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Taking Socialism Seriously

Edited by
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TEN

Social Movements and Struggles for Socialism

John L. Hammond

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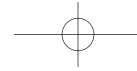
Social movements are the means by which masses of oppressed people struggle for social change. Relatively powerless people can amass and accumulate power, challenge their subordination, and win concessions from or overthrow existing power structures. The large numbers and strong commitment of participants can sometimes compensate for their lack of power. But they do more than struggle for power. They empower the participants themselves, create collective consciousness and organization, and shape the culture of the society in which they act. Participation in a social movement is a collective activity and thus is itself part of the preparation for life under socialism.

[10.1]

In this paper I examine the ways in which social movements can contribute to the struggle for socialism. They have been an important vehicle for that struggle for the last two centuries. If socialism is to represent the goal of the large majority of the population (as I believe it must if it is to succeed), then large numbers of people must be involved in its achievement. Today's economic and political crisis can only be resolved by socialism, so it is essential that socialists understand the importance of movements in bringing socialism about.

[10.2]

Most of the movements I discuss are not movements for socialism, but for some much more partial kind of social change. I examine these movements because I believe that present conditions do not offer a realistic way for movements to struggle explicitly for socialism. (I do not discuss today's sectarian parties, none of which in my opinion promotes any realistic struggle for socialism.) I will argue, however, that although the



goals of such partial struggles fall well short of socialism, and even when they do not achieve their stated objectives, their process of organization, their successes, and their failures can prepare the ground for a struggle for socialism and for a socialist future.

I present this discussion in the spirit of optimism of the will, emphasizing the ways in which these movements can lead the way to socialism. I do this not because I believe that they offer any guarantee (my intelligence is too pessimistic for that) but because we must understand the possibilities and keep them in mind. We must remember past experiences and envision future possibilities expansively. As we do so, we change the limits of the possible.

[10.3]

So the emphasis in this paper is on positive possibilities, even though the reality has generally fallen short. I will not spend time discussing the shortcoming of social movements that fail to live up to their objectives. In the conclusion to the paper, however, I will discuss some limitations built into the very process of social movements which limit their chances of success.

[10.4]

In this paper I will elide two important definitions: of socialism and of social movements. I do not lay down any prescription for the structure of a socialist society. I understand it as the fulfillment of very general values: equality, freedom, justice, and solidarity. These values must not only inform our vision of the future; they must be integral to the movements through which we pursue it.

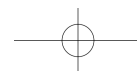
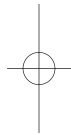
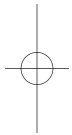
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Nor will I define social movements precisely. We can apply Justice Potter Stewart's principle regarding pornography and say we know one when we see it. When I teach courses on social movements, I prefer to leave the concept undefined and instead present social movements as a form of activity, or what Charles Tilly calls "clusters of performances."¹ The kind of activity specific to social movements is defined principally by collective purpose, nonmaterial incentives, and noninstitutional action. That is, people who perform the activity of social movements gather on a voluntary basis to achieve some shared goal. Their action is coordinated by their commitment to that goal rather than by any exchange of money or other reward. In the cases examined here, the goal is usually public: it is intended to be binding on the whole society or some group larger than the core of activists.

[10.6]

Further, because my interest is in socialism, I will consider only those movements that I recognize as striving for social justice in some broad sense. It can be argued that social movements are intrinsically emancipatory even when their demands are for restrictions rather than enhancements of human freedom—for example, Deirdre English has suggested that the antiabortion ("right to life") movement, despite attempting to control women's freedom of choice, offers some women a channel for empowering political participation.² Here, however, I will only examine movements in which process and goals appear to me to be congruent.

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[10.8] Such collectivities must be bound together by something more than mutual self-interest or even shared goals. They develop affective bonds of identification and collectively develop a self-awareness that heightens their commitment to the goal. Because they lack the resources to win their goals through conventional political action, they use means that violate social order—their actions are disruptive or contrary to generally accepted norms of behavior, and often violate laws. They can include mass public gatherings, occupying public space illegally, and sometimes violence. Confronting power with large numbers, unity, and transgressive action is what gives them the power to achieve their goals, compensating for the lack of more conventional resources.

[10.9] Trying to specify what is a social movement often leads to confusion because to treat a social movement as an entity suggests a more or less formal organization. How much more or less? Too little organization, as in a crowd action or a state of consensus, and it is not a social movement. Too much organization, as in a political party or a well-established voluntary organization in which activism consists of little more than writing checks, and again it is not a social movement. And the actors in any collective action may or may not be formally affiliated with any organization—or some may be, and others not. Any movement may, moreover, be embodied in several organizations, perhaps collaborating with each other but also competing for active adherents and public support.³

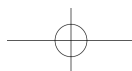
[10.10] For my purposes, it is not necessary to specify the boundaries and ask whether any particular phenomenon is a social movement or not. To treat a movement as a well-defined and bounded organization is to reify; nevertheless, for purposes of this article I will assume that movements can be identified as real entities that act collectively and whose collective action has identifiable effects, oversimplifying without (I hope) reifying.

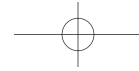
[10.11] In a single article I can hardly offer a comprehensive survey of social movements, or of the literature about them. Readers will see that I draw on a heterogeneous set of organizations and activities. I have made arbitrary choices to discuss movements that illustrate specific points, and I have drawn freely on my own prior research in Portugal and Latin America, which I discuss in some detail. I trust that the many US-based movements which I discuss are well known enough or clearly enough described that I can discuss them more briefly. I also draw on the sociological theory of social movements, but selectively, to make specific points. I do not try to offer a general overview of social movement theory.

[10.12]

THE FIRST SOCIAL MOVEMENT

[10.13] The term “social movement” was coined by Lorenz von Stein to describe the working class movement for socialism in Europe that culminated in the mass socialist parties of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.





Stein first used the term in his *The History of the Social Movement in France* (1846) in which he proclaimed the movement to a state-centered economy that he believed was in progress. The labor movement was historically the most prominent participant in the struggle for socialism. Trade unions were the main force for socialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in Europe.

The earliest workers' movements arose among artisans who were being displaced by mechanized factory production in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Luddites, handloom weavers who sabotaged factories to resist the introduction of mechanical looms, were an early example of workers who combined to develop class consciousness through daily struggles, based on their traditional sense of justice and their reaction to injustice, as E.P. Thompson's classic and still definitive study shows.⁴

[10.14]

These workers resisted the imposition of factory discipline. As the factory system took hold, workers organized within it to improve their wages and working conditions. In Germany, industrial workers created a mass movement that supported the explicitly socialist and Marxism-inspired Social Democratic Party. In the nineteenth century an increasingly homogeneous working class, increasingly subjected to wage labor and the discipline of the factory, lived in relatively cohesive communities where the movement organized social life. Workers participated in a cultural life of musical, theater, hiking, and other kinds of clubs in which they could develop a social identity as workers and socialists. As we will see, community life and cultural offshoots are an important part of social movements even today.

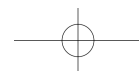
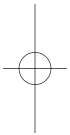
[10.15]

The homogenization of the working class was a slow process. Buffeted by economic fluctuations and political repression, its political organization was never secure. The German movement encompassed various visions of socialism. Ostensibly united around a written program, it was nevertheless divided by strategic differences, particularly regarding its relation to the bourgeois state and the electoral process. Some believed that socialism could be achieved by constitutional means; others saw electoral participation as a way station in preparation for a future rupture; still others argued for complete abstention from formal political participation.⁵

[10.16]

Today the working class, broadly defined, is increasingly heterogeneous in skill, education, and ethnic background, and does not live in homogeneous communities defined by their class composition. Nevertheless the lesson of those early workers' movements remains instructive. In the US today, the labor "movement" is called a movement only by historical memory. Organized unionism, weakened by the changing industrial structure, the globalization of the economy, and the political attack it has suffered under increasingly conservative federal administrations, has also been weakened by its own organizational sclerosis. Large

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unions are ossified bureaucracies; most do not work for social change. Their steadily shrinking membership is enrolled through involuntary (whether or not unwanted) dues checkoffs from their paychecks and have no active association or activity within the “movement.”

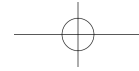
[10.18] Some current efforts to revive unionism follow the social movement model. A relatively small number of locals within a few unions have adopted what is called “social movement unionism,” organizing workers and allies on the basis of community membership. Social movement unionism is modeled on union movements that fought dictatorships in the last decades of the twentieth century, notably in Brazil, South Africa, and South Korea. In the United States, this new form of organizing has broken new ground, especially in low-paying service sectors such as hotels, building services, and health care facilities, all of which are location-dependent, giving a strategic advantage to organizing efforts because they cannot be outsourced.⁶

[10.19] Movements that occupy the same spaces in which people live often have a stronger base for socialization and political activity. They are part of real communities whose existence usually predates the mobilization. The communities in which they are rooted create common sentiments and common interests and provide networks of communication through which people can be activated. As we have already seen, the German working class movement for socialism in the late nineteenth century was rooted in homogeneous communities.

[10.20] Some movements today grow out of, or are located in, homogeneous communities of subordinate people who recognize their shared interest and mobilize on that basis. The indigenous movements that have recently won striking political victories in Andean countries, especially Bolivia and Ecuador, are based in communities that are often far from urban centers and outside the dominant mestizo culture. The people living in them are poor and discriminated against as “Indian.”

[10.21] These communities arise naturally. The same organizations that mobilize for political activity have important functions in everyday life: in agricultural communities they organize market relations and in some cases allocate communal lands for cultivation. They conduct community rituals and festivals. Networks that join people in daily life can be mobilized for political action when it is called for. Community-based organizations are also the site and vehicle for the assertion of a distinct indigenous culture.⁷

[10.22] Another movement where the spaces for work, living, and mobilization are nearly identical is the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* or MST), a rural movement that occupies land to create farms for farmers without access to land. For more than a decade the MST has been the most dynamic social movement in all Brazil. It organizes unemployed and landless farm workers to take over idle, absentee-owned farmland. When occupiers take over a



property to farm, they create a community where they live and work. Through engagement in earning a living, political self-defense, and education, they develop a sense of solidarity. The MST's settlements are collective, and the people in them create a community life and local institutions (such as schools and marketing cooperatives) whose existence is part of their mission to create a just and productive society.⁸

The MST is one of the few movements discussed in this paper that is explicitly committed to socialism. In pushing for land redistribution, the movement offers peasants a means to make a living on the land and at the same time pursues its goal of a general agrarian reform as part of a socialist society.

[10.23]

The MST's communities are therefore created by the movement itself. While most people live and work on the farms full time, activists are recruited from them for full-time organizing or to study to be teachers or cooperative specialists in the movement's high schools and in universities. Those living on the settlements are available to participate in the movement's mass actions—land occupations, marches, and educational and cultural activities.

[10.24]

The most important political movement in the United States in the twentieth century, the civil rights movement, was also rooted in communities. Oppressed blacks in the American South came together, primarily in churches, to protest segregation and their exclusion from full citizenship. The existing networks of communication and solidarity formed the basis from which they organized to protest and demand their rights.⁹

[10.25]

Worker cooperatives and worker-controlled firms, examined in more detail below, are in some ways similar; members of cooperatives do not necessarily live together but they collaborate daily to keep their businesses going. The primary incentive for the farm workers and the cooperative members is, of course, material: they earn a living through the movement. But the solidarity incentive of working together to achieve a goal is important in sustaining them.

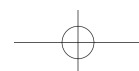
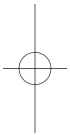
[10.26]

Today social movement activists do not usually share a community life or a work life that creates links beyond their common activism. Nor is movement activism the center of most people's lives. In most movements in industrialized countries and in urban movements in poorer countries, participation is segmental and detached from work, family, and other activities. Nor are they necessarily socially homogeneous.

[10.27]

How can movements get organized when they do not have a natural community base and when participation is segmented? Drawing on such community relations strengthens movements, but most movements today organize without them. Networks are still key in organizing social movements—people who participate in the same social network are likely to share the identification and affective bonds on which participation in social movements at least partly depends; they may also, at least potentially, share a predisposition to embrace the same causes. Today, how-

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ever, networks are less tied to the residential community so mobilization must occur on other bases.¹⁰ Electronic networks form the basis of many movements today, but some argue that increased breadth does not make-up for a shallowness that is due to the lack of face-to-face interaction.

[10.29]

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

[10.30]

In Gramscian terms, the movements discussed in this paper wage a war of position rather than a war of maneuver; they do not assault the state directly but work in civil society to create the cultural and organizational conditions for political change.¹¹ I will argue that they contribute to political struggles in four main ways:

[10.31]

1. Empowerment: For individuals, social movements cultivate skills, confidence, and commitment. Acting in concert with others for a common cause solidifies one's commitment to the cause. The very act of transgressing everyday norms creates a sense of power by showing that it is possible even for people who consider themselves powerless to take action on behalf of their commitments.

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2. Prefiguration: At the collective level, movements prefigure the social relations that we hope to see prevail in socialism. They do so in three major ways: community, democracy, and decommodification.

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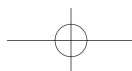
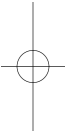
3. Cultural shift: Movements influence culture beyond their own activists by challenging received norms and presenting alternatives that redefine the universe of permissible discourse. When activists transgress boundaries, they demonstrate the existence of new possibilities to others who actually or potentially share their interests even if they are not directly involved, and may be encouraged to join them or at least reconsider their assumptions.

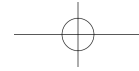
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4. Policy impact: Through movements, subordinate groups acquire the power to win political victories. They can exert pressure on officials to adopt policies they favor, compelling those who are hostile to the cause and fortifying the ones who are sympathetic.

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Before considering each of these possible effects of social movements in more detail, let me pause for a brief theoretical reflection and an example. This article cannot offer a complete account of social movement theory, but it will be useful to introduce some conceptual distinctions. The first two effects are felt in the movement itself and by its participants; the last two are effects on the world outside of the movement. The sociological theory of social movements has conventionally distinguished between two types of movements (or sometimes two functions of movements), expressive and instrumental (or, in Jean L. Cohen's formulation, focused on identity or strategy). In this view, when a movement's activities are focused inward, they serve expressive functions, and when they are focused outward, they serve instrumental functions. Sometimes the same





movement is characterized by some analysts as primarily instrumental and by others as primarily expressive.¹²

I believe, however, that movements must be understood as having elements of both. Let me illustrate this with a brief discussion of the US women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s. I will assume that, despite all its internal diversity, it can be characterized as a single movement. It evidently embodied elements of both strategy and identity. The women's movement had two branches, generally referred to as the older and younger branches.¹³ The main organizational embodiment of the older branch was the National Organization for Women (NOW); the younger branch was more loosely organized in the consciousness-raising groups that proliferated during the period. They did tend, though not absolutely, to attract older and younger women respectively.

[10.36]

NOW emphasized legal change in the status of women; other related organizations concentrated on the election of women to public office; in both cases they directly worked for change in public policies that oppressed women. The younger branch was more concerned to establish that "the personal is political," and attempted to raise women's consciousness of the oppression to which they were subject in interpersonal relations, especially with intimate partners but also in everyday interaction with work colleagues, superiors, and friends and acquaintances. It also showed a penchant for audacious public performances which dramatized the demand for freedom from sexist oppression.

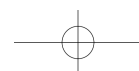
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Important legal and political changes followed, upholding women's rights to abortion and to equality in education and employment. Some changes came with amazing speed, although taken together they fell far short of abolishing sexism. Personal change ensued as well, in the intimate relations and career goals not only of the most committed feminists but in the lives of many other women who did not participate actively in the movement, and in a broader (male) public forced to confront its own sexist practices. The two branches were complementary and, in retrospect, the distinction between them loses much of its meaning. Their complementarity is evident in Betty Friedan's choice of a title for her memoir of the movement: Friedan, first president of NOW and leading figure of the older branch, called her book by the younger branch's mantra. *It Changed My Life*.¹⁴

[10.38]

While the women's movement has been criticized for emphasizing the aspirations of middle class women to professional and well-paid employment and neglecting the needs of women who were poor, from the working class, or members of minority groups,¹⁵ it exposed the depths of women's oppression and made major strides toward overcoming it. The movement was not entirely homogeneous in class or racial terms; "bourgeois feminism" opened up opportunities for women of all backgrounds to organize and assert their claims.

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[10.40] With more detail, I will now present some examples of recent social movements and the ways in which they have the four effects that I highlight above as potential contributions to socialism.

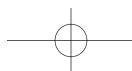
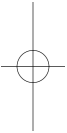
[10.41] *Empowerment*

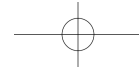
[10.42] Participation in social movement activity is empowering. The fact of collective participation and the recognition that it is possible to struggle for social change create a sense of power in participants, even in the event of failure. People who participate in actions that are costly in time and effort, and even more when the actions are disruptive and risk sanctions, find their commitment strengthened by their participation and by the recognition that they *can* transgress normal rules for the sake of their commitment. The very fact of gathering with large numbers in a public space to express a demand can be a heady experience ratifying one's commitment to the cause and creating confidence in the result, especially when such gatherings are forbidden or subject to repression. The reports and images from the Arab uprisings in the winter and spring of 2011 provide stirring examples.

[10.43] Participation gives activists a new light on their world: their new interpretation of social reality makes the cause (more) central to their lives, recasts their understanding of the rest of the world in light of it, draws boundaries between those who are for and against, and identifies allies clearly.

[10.44] Numerous studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, testify to the long-term consequences of movement activism in people's lives. Most studied are the activists of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States and Europe. Research has shown that they—who were generally young when they were most active—remained active in their adult lives in support of the causes that they had worked for and others that grew out of them. Most notably, many of the women formed in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements became committed and active feminists when the women's movement flourished. Women and men were more likely than others of their generation to choose careers in which they could continue to work for social change.¹⁶

[10.45] Some movements, especially those that recruit among the underprivileged and less educated, make a point of educating their activists so that they develop the skills that will give them the confidence to assert themselves collectively. Popular education in El Salvador during the civil war in the 1980s and freedom schools in the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 are instances where education in skills, beginning with basic literacy, and political education about the nature of their oppression equipped people to assert their rights. Both educational experiences used a pedagogy of empowerment in which learning was active and drew on the learn-





ers' life experiences, and teachers identified with learners and learned with them.

Educación popular means education of, by, and for the *pueblo*—organized by people in their own community, outside of the control of the official education system. It was an integral part of political struggle in El Salvador. In Christian base communities before the war, in refugee camps in Honduras, and in communities in FMLN-controlled zones, people who themselves had only a few years of education taught others to read. They promoted education in order both to cultivate skills necessary for participation in the struggle and to affirm a belief in the proposition that people are equal by right and a commitment to make them equal in fact.

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Popular education uses a pedagogy that was adopted by politically-inspired education campaigns across Latin America based on the work of the Brazilian literacy pioneer Paulo Freire. Education means more than learning to read. To become politically conscious actors, people had to acquire the skills of the classroom both to achieve confidence in themselves and to be able to perform political tasks. Beyond that, Freire argued that the goal of education should be conscientization, the development of the critical consciousness that will enable learners to recognize and combat the sources of their oppression. Education is not just the acquisition of skills; it is the development of the whole person to exercise the capacity for independent and critical thinking.

[10.47]

Communities organized popular education in FMLN-controlled and contested zones and also in cities and relatively peaceful rural areas. Most combatants and civilians were peasants and few had had much opportunity for schooling in the communities where they grew up. The teachers themselves were poorly educated—many had only a year or two of formal schooling. They had to improvise as they went along.

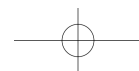
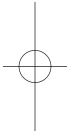
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The war constantly interrupted their work, not only when combat fell nearby, but when tasks of organizing and defense demanded priority over holding classes. But the setting of education in poor communities and in a war zone also created an opportunity. Using the methods of popular education, the insurgent movement strove to fill the gap and provide the education they had never had. It was guided by a vision of education which was tailored to those circumstances, a vision summarized by the very name “popular education.”

[10.49]

Popular education in El Salvador made a material contribution to the insurgents' relative victory in the civil war—they fought the US-backed Salvadoran armed forces to a standoff—because it formed people to perform the necessary tasks, to believe in the goal, and to have a sense of efficacy that they could indeed contribute to that struggle. The will to teach and learn grew out of the commitment to struggle together for economic justice and dignity. Popular education was about politics and organization as much as education. It created a focus for organizing; it

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provided trained personnel to carry out political tasks; and it put into practice the ideology which underlay the Salvadoran struggle, an ideology which declared the equality of all and insisted on the full development of their capacities.

[10.51] The freedom schools in Mississippi during the heyday of the civil rights movement are another example. Freedom schools were part of the 1964 Mississippi summer project sponsored by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and other organizations; it also promoted voter registration and a challenge to the Democratic Party's presidential nominating convention. The schools themselves, though organized somewhat spontaneously, attracted several thousand black children, teenagers, and adults. According to John Dittmer, they offered "a creative, anti-authoritarian, student-centered approach to learning."¹⁷

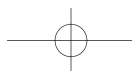
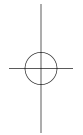
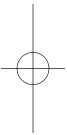
[10.52] Literacy was particularly important to the civil rights struggle because of the literacy requirement for voting and the discriminatory manner in which it was applied. But the Mississippi freedom schools were about much more than learning to read. First, knowing how to read was an assertion of one's independence and determination to struggle. Second, the political knowledge gained taught people to oppose segregation and claim their rights.

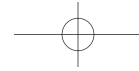
[10.53] Education of activists with little formal schooling is part of the participatory budget process in Porto Alegre, Brazil (discussed in more detail below). Activists are trained in the technical issues of bureaucracy, infrastructure, and budgeting, skills they need to press their demands on their city government.

[10.54] Movement participation also empowers people by confirming their identity. As used by social movements theorists, "identity" refers to collective identity, understood as shared with others of the same social condition (in some sense). Francesca Polletta and James Jasper define collective identity as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. . . . it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity."¹⁸ The concept draws attention to the need of subordinate groups to assert their identity, which may provide the basis for particular lifestyle choices.

[10.55] Some movements (often called "new social movements") are primarily about identity construction.¹⁹ With the exhaustion of the New Left in the US, the practice of many social movements shifted from efforts to achieve political change ("strategy") to identity formation, and movements were increasingly analyzed in those terms, under the heading of new social movements.

[10.56] To some theorists, generally identified with the resource mobilization perspective on social movements, and perhaps to many casual observers, what a social movement is *about* is its attempt to change the society that surrounds the movement; if a movement focuses on the identity of indi-





viduals, it downplays social change goals. As I have argued in the case of the women’s movement, this opposition is overdrawn. People who are oppressed as members of a group gain strength by affirming pride in their identity. Not only is the shared identity important as an affirmation of membership. It can also be a necessary resource for social struggle. At the same time, emphasis on identity can favor collective actions that are not exclusively oriented to the state. Oppressed people can affirm their identity by creating autonomous spaces of democratic practice.²⁰

[10.57]

The experience and success of one movement can serve as an example to other constituencies. The civil rights movement in the United States inspired many struggles for liberation among other ethnic groups, women, gays, and the disabled, which adopted and adapted its goals and strategic repertoires.²¹

Prefiguration

[10.58]

Many movements for social justice attempt to anticipate in their own social relations the future society they aim to create. They are prefigurative: they try to embody “within the ongoing political practice of a movement . . . those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal.”²² Social movements attempt to prefigure future social relations in three main ways: community, democracy, and decommodification.

[10.59]

The creation of community in the spirit of socialist construction is illustrated by G.A. Cohen’s introduction to his book *Why Not Socialism?* He presents a group camping trip as a model for socialist social relations:

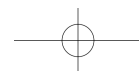
[10.60]

Our common aim is that each of us should have a good time, doing, so far as possible, the things that he or she likes best. . . . [P]eople cooperate within a common concern that, so far as is possible, everybody has a roughly similar opportunity to flourish, and also to relax, on condition that she contributes, appropriately to her capacity, to the flourishing and relaxing of others. In these contexts most people, even most antiegalitarians, accept, indeed, take for granted, norms of equality and reciprocity. So deeply do most people take those norms for granted that no one on such trips questions them: to question them would contradict the spirit of the trip.²³

[10.61]

I belong to a group which operates very much like Cohen’s camping trip except that it is ongoing. For ten days every June, a group known variously as Summer Camp or Bear Rock (the name of the camp where we gather) meets to share a common life. We swim, boat, play games, hike, have discussions, and take meals in common. The tradition is nearly forty years old (I have not been part of it for nearly that long) and the group is multigenerational. People who grew up going to Summer Camp every year now bring their own children.

[10.62]

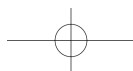
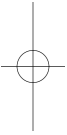


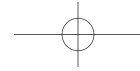


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- [10.63]** A varying population of around one hundred people takes part. During the rest of the year a core group does the work necessary to hold the group together and ensure that the June gathering will go smoothly. At camp we form work teams that rotate among the duties of cooking, cleaning, and child care (all the adults, including those who are not parents, as well as the older children, do a stint to free the parents during at least part of every day). Everyone is free to participate or not in any recreational activity.
- [10.64]** Probably no one believes that we are changing the world by going to Summer Camp, but our common politics is one of the things that brings us together and our gatherings do help sustain us for other activities that we hope will contribute to changing the world.
- [10.65]** Social movements try to capture the spirit of community that Summer Camp exemplifies in their relations within the group. Feelings of solidarity and community are an important part of the motive for participation. This is not to say that community is always achieved, especially in the contentious atmosphere frequently found in left movements in the United States. Nevertheless, because participation is voluntary, it must be enjoyable; so participants look for good social relations.
- [10.66]** Closely related to the ideal of community in prefigurative social movements is that of participatory democracy. In the antinuclear movement of the 1980s, Barbara Epstein finds a new kind of movement: many in the Clamshell Alliance in New England and the Abalone Alliance in California felt that community building and acting out their vision were at least as important as contesting nuclear power.²⁴ Prefigurationists often emphasize nonviolent direct action as their preferred mode of operation, but the prefiguration comes not so much in their public protests as in their adoption of a style of interaction among themselves based on consensus formation, affinity groups, and pacifist principles of action to govern the movement itself.
- [10.67]** Francesca Polletta shows that participatory democracy has a longer history. She identifies the internal structure that participatory movements consciously work to implement: a minimal division of labor, decentralized authority, an egalitarian ethos, direct and consensus-oriented decisionmaking.²⁵ In such movements, leadership is limited; all participants have an equal opportunity to influence decisions.
- [10.68]** Polletta examines several movements in the US in the twentieth century which have attempted to implement participatory democracy, emphasizing the civil rights movement, the New Left, and the women's movement. The principles of voice and equality within a movement, usually with rigorous attention to procedures to insure it, are inseparable from each movement's social change goals. Activists embraced the Gandhian principle, "Be the change you want to see." Or, one might say, the movement is the message.





Polletta shows that it took work (“an endless meeting,” in the title of her book) and some activists felt that it distracted from goal-oriented activity, but she argues strongly that internal democracy, in addition to expressing the ideal of the movements, was adopted for pragmatic reasons and made the movements more effective.

[10.69]

A final aspect of prefiguration is decommodification, the production and distribution of products or services outside of the marketplace. I will discuss two examples: worker-controlled workplaces and alternative institutions. Rather than attempt to survey a vast literature on worker-controlled workplaces,²⁶ I will draw on my own research on worker control in the Portuguese revolution of 1974-1975.²⁷ During that revolution many production and service firms came under worker control.

[10.70]

Most of the worker-controlled firms were rescued by their workers from the brink of bankruptcy. They were inspired less by ideology than by the need to keep firms running in the face of owner abandonment and an economic crisis that made other employment opportunities scarce. Nevertheless, they practiced real worker control. (They called it *autogestão* or self-management.) Though they generally maintained traditional work organization, all received equal incomes; workers took steps to level hierarchical authority; and, by mobilizing their commitment to the firms and to each other, they salvaged foundering enterprises and often increased production and employment.

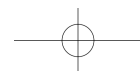
[10.71]

Worker control is difficult and requires a great deal of commitment from all participants. The firms’ precarious economic circumstances often meant that workers had to accept reduced salary (or none at all) for periods of time. In addition to the daily routine of production, they spent a lot of time debating management decisions. Most of the worker-controlled firms were small (many larger firms were nationalized outright; in others, government officials named the managers) and had been directly managed by their owners, so there were few workers with management experience; the most politically active workers, often from jobs low in the hierarchy, constituted a management committee. But consultation with all workers was intense, with frequent meetings to establish policies and monitor the managers’ implementation of them. Those who assumed management positions had to learn how to get credit, make purchases, and distribute products (or in the case of service industries, find customers).

[10.72]

Despite the commitment to universal participation, the firms I studied did little to alter work routines. Consultation was continuous, but some workers were clearly the managers and directed the work of others. They did not adopt job rotation; where there was an assembly line, it was maintained. But they were equal in other ways: the salary range was dramatically narrowed, especially at the top. In some cases new benefits were offered equally to all workers (such as bus passes and supplements to state-provided disability payments). Some instituted nominal profit-

[10.73]





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sharing, though usually retaining in the firm the profits that were credited to the workers.

[10.74] Beyond these incomplete steps to economic equality, an atmosphere of social equality prevailed in these firms which workers compared favorably to extreme expectations of deference toward capitalist managers in the past. Some firms had an extracurricular social life of outings, parties, and soccer teams. Workplaces were brightened with potted plants, birds in cages, and murals that demonstrated the affection workers had for their shops. Workers spoke quite consciously of the social value of such activities to the firms; in precarious economic conditions they knew that the firms' survival depended on their getting along well.

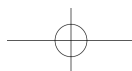
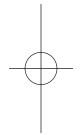
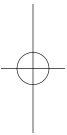
[10.75] These firms operated on different principles from those under capitalist management. Because workers took over to maintain secure employment, the imperative governing major decisions was not to maximize profits but to maximize and stabilize employment. The emphasis on secure employment meant that workers often refused to let fellow workers be fired, even when a management committee believed that their performance clearly warranted dismissal. An assembly of all workers had to pass on any firings, and they frequently rejected management recommendations and insisted that a worker be given another chance. Job security meant that employment was not subject to the market; workers had control over an aspect of their fate that is normally determined by capitalist imperatives. The firms institutionalized their commitment not to treat labor as a commodity.

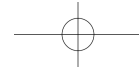
[10.76] Effective job security also reinforced workers' commitment to the demands of economic stability in the firms: they were willing to work very long hours without extra pay as long as they received their basic salary. They claimed that they worked not only longer hours, but harder and with greater enthusiasm. For many of them, worker control was a learning process in which they demonstrated unsuspected abilities.

[10.77] These worker-controlled firms were hardly free of commodity relations. They had to compete in a marketplace with capitalist firms and produce a product that they could sell for money. Though they could not operate completely outside of the market, however, profit was not their main goal. Instead, it was meeting the needs of members and potentially serving larger social and political goals as well.

[10.78] Thus worker control is intrinsically a challenge to capital, both in ownership and in authority, even though it was usually inspired by practical necessity more than ideological conviction. It therefore prepares the ground for socialism. Socialism, moreover, frequently became an explicit objective in many of the Portuguese firms.

[10.79] Alternative institutions, institutions that provide services that are also commercially available but that provide them on a nonmonetary basis, are another example of organizations set up to decommodify exchange. According to Joyce Rothschild and J. Allen Whitt, these organizations





reject the norms of rational bureaucracy and are governed by collectivist-democratic principles. Rothschild and Whitt's definition could encompass the worker-controlled firms just described but their empirical cases are a narrower set of organizations of a type that arose in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, such as free medical clinics, free schools, and legal collectives. The services these organizations provide are available on the market but alternative institutions seek to provide them for free or at low cost to people who may not be able to pay for them.²⁸

[10.80]

More than providing free services for the needy, these organizations adopt an egalitarian internal organization in contrast to the hierarchical organization common in professional service provision. They practice equality in rewards; authority resides in the collectivity as a whole. All members participate in a consensus process to negotiate and formulate decisions collectively. "Members" may include those who in mainstream organizations would be regarded as clients as well as the employees. The organizations cultivate close personal relations rather than bureaucratic impersonality. They eschew formal rules. People are motivated to join and remain not by material rewards or the opportunity for professional advancement but by commitment to an organization's ideals and by the social reward of collaborating with like-minded people who work cooperatively.

Diane Elson talks about an "associative sector" of social organizations formed around social rather than commercial objectives. She offers as an example *Socialist Register*, the annual volume in which her article appears. It and similar organizations are embedded in a market because they must produce and sell a product using financial resources, some paid staff, and a distribution network. But they mainly rely on voluntary labor and supporters' donations. For Elson, the point is not to abolish or bypass markets but to embed them in egalitarian social relations. A publication like *Socialist Register* is not the same as a social movement, but it serves movements for socialism and draws on the same kinds of commitments from people who write for it for free or work for it for lower pay than they could command in a commercial enterprise.²⁹

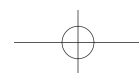
[10.81]

Elson calls this process "socializing" the market rather than withdrawing from it. Whether one regards this as changing or rejecting the market, however, the point is the same: to make market relations egalitarian. Decommodification is not complete: all these groups are entangled with the capitalist market. Organizations where people earn wages do not neatly fit my criteria of social movements, precisely because those who work in them are not volunteers; but they rely on the same sort of commitment both to goals and to processes that establish within the present society institutions and social relations to be expanded and consolidated in the future.

[10.82]

In all these cases, activists practice social-movement-like activity to create institutions which will prefigure social relations as they will exist

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in a future socialist society, even though they are conditioned by market relations. I have presented them in their ideal form and do not want to imply that they all succeed at establishing a utopia of perfect harmony. I will discuss some of their shortcomings in the conclusion to this article. At their best, however, they exhibit the prefigurative process through which social movements can contribute to the future construction of socialism.

[10.84] *Cultural Shift*

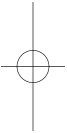
[10.85] Empowerment and prefiguration represent the impact of movements on their own activists; for some, however, the real payoff of movements, the real test of their effectiveness is their impact outside of the movement itself, on the larger society. That impact, when it occurs, can take two broad forms: it can operate through the state or outside of the state. Impacts that pass through the state I call policy impacts; those outside of the state I consider cultural shifts.

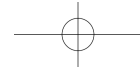
[10.86] Movements can have significant influences on culture, causing changes in the perception and evaluation of the claims made by movements and of the groups whose claims a movement puts forward. Without being too precise, I define culture broadly as encompassing the thoughts, opinions, and practices prevalent in a society or in a substantial segment of a society.

[10.87] People usually take culture for granted. They interpret events and perceptions in the light of their preconceptions. How we understand our conscious perceptions depends on the frame we place around them without thinking. Frames are “‘schemata of interpretation’ that enable individuals ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action.”³⁰ A frame consists of background assumptions that affect the way we see what is contained in it.

[10.88] Disruptions of perception or action break frames open. The public performances of movements challenge the taken-for-granted, and in so doing shift the frame: people become aware of new ways to see things. Shifting the frame may engender hostility among those whose unquestioned world views are challenged. A movement must shift the frame in such a way that the new possibility becomes not only recognized but accepted, or at least acknowledged as legitimate.

[10.89] The shift to majority support for gay marriage in US public opinion is a clear example. A decade ago the notion that two people of the same sex could marry was, if not repugnant, then laughable to a large part of the population. Without the active legal challenges to the prohibition, the flood of marriages when they became legally permitted, and even the mobilization of opposition, gay marriage could not have become the rec-





ognized and acceptable option that many people now find it. (Legitimation of gay marriage is a state action but at least as noteworthy is the change in public acceptance.)

The formation of new identities can be part of a cultural shift. Studies of how movements form identities generally analyze the effect of participation on participants' sense of themselves,³¹ but movements can also contribute to identity formation in larger publics, and to the public's view of groups that share a collective identity. In this sense, identity formation is part of a process of cultural shift.

[10.90]

Views can differ as to whether cultural shift or policy impact is more important. The difference to a degree parallels that between identity and strategy, already discussed. As I have suggested, the two approaches cannot be neatly separated, though in some cases either cultural shift or policy impact may take priority, either in practice or in the intentions of movement participants.

[10.91]

The claim that a movement was the cause of a cultural change is hard to prove even when heightened mobilization and cultural change in the general public appear to happen concurrently, or nearly so (though in my view causation is hard to deny in the case of gay marriage). A movement is not in any case the only cause of such a change; it often parallels broader social, demographic, and economic changes that affect the culture or the cultural predispositions of a society. Nevertheless an active, mobilized population supporting new views would seem to be an important, possibly a necessary step in achieving that change.

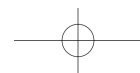
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Dieter Rucht has argued that the environmental movement in Europe and the United States did shift the environmental agenda even when it secured few tangible political measures. It affected both public opinion about the need for environmental protection and the individual behavior of people who conscientiously recycled or adopted other practices to lighten their own environmental footprint.³²

[10.93]

Social movements protesting authoritarian rule and promoting a transition to democracy in Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1980s found that democratization required more than ousting dictators. Citizens had to develop a whole new conception of themselves and their relation to the state, recognizing the "right to have rights." Their culture had been constrained by political repression and its after-effects persisted. In Latin America the democratic transitions were engineered to promote stability and preserve the power of the right. Military rulers only surrendered power on the condition that the new "democratic" governments kept the scope of democratization narrow: notably, officials of the ousted regimes would go unpunished and neoliberal reforms would be maintained.³³ Mass demonstrations nevertheless erupted and people debated endlessly in informal groups and in institutions about the reconstruction of their societies. In these interactions they proved to themselves that they were really free to act in the public space.³⁴

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[10.95] Some movements actively seek to use the media to mold the culture around them. To do so, they stage events to garner attention. Success at getting covered is not an unalloyed blessing, however. Media reports are also contained within a frame. According to William Gamson, “news frames are almost entirely implicit and taken for granted. They do not appear to either journalists or audience as social constructions but as primary attributes of events that reporters are merely reflecting. News frames make the world look natural.”³⁵ A movement will wish the media to frame its claims in terms of injustice and the agency of the people combating the injustice,³⁶ but reporters may instead resort to stereotyping or ridicule.

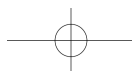
[10.96] Frames can shift, however, as some messages (whether from the media or from movement spokespeople) successfully challenge assumptions. Movements cannot normally expect that their message will form the media’s unquestioned frame, but can only hope that it will be presented at all; the best they can usually hope for is that they will move the discourse to a point where their frame is admitted as a contender and the dominant frame is recognized as susceptible to challenge.³⁷

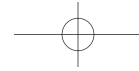
[10.97] *Policy Impact*

[10.98] Many social movements relate primarily to the state and seek some state action. The goals can be formulated in narrow or very general terms and may entail legislation, administrative action, or court judgments. Actions that vividly portray their grievances and demonstrate the breadth of their support can compel officials to act. When officials respond favorably, the movement can claim credit.

[10.99] It is perhaps slightly easier to evaluate the impact of social movements on government action than on a broader culture, if only because government actions are specific and identifiable, whereas cultural shifts are diffuse and hard to verify. But state actions, like cultural shifts, rarely if ever have a single cause. Social movements do not act in a vacuum, and state action depends on many political factors, including public opinion, leadership, alliances, and political opportunity. Even when a state action corresponds to a movement’s demands, then, the movement may not have influenced the outcome—or it may be one among many factors that determined the outcome.³⁸

[10.100] A great deal of research has examined the effect of movements on state actions to identify which types of movement and which political conditions are more likely to produce successful outcomes. Gamson’s pioneering study, based on a random sample of challenging groups in the US, found that many of them succeeded in gaining advantages for their constituencies. Applying statistical controls, he contended that many successes can be attributed to the action of the challenging group itself.³⁹





As with the media, success may consist not in getting the desired outcome but in raising an issue to the consciousness of the public and officeholders. It may also be true that movements are more able to exercise veto power, that is, to prevent undesired outcomes, than to secure exactly the outcome they want.

[10.101]

Alliances matter too. According to one argument, movements that adopt disruptive tactics need alliances with elites, because by resorting to confrontation they lose their legitimacy with authorities, but their disruption enables elites to bargain with those authorities. Jack L. Walker found that when black protest leaders organized disruptions in Atlanta during the segregation era, they “start[ed] fights they [were] unable to finish.” The moderate, acknowledged leaders of the black community could then step in to negotiate a resolution with elected officials.⁴⁰ But Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, in their classic analysis of protest in the United States in the 1930s and 1960s, argue much the opposite: that disruption by the civil rights movement and poor people’s protests in the 1930s won concessions precisely because they rejected such alliances, and that when they moderated their tactics to claim legitimacy they lost influence.⁴¹

[10.102]

A movement often has multiple goals, and they are not always clearly articulated. Even to speak of a movement’s goals is to reify; different actors within a movement may have different goals, and movement protest is often a blunt instrument whose goals are ambiguous. But even government actions that adopt the movement’s goal only minimally may reflect the movement’s impact.

[10.103]

With all these qualifications, there are cases in which we need have few reservations about affirming that movement action contributed to policy change. Sometimes politicians explicitly acknowledge the persuasive or pressure power of social movements, as with the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965. In other cases the close match between a movement’s pressure and official actions is sufficient to establish the connection. The civil rights movement, which I believe was the most effective social movement of the twentieth century in the United States—as well as the most important—won dramatic (though less than complete) victories over racial domination at many levels of government and in many policy areas.

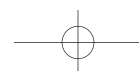
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After the global justice movement (often referred to as the antiglobalization movement) made its public debut at the Battle of Seattle in 1999, multilateral free trade agreements moved off the fast track at least for several years.⁴²

[10.105]

Social movements can contribute to electing progressive governments at the local and national level and push them to implement their progressive programs. In a detailed study of welfare state regimes in advanced industrial societies, Evelyne Huber and John Stephens show that generous welfare states with universal benefits and government responsibility

[10.106]



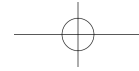
for fulfillment arose almost exclusively in countries where the dominant political forces were social democratic parties and trade unions. In countries where Christian Democrats were strong (and especially where they were in competition with social democratic forces), relatively generous welfare states arose but were more likely to vest benefits in the private sector. Liberal secular states without popular movements did not develop generous welfare state regimes. The mobilization of women was also important: where they entered the labor force in large numbers and organized effective feminist movements, welfare states were more likely to take responsibility for family needs.⁴³

[10.107] Erik Olin Wright and his collaborators (Wright, 2010; Fung and Wright, 2001; Thomas Isaac and Heller, 2003) present several examples of what they call empowered participatory governance, in which a mobilized population pushes a government to adopt public policies designed to meet social needs.⁴⁴ In the participatory budget process already mentioned, pioneered in Porto Alegre, Brazil (and which has since spread to dozens of cities in Brazil, elsewhere in Latin America, and Europe), the state and participatory social movements interact in a process of mutual influence, cooperation and conflict.

[10.108] Every year, open community assemblies in sixteen regions of Porto Alegre debate the municipal investment budget and make recommendations that are passed upward for final approval. They set priorities on how the budget should be allocated among major areas of expenditure, including health, education, urban infrastructure, and economic development, and recommend the specific projects to be funded in each area. Because attendance at local assemblies is one of the criteria for funding, neighborhood residents have an incentive to mobilize. Mobilization also encourages groups in the regions to assess needs and to present them forcefully. Under the participatory budget process, municipal spending in Porto Alegre shifted massively to the poorer areas of the city and citizen participation was high and sustained.⁴⁵ (The Porto Alegre experience also illustrates the mutual dependence between popular mobilization and favorable political conditions. The participatory budget has been much less effective since the Workers Party, which originally promoted it, lost the mayoralty.)

[10.109] T.M. Thomas Isaac and Patrick Heller examine decentralized planning in the state of Kerala, India. There, biennial assemblies in local communities review state economic plans, typically revising their priorities significantly from those made at the district level, emphasizing basic needs such as housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, and irrigation.⁴⁶ The process makes planning an instrument of mobilization and redistribution of resources.

[10.110] One can question whether institutions of empowered participatory governance are social movements. They are often initiated from the state itself. The same question can be asked about worker control, which is not



usually state-initiated but where the fundamental incentive is material. But both empowered participatory governance and worker control require mobilization resembling that in social movements: participants are actively engaged, mobilize collectively, and are committed to the goals. A favorable political context enables them to accumulate sufficient power to press their demands on the state and achieve significant outcomes. Through them people engage in deliberation over their common problems and seek solutions, in the process educating themselves to balance their needs with the technical possibilities. These processes emphasize popular participation and citizenship. New mechanisms for popular participation attempt to unite representative and direct democracy.

Having reviewed four potential effects of social movements—empowerment, prefiguration, cultural change, and policy impact—I must add a fifth, which at first glance is a specification of the first but really subsumes all of them. Participation in social movement opens up new possibilities and opens up participants to new ways of thinking. People learn that the dominant view of how the world works is not an objective fact but a hegemonic imposition. The claim that only those in power are capable of ruling is disproved in practice. They learn that they can challenge the rules and institutions which govern them and apply their power to winning dramatic changes in the conditions of their lives. People become aware of the possibility of transcending their institutions. In social movements people change their minds, and in changing their minds they equip themselves to change the world. By no means do I claim that power is only in our minds and that we can overturn it just by deciding to challenge it. Overcoming received assumptions is nonetheless the necessary first step. That is why we need to study and create movements to carry out socialist construction of thought, of relations, and of institutions.

[10.111]

SOCIAL MOVEMENT DILEMMAS

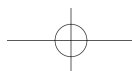
[10.112]

Some readers will doubtless be impatient at my uncritical optimism. I can hear the objections: Not all social movements empower their activists. Not all social movements construct communities of unalienated social relations. Not all social movements cause broad shifts in the surrounding culture. Not all social movements win the political clout to enact policies that establish social justice.

[10.113]

No, they don't. I have admittedly written only about the positive effects of social movements. Many fall short of their goals. In view of the weak state of social movements and the lack of any significant socialist consciousness, especially in the United States, it might appear futile to make this article's argument.

[10.114]





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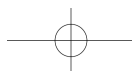
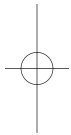
[10.115] But we must find ways to work for socialism. The crisis of the national and international capitalist system demands it. I believe that the lessons of past experiences that I have presented in this article can help us take advantage of that crisis. I have deliberately chosen to present the maximalist position and overlook shortfalls. I do, however, want to examine some problems that arise not because social movements do not live up to their own ambitions, but because of contradictions in their internal working.

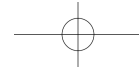
[10.116] I will discuss five problems: the demand for participation, the problem of free riders, the problem of oligarchy, the divisiveness of identity politics, and the impermanence of movements.

[10.117] **The demand for participation:** Does socialism really require us to be fully engaged participants, all of the time? According to models of participatory democracy, everyone must participate in political deliberation. Not everyone finds active debate and discussion gratifying, however. Even when such discussions maintain a reasonable level of civility (often they don't), they privilege intellectual agility and make some people feel inadequate; many will find them a burden. Besides, they take up a lot of time. As Oscar Wilde reportedly said, the problem with socialism is that it would take too many evenings. For many, and to some degree for everyone, the obligation to participate may not enhance but detract from the kind of life we want.⁴⁷

[10.118] **Free riders:** The free rider problem is in a sense the inverse of the demand for full and equal participation. If some choose to abstain, others will have to shoulder their share and bear an undue burden, while those who opt out will get the benefits of others' participation. If each contributes according to his or her ability, then no one should resent unequal contributions. But if some refuse to contribute their share, others will be justifiably resentful and the system will be weaker overall.

[10.119] **Oligarchy:** Unequal participation can lead to unequal power. Those who participate more actively, whether because they are better at it or because they enjoy it, are in a position to coordinate a movement's activities. But coordination easily becomes authority over other people. Participatory movements aim to prefigure a society free of centralization and authority. But when they are successful, they tend to become institutionalized, and leaders gain privileges—often leading them to identify with the existing structure of power rather than challenge it. Robert Michels presented this process as inevitable, citing the supposed "iron law of oligarchy."⁴⁸ It is not inevitable, but it is common. In a world of disciplined parties, it led to dictatorship. In the contemporary world it more often takes the form of transformation of a movement into a nongovernmental organization, needing funding and cultivating close relations with state institutions, thereby undercutting the movement's critical edge.⁴⁹





Identity politics: Does identity politics contradict universal solidarity? We know well enough from the political struggles of the mid- to late-twentieth century that we are not all alike and that overcoming oppression based on ascribed characteristics may require cultivating positive identification with those characteristics. But the danger is that groups based on collective identity will become exclusive, separate from if not rivals of others. And those who do not fall into any subordinate ascriptive category but who nevertheless embrace the goals of socialism may feel marginalized— straight white males, for example, are sometimes relegated to second-class status in the movement.

[10.120]

Even when identity-based movements do not develop rivalries, they can distract from broad struggles for universalistic social justice. That criticism must be balanced with the realization that seemingly universalistic claims may cover up oppression, and oppressed groups must claim recognition on the basis of their identity in order to establish their right to equal citizenship. But the tension with universal solidarity remains.

[10.121]

Evanescence: Social movements do not last. Mobilization extinguishes itself.⁵⁰ The reasons for decline are diverse. They include the aging out of activists, exhaustion, repression or cooptation by authorities, radicalization in the face of short-run failures, and a contagion effect that at times serves the growth of movements but at other times can deflate a broad spectrum of movements simultaneously. The end cannot be predicted and sometimes it can be staved off by heightened efforts or by external shocks, but it makes movements an unreliable vehicle for sustained efforts to achieve change. (This is another reason for the importance of movements rooted in pre-existing communities and organizations.)

[10.122]

Often gains are reversed in phases of declining mobilization. It is possible, however, to use such times to consolidate and institutionalize those gains. Fears that a movement will end must not become an excuse for inaction. Activists must recognize when mobilization is winding down and find ways to any gains permanent.

[10.123]

I do not have a solution for any of these problems. We as socialists must be attentive to them in organizing. Social movements do not always produce these contradictions, but they are dangers. Activists must guard against them as we try to struggle through social movements for the construction of a socialist society.

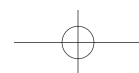
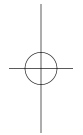
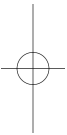
[10.124]

To wage that struggle, I argue, social movements, with all their imperfections, are all that there is. They are the vehicles through which people who hunger for justice and lack other resources can unite to pursue their shared goals. It is incumbent on socialists to do everything we can to create or reactivate movements across a broad range of issues to create the society of equality, freedom, and solidarity we all aspire to.

[10.125]

That task undoubtedly seems utopian in the current political climate of the United States. It is hard to have faith in the power of social movements to move the country even slightly in the direction of socialism at a

[10.126]





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time when progressive movements seem to be totally quiescent. In 2011, the most active movement in the country is the Tea Party. A Herbert Hoover congress is working hard to drive the economy back into recession. Inequality of wealth and income is at record levels, and growing. Progressive movements are hard to find.

[10.127] But we must not despair. We must remember the vital contributions that social movements have made in the past and take them as inspiration and guide to moving forward today. Social movements offer tools that can be used to fight for the kind of society we believe in. We must activate progressive social movements to fight for the social justice and shared prosperity that the country so evidently needs. Or, as Joe Hill said, don't waste any time mourning, organize!

[10.128]

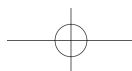
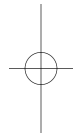
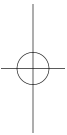
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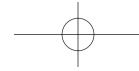
[10.129] When I completed this essay early in September, 2011, I wrote that it was hard to have faith in the power of social movements when they appear to be totally quiescent. Shortly thereafter, Occupy Wall Street erupted. The phenomenon bears on several of the issues that I discuss in this essay.

[10.130] On September 17, inspired by the Arab spring and appealing to the many people who (like myself) are frustrated at the lack of progressive opposition to the interminable wars and the government's bailing out the banks instead of holding them accountable for the financial crisis, a small group occupied Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan and renamed it Liberty Plaza. Calling themselves "Occupy Wall Street" (OWS), they camped out and proclaimed their opposition to economic inequality and the power of corporate finance.

[10.131] Despite the anticorporate stance, OWS is (like most of the movements I have discussed) not explicitly a movement for socialism. It does, however, ratify my counsel not to despair. It is astounding that an electronically networked movement with no formal leadership could spread so quickly to hundreds of cities in the US and elsewhere and involve hundreds of thousands of activists. It reflects a widespread discontent with capitalist institutions, notably gross income inequality and financial-corporation domination of politics and social life. It has permeated the culture rapidly, brought these issues into popular consciousness, and provoked widespread discussion of them.

[10.132] The movement has evidently touched a nerve, because the response has been phenomenal. It is a spectacular demonstration of the power of transgression to move people's minds. Violating public order is a mind-altering experience. Regardless of the results, by the very act of defiance protesters deny the power of authorities that is normally taken for granted. Occupiers and those who applaud them have learned that they can stand up to authorities in defense of a cause about which they feel





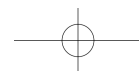
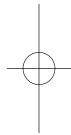
deeply. Indefinite occupation is a new tactic, and it has caught on. Tens of thousands have come out in support in New York, and spinoffs have sprung up in over 1500 cities and towns in the US and around the world.

It is not only the occupiers who are ready to defy authorities. When the city threatened to send in police to dislodge the occupation from Liberty Plaza on October 14, thousands showed up at six o'clock in the morning to defend it. Their presence persuaded the police to call off the eviction. A few days later Governor Cuomo ordered the Albany police to evict an occupation of state government grounds, but the mayor and police chief refused for fear of provoking a riot. These victories demonstrate the power of the people acting collectively to challenge authorities.

One cannot spend an hour at the occupation site in New York without feeling the sense of pulsating, vibrant energy. People mill about, peddle their causes, talk and debate in informal groups and somewhat more formal committees, or meet in the daily General Assembly to make collective decisions. There is a people's library with donated books. Groups are preparing artworks or drumming. Others are busy with logistics: keeping the place clean, receiving food donations and distributing them, preparing the seemingly daily demonstrations, and chatting up the local merchants who have generously allowed the people camping out to use their facilities.

The occupiers emphasize the participatory process of consensus building that has been developed in other direct democracy movements that I have described. But OWS adds an element which is not highlighted in discussions of those groups. It is decentralized: an infinity of activities goes on at the occupation site or proceeds out from it. Any group can try to drum up supporters for a joint action, cultural activity, or small group meeting on the site or off. Sometimes someone shouts out an appeal and raises a small, spontaneous crowd of a few hundred to march to a demonstration called by some other group, such as United for Peace and Justice on the tenth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan or the picketing strikers at Sotheby's art auction house. The many occupations around the country are all autonomous and have endorsed diverse goals, and they range widely in numbers. All have been inspired by the action in New York, but each operates on its own in response to its local situation.

The occupation has won the attention of the mainstream media. The first reports complained that the occupation was frivolous and had no clear political platform. But the idea of indefinite occupation demands attention for its novelty. After the police violently broke up several demonstrations, sympathy to OWS grew in the press and the public. The press began to cover the occupation respectfully and discuss its issues seriously. As I have shown, while movements often cultivate the attention of the media, the movements cannot control the message, and the media often prefer to highlight the dramatic and bizarre aspects rather



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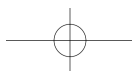
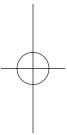
than a movement's cause. OWS offers plenty that is dramatic and bizarre, and the media have reported it that way, but to a surprising degree the coverage has been about economic injustice. Not only mainstream news stories but opinion journals and commentaries have discussed the extreme degree of inequality in wealth and income in the US; many people around the country have learned about it, and nationwide polls show majority support in public opinion for the occupiers' positions.

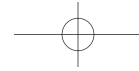
[10.137] The occupiers have created their own media, too, with a polyphonic (or cacophonous) outburst of creativity. They have many websites; they have produced several issues of an attractive four-page broadsheet; they videotape everything and immediately post it to Youtube. The most innovative practice (other than the occupation itself) is the "people's microphone." Using bullhorns in public in New York requires a police permit, so they have come up with an alternative: at mass meetings, a speaker pauses after each sentence and the people near him repeat it in unison to the crowd; if the crowd is big, a second circle shouts it out. If it is even bigger than that, people on the periphery listen on their phones and shout it to those near them. I can personally attest that if you say something and dozens of people repeat it, you feel like you have been heard.

[10.138] While the movement depends heavily on the internet for initial and ongoing organizing, it has also shown the internet's limitations because the real action has been on the ground. In recent years much "activism" has been limited to sending e-mails and soliciting signatures for online petitions. OWS has understood that however important electronic communication is, it achieves little except as preparation for face-to-face interaction in which people do more than respond reflexively. It is when people act together that social movements can empower them and prefigure future social relations.

[10.139] Some sympathizers have complained that the occupation has no political platform. Its demands are a melange and none have been issued authoritatively. Many of the organizers and occupiers want nothing to do with mainstream politics. Progressive organizations that are more institutionally oriented and were not part of the original movement have tried to seize the momentum to promote their own issues. Some of them have claimed an affinity with the occupation that core activists, wary of co-optation, might not acknowledge. The diversity and decentralization which are the movement's strength right now clearly make translation into government policies difficult.

[10.140] Movements are ephemeral. The occupation will have to end sometime. How long will the hard core of activists camp out as winter comes? How long will the broad network of supporters continue to offer their money, their sympathy, and occasionally their bodies to help keep the occupation going? Occupy Wall Street has clearly already achieved far more than what anyone might have predicted at the start. As I write, the





first snow has fallen on New York, and the occupiers have put out requests for donations of warm clothes and sleeping bags.

Beyond what happens at Liberty Plaza, it is an open question whether it will be produce any action to mitigate economic inequality, curtail the power of the financial corporations, or hold them accountable for their destructive effects on the economy and people's livelihoods. It is still true that even with a powerful and widespread movement like the occupation movement, results are not immediate or guaranteed. For longlasting impact, multiple and diverse initiatives will have to be ongoing around the country. The struggle continues.

But at the same time, let's rejoice that this movement has blossomed, grown, provided such rich experiences, and stimulated a serious discussion of economic injustice that has captured much of the country's attention. To rewrite Joe Hill, let's spend (*not* waste) time celebrating, then organize!

Author biography: John L. Hammond is a longtime social movement activist, notably against US military intervention from Vietnam to Iraq. He is also active in his union, the Professional Staff Congress. He has studied social movements in the United States, Europe, and Latin America, and is the author of *Fighting to Learn: Popular Education and Guerrilla War in El Salvador* and *Building Popular Power: Workers' and Neighborhood Movements in the Portuguese Revolution*. He teaches sociology at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

NOTES

1. Charles Tilly, "Social Movements as Historically Specific Clusters of Performances," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 38 (1993–1994), 1–30.

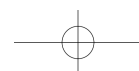
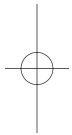
2. Deirdre English, "The War Against Choice: Inside the Antiabortion Movement." *Mother Jones* (February–March 1981), 16–32.

3. Mayer Zald and his collaborators contribute to clarifying the relation between social movements and social movement organizations (SMOs). See Mayer N. Zald and Roberta Ash, "Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change," *Social Forces* 44 (1966), 327–41; John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, No. 6 (May 1977), 1212–41.

4. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

5. Norman MacKenzie, *Socialism: A Short History* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1966); Mary Nolan, Economic Crisis, State Policy, and Working-Class Formation in Germany, 1870–1900. In *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, edited by Ira Katznelson and Aristide R. Zolberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 352–93; Guenther Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany: A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1963).

6. Kate Bronfenbrenner et al., eds., *Organizing to Win* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 1998); Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss, *Hard Work: Remaking the American Labor Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Gay W. Seidman, *Manufacturing Militance:*





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Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970–1985 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

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7. John L. Hammond, "Indigenous Community Justice in the Bolivian Constitution of 2009," *Human Rights Quarterly*, 33 (August 2011), 649–81; Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics* (London: Verso, 2007); Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Liberal Democracy and Ayllu Democracy in Bolivia: The Case of Northern Potosí," *Journal of Development Studies*, 26, No. 4 (July 1990), 97–112; Deborah J. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

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8. John L. Hammond, "Law and Disorder: The Brazilian Landless Farmworkers' Movement," *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 18, No. 4 (1999), 469–89; Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, *To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil* (Oakland: Food First Books, 2003).

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9. John Dittmers, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Aldon D. Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

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10. Bert Klandermans and Dirk Oegema, "Potentials, Networks, Motivations, and Barriers: Towards Participation in Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 52, No. 4 (August 1987), 519–31; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition, 1998); Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1978); Charles Tilly, *Agendas for Students of Social Movements. In States, Parties, and Social Movements*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone, 246–56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003).

[10n11]

11. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 229–39.

[10n12]

12. This is a basis for the distinction between theories of resource mobilization or strategy and theories of new social movements or identity, discussed below. Some older theories tend to characterize movements in general as expressive, even when they claim instrumental purposes, with the argument that these activities have no instrumental consequences and only meet the subjective needs of the participants. See Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* 52 (Winter 1985), 663–716; Doug McAdam, *Political process and the development of black insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Alberto Melucci, "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements," *Social Research* 52 (Winter 1985), 789–816; Tarrow, *Power in Movement*.

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13. Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation: A Case Study of an Emerging Social Movement and its Relation to the Policy Process* (New York: McKay, 1975).

[10n14]

14. Betty Friedan, *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[10n15]

15. Hester Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women's Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World* (Boulder; Paradigm, 2009).

[10n16]

16. Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 173–76.

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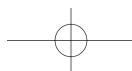
17. Dittmer, *Local People*, 261; cf. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); McAdam, *Freedom Summer*.

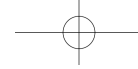
[10n18]

18. Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285.

[10n19]

19. Though the term "new social movements" is well established in the literature, I find it problematical, because what is "new" about these movements is not what is specific to them. Though the overlap between designated new social movements and





Chapter 10

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movements based on identity politics is not complete, I will use the term identity politics to refer to them.

20. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, "Introduction: Theory and Protest in Latin America Today." In *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America; Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*, ed. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 5. [10n20]

21. Sara N. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage 1980); David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, "Social Movement Spillover," *Social Problems* 41 (1994), 277–98. [10n21]

22. Carl Boggs, "Marxism, Prefigurative Communism, and the Problem of Workers' Control," *Radical America* 11 (November 1977), 100. [10n22]

23. G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3–5. [10n23]

24. Barbara Epstein, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). [10n24]

25. Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6. [10n25]

26. For the classic theoretical statement, see Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); for a recent survey, see Dario Azzellini and Immanuel Ness, *Ours to Master and to Own: Workers' Control from the Commune to the Present* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011). [10n26]

27. John L. Hammond, "Worker Control in Portugal: The Revolution and Today," *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 2 (December 1981), 413–53; Hammond, *Building Popular Power: Workers' and Neighborhood Movements in the Portuguese Revolution* (Monthly Review Press, 1988). [10n27]

28. Joyce Rothschild and J. Allen Whitt, *The Cooperative Workplace: Potentials and Dilemmas of Organisational Democracy and Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). [10n28]

29. Diane Elson, "Socializing Markets, not Market Socialism," in *Socialist Register 2000: Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias*, 36, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 67–85. [10n29]

30. David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (August 1986), 464, quoting Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974), 21. [10n30]

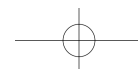
31. See especially Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans, ed., *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). [10n31]

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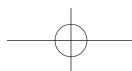
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- [10n36] 36. William A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- [10n37] 37. Charlotte Ryan, *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing*, (Boston: South End Press, 1991), 70; cf. William A. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., second edition, 1990).
- [10n38] 38. Marco Giugni, Introduction. In Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly, eds., *How Social Movements Matter*, xiii–xxxiii.
- [10n39] 39. Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*.
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- [10n41] 41. Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).
- [10n42] 42. In a decade during which social movements were distressingly absent despite the provocations of two seemingly endless wars of humanitarian aggression and the financial meltdown of the international capitalist system, the global justice movement stands out for its protest against capitalist globalization at massive demonstrations against meetings of international financial institutions and at the World Social Forum and its regional and national offshoots. It deserves more than a brief mention, but the issues of transnational organization and electronic communication as an organizing tool are too complex to give it the attention it deserves. See John L. Hammond, "The Possible World and the Actual State: World Social Forum in Caracas," *Latin American Perspectives*, 33, No. 3 (May 2006), 122–31; Hammond, "The World Social Forum and the Rise of Global Grassroots Politics," *New Politics*, 42 (Winter 2007), 173–80; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Jackie Smith, *Social Movements for Global Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2007).
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- [10n50] 50. Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*, 239; Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, 147–50.

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