beyond any isolated identity politics or cultural radicalism, combining extensive popular alliances, systematic analyses of the roots of injustice and in some cases serious attempts to remake the state. It is too early to tell what direction the popular struggles of the Arab Spring will take, or how European or North American anti-austerity movements will develop, but all the indications are that Marxism can continue to play a key role in relating the structural causes of popular unrest to strategies to challenge those structures - in practice as well as theory.

Producing this Volume

This effort to fill a gap in the literature began as a set of discussions, over several years, at the annual Alternative Futures and Popular Protest (AFPP) conferences run by Colin Barker and Mike Tyldesley in Manchester. AFPP attracts a wide range of scholars and activists for three days of dialogue on social movements. Typically, the participants are drawn heavily from left circles in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, with regular participation from scholars and scholar-activists across Europe, from Canada and the US, South Africa, and occasionally, too, Latin America, Australia and Asia. Trotskyists, autonomists, anarchists, and unaffiliated leftists; people committed to Marxism, people committed to developing questions framed by U.S.-based social movement studies, people committed to post-structuralist theory, and resolute defenders of social science and history hash out their ideas and differences for three days of presentations, pub visits and group dinners. Over the years, one strand in these debates has been provided by scholars posing serious questions about social movements in a Marxist vein, and putting Marxist resources to innovative and provocative use. After organizing a small micro-conference in advance of the 2008 meeting, we resolved to reach beyond even the wide range of scholars who have attended AFPP and to call for contributions to a listserv. The lively listserv discussion shaped an eventual call for submissions of abstracts for the book. We received more than seventy.

The chapters in this book draw on scholars of anthropology, geography, history, politics, sociology, employment relations, civil society studies and East Asian Studies based in the U.S., Britain, Canada, Ireland, South Africa and India. The book includes theoretical accounts of the relationship between Marxism and social movement studies; analyses of

the development and internal tensions of social movements; historical-comparative and global approaches to social movement studies. Showing the intellectual robustness and empirical purchase of a Marxist approach to movements, it pays attention both to the experience of Northern countries and to that of the global South (China, India, Africa, Latin America and the 'black Atlantic'); ranges historically from the 19th to the 21st centuries; and engages with trade unions, slave and colonial revolts, environmentalism, LGBT movements, peace activism and contemporary anti-capitalist struggles around the world.

With such a diverse set of chapters, there is no question of cooking up, in this volume, *the Marxist theory of social movements*. No such thing exists. Indeed, the reader will find disagreements among our authors, not just in emphases, but in interpretation both of social movement studies *and* of Marxism. Nevertheless, we all agree that it is important to raise the questions of *what a Marxist approach to social movements might look like, and how can students of Marxism and social movements learn from each other?* In answering these questions, the contributors to the volume emphasise different criteria: some are more concerned with faithfulness to the writings of Marx and later authors; others with the empirical and logical strengths offered by a Marxist approach; while others emphasise Marxism's usefulness for movements. Like the listserv discussion that preceded the proposal stage of this book—and there are many worthy contributions for which we simply could not find space—this volume is an invitation to what we hope will become a spirited conversation.

In This Volume

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals with theoretical frameworks. It explores the possibilities of relating Marxism to social movement theory by asking two sets of questions. What theory of social movements might be said to be implicit within Marxism? And how might a Marxist approach to movements respond to the silences and limitations of conventional social movement theory?

Colin Barker's chapter suggests that the language of 'class struggle' can be translated into a language of 'social movement' – with a Marxist accent. While contemporary social movement theories rightly stress the network character of social movements, they pay less attention to their heterogeneity and internal debates. Marx and Engels' writing presents an enormous variety of movements which together encompassed both 'the class struggle' and 'the social movement in general': a perspective on totality which is characteristic of Marxism. In contemporary capitalism, as the relationship of states and movements has changed, 'the class struggle' now runs not simply between movements

but also through them. These developments pose new problems, in areas such as transformations during mass struggles, contradictions in popular consciousness and the relationship of organizations to movements, which this chapter discusses in relation to the work of Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky and Gramsci.

Alf Nilsen and Laurence Cox take up the argument that although Marxism was written ‘from and for’ social movements, it lacks an explicit theory of social movements. Their chapter sets out to formulate such a theory, outlining a conception of social movements as both ‘from below’ and (typically, more powerfully) ‘from above’ and proposing the interaction between these as key in the making and unmaking of social structures. It explores some of the key aspects of this encounter, and proposes a processual analysis in which movements can develop from one level of strength and complexity to another.

Gabriel Hetland and Jeff Goodwin take up the problem from the other side, as it were, in one of two chapters that engages social movement theory more explicitly. They suggest that while 1970s scholarship on social movements often integrated an understanding of capitalist dynamics, more recent work has largely ignored the enabling and constraining effects of capitalism despite the ever-increasing power of global capitalism. Rather than ascribe this to the shift of attention towards ‘new’ social movements that have little or nothing to do with capitalism, this chapter shows how the LGBT movement has been powerfully shaped by capitalism, despite neither representing a class nor making primarily economic demands.

John Krinsky takes a different cut at the same issues, but ties together issues within U.S.-dominated social movement theory and the Marxist approaches laid out in Barker and Cox and Nilsen’s earlier chapters. Specifically, the chapter focuses on five areas of Marxist theory - totality, contradiction, immanence, coherence, and praxis - that can more effectively synthesize the disparate parts of contemporary social movement theory and research into a whole that is both more critical and more useful for activists.

The second part of the book explores what a Marxist perspective on social movements has to offer by way of concrete analysis, arguing for a more developmental and dialectical understanding of how movements actually work and in exploring the political questions facing movement activists and thinkers. It draws on historical and contemporary cases from three continents to bring Marxist theory to bear on questions about organization, institutionalisation, and engagement with the state. Each chapter probes the immanent potentials in existing forms of popular self-organization.

Laurence Cox's chapter takes up more explicitly the nineteenth century usage of 'social movement' as the political self-organisation of the majority of society, a notion which entails a broader sense of possibility and a more interactive sense of social movement development than exists in mainstream social movement theory. It articulates this position theoretically in relation to E.P. Thompson's classic *Making of the English Working Class* - a pivotal book in Marxist thought and in social history - and empirically in relation to the immense variety of working-class self-organisation in contemporary Ireland, which typically eludes more static approaches.

Marc Blecher explores the relationship between the nature of the Chinese working class and the forms of proletarian movements in China from early twentieth century industrialisation until now. His chapter argues that the close interconnection of workplace and community in China led to a flourishing of local workplace struggles at the same time as it made it hard to extend working-class power to the regional or national level. Like Cox's piece, it extends the conversation on class formation that was so fertile in the 1980s to social movement theory and contemporary concerns in a way that resituates it at one of the key centres of contemporary capitalist expansion.

Taking aim at both state-centric views of social movements as seeking to restore the developmental state and post-structuralist understandings of movements as rejecting modernisation *tout court*, Alf Gunvald Nilsen's chapter analyses popular opposition to the Narmada dam projects in contemporary India. In showing this opposition's intimate relationship with changing modes of state action as well as its strategic failure in relying on the state as the locus for political action, it contests both state-centric and post-structuralist understandings of the constraints placed on movements by their opponents and by their own stances towards the state. Echoing, in some respects, mainstream social movement scholarship on institutionalisation, 'channeling' of protest, and movement-countermovement dynamics, it nevertheless goes beyond this work by resituating the questions on the broader canvas of global development politics.

Patrick Bond, Ashwin Desai and Trevor Ngwane analyze the contemporary impasse on the left in South Africa, made all the more pressing by the extremely high levels of protest there. Drawing on Trotsky's theory of 'combined and uneven development', they explain the development of the problems of neoliberal cooptation of movements to 'service delivery' from agitation, the strong tendencies toward localism in the widespread protests of the 'poors', and the failures of movement leadership in the context of the neoliberal program unleashed after apartheid by the African National Congress and its governing allies, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African

Communist Party. They propose a 'combined and uneven Marxism' as a way to investigate the systematic and conjunctural aspects of the current impasse, and that fully recognizes the importance of the development of organic intellectuals from within the growing number of different sectors of South African society that are under neoliberal attack.

Ralph Darlington's chapter looks at debates within industrial relations about bureaucracy and rank-and-file relations within trade unions. It argues, against criticism that the dichotomy is conceptually unsound, that a Marxist approach can give it nuance and multidimensionality. Darlington makes the case that the 'Michelsian dilemma' of inexorable bureaucratisation is not an 'iron law'. Rather, bureaucratisation is a process that occurs in particular cases, and to greater or lesser degrees, through a set of determinations both internal and external to an organization. The chapter suggests a broader applicability of this approach to social movement organizations beyond labour.

A context of extreme repression, the uprooting of an annual encampment of protesting teachers, led to the 2006 uprising in Oaxaca (Mexico) that Chris Hesketh examines in his chapter. Drawing on the Marxist geography of figures such as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, Hesketh compares the Oaxaca uprising to the Zapatista uprising in 1994 in terms of the 'spatial projects' that each expressed. The central idea is that capital requires the conquest of space, and that the APPO movement in Oaxaca and the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, in different ways and with varying degrees of success, extended new social relations over spaces that Mexican and international capital sought for its own. Hesketh acknowledges that these spatial projects are incomplete, and raises the question of whether these insurrectionary projects are at all compatible with parliamentary strategies or other engagements with the state that risk the 'reinscription' of the movements into the 'normal' politics of 'coerced marginalisation' of Mexico's poor and indigenous communities.

The third section of the book is largely comparative-historical, drawing on a variety of historical cases to develop ideas about how to understand contemporary movement formations. It builds on the previous sections in that it probes areas of activity that social movement studies often leave aside, such as the development of localised oppositional cultures, contradictory consciousness, and the importance of the *longue durée* in political analysis.

The section begins with Paul Blackledge's observation that social movement theory has largely sidestepped the investigation of the 'cultures of resistance' that generate all manner of challenges to the 'rule of law,' including social movements. Blackledge draws

on the British Marxist Historians of the mid-20th century, arguing that Bakhtinian views of language can underwrite their ideas of class consciousness and identity, and offer a response to postmodernist challenges. He invites us to recognize that even other movements that make claims for specific identities, and that pursue direct action rather than radical reformism - i.e. 'new social movements' - are best seen as different aspects of a reaction to capitalist alienation. He asks, in other words, that we see apparently different sorts of movements as related facets of a whole, but whose mediations through language differ and diverge.

Neil Davidson also considers different sorts of social movements, but here trains his focus on right-wing movements, such as Catholic Absolutism in 19th century Naples, the Ku Klux Klan in the postbellum American south, and the Irish Protestant Ascendancy in the early 1920s. Davidson cuts against the grain of Nilsen and Cox's argument about social movements from above, as he insists that right wing movements can also be 'from below' both in terms of their class origins, and in terms of their challenge to the hegemony of ruling elites. Davidson then applies lessons from these cases to the current surge of 'Tea Party' politics in the United States. He takes issue with Lenin's suggestion that even when masses' revolt is motivated by their most 'reactionary fantasies' they are '*objectively attacking capital*'. Instead, Davidson argues - this time *with* Lenin - that socialists have to remain committed not just to following movements, but to offering direction to them.

Hira Singh offers a historical defence of class analysis when applied to nineteenth century India, both that part under British rule and that under Indian jurisdiction. He shifts the ground in this section somewhat away from questions of consciousness, but complements Høgsbjerg's argument for what critical race theorists call 'intersectionality', or the mutual reinforcement and mutual alteration of various 'types' of oppression and resistance. Seeing the division of India into separate jurisdictional areas as the outcome of resistance to colonialism over the long period of British involvement, Singh takes equal aim at Marx's own writings on India (which saw the Revolt of 1857 as an anomalous outburst) and at writers in the Subaltern Studies tradition for not fully appreciating the dynamics of colonial class formation in India.

Questions about 'reactionary fantasies' and much else resurface in Christian Høgsbjerg's chapter on C.L.R. James' *History of Negro Revolt*. James' classic work on the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, was situated within a larger perspective on the importance of black movements in the making of the modern world.⁶⁵ His analysis took in the U.S. from the Civil War to Marcus Garvey, anti-colonial rebellions and millennial

⁶⁵ James 2001.

religion in Africa, and contemporary struggles in the Caribbean. Importantly, far from discounting protest that was not explicitly - or even 'objectively' - class-based, James argued eloquently for the importance of autonomous Black protest, even when it took such forms as Garveyism or the otherworldly Jehovah's Witnesses. James probed what Gramsci called 'contradictory consciousness', i.e., the mismatch between how people live and how they talk about their lives and form belief systems about them. James saw in these contradictions potentials that could be developed in directions different from those of nationalism and religious fervour, holding up the 'San Domingo' – Haitian - revolution as a comparative yardstick. Further, the chapter uses James' work to think about the dialectical relationship both between the political economy of global capitalism and racialised hierarchies of domination, and between processes of class and racialised struggle as an important corrective to analyses which place 'race' and 'class' as essentially opposed identities.

The last four chapters of the book focus on contemporary social movements against neoliberal capitalism and the difficulty of confronting a mode of governing that explicitly attacks collectivities.

Chik Collins uses a Marxist approach to cognition, developed through the work of Lev Vygotsky, and broadly compatible with the 'dialogical' theories of language propounded by Bakhtin and Vološinov. He explores how the Scottish state's re legitimisation of the 'political voice' of the poor gave working-class organisers early warning of a new twist in the neo-liberal agenda, which sought to pit the poor against their own organisations. The chapter gives a twist on the organisational studies in the second part of the book by showing how state actors can seek to insert themselves into class formation, by claiming for themselves the right to speak for the poor. The chapter also offers an example of a direct involvement of research with community organising.

Elizabeth Humphrys develops Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual to distinguish between movement campaigners, who focus on a single sector of the movement, and movement dialoguers, who aim to give expression to a wider process of social change. Reflecting on the absence of a structure for such dialoguers in the Australian global justice movement, she argues that this was an important cause of its rapid collapse after September 11th 2001. Humphrys' chapter dovetails well with work in social movement studies that investigate the strategic importance of people occupying various positions in movement networks. That she derives a similar perspective from Gramsci's work is another indication of the fruitfulness of greater interchange.

Heike Schaumberg, by contrast, asks a fundamental question about the self-organization of the working class. In contrast to Humphrys' shared interest with Gramsci in identifying leadership positions and potentials within movements, Schaumberg draws on a study of the 2001 uprising in Argentina to argue that that inherited notions of what organisation looks like block us from understanding new or alternative forms of working-class self-organisation. This is important both because neoliberal policies' destruction of working-class communities' organisational infrastructure generates new organisation, which may be more or less conducive to political action and more or less likely to attract official repression.

David McNally's analyses the dialectics of working-class reformation in the neoliberal period. He discusses the convergence of campesino and indigenous resistance with rural and urban wage-labourer resistance in Bolivia (2000-2007) and Oaxaca (2006) into new kinds of class movements, and suggests that there is a common dynamic between them and the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, where radical labour unions played key coordinating and instigating roles in the protests in early 2011. McNally shows that these are processes of class formation and of generalising a new class consciousness. Citing E.P. Thompson, he argues that in these struggles, 'class manifests itself in and through key dynamics of modern society'; it describes '*the way the machine works* once it is set in motion - not this interest or that interest, but the *friction* of interests - the movement itself, the heat, the thundering noise.'

We feel that between them the various chapters and perspectives collected in this volume show the 'reality and power, the 'this-worldness' of Marxist thinking on social movements, and demonstrate its relevance to movement activists and researchers alike. In reflecting on, distilling and articulating the development of movement practice and theory across so many movements, periods and regions of the world they also continue the deeper Marxist project of a theory which is not simply 'applied from above' to the popular movements that shake states and transform economic relations but remains open to learning and dialogue in both directions.

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