

## **Book review: Interface volume 4 (1)**

**Reviews editor: Mandisi Majavu**

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### **Books reviewed this issue:**

Chenoweth, Erica and Stephan, Maria J. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent action*. New York: Columbia University Press. (320 pp)

Reviewed by Brian Martin

Manji, Firoze and Ekine, Sokari (Eds). (2012). *Africa awakening: The emerging revolutions*. Cape Town: Pambazuka Press. (323 pp)

Reviewed by Karen Ferreira-Meyers

Starr, Amory, Fernandez, Luis and Scholl, Christian (2011). *Shutting down the streets: Political violence and social control in the global era*. New York and London: New York University Press. (202 pp plus index)

Reviewed by Deborah Eade

Kolins Givan, Rebecca, Roberts, Kenneth and Soule, Sarah (Eds). (2010). *The diffusion of social movements: Actors, mechanisms, and political effects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (270 pp)

Reviewed by Cecelia Walsh-Russo

Heßdörfer, Florian, Pabst, Andrea, and Ullrich, Peter (Ed.). (2010). *Prevent and tame: Protest under (self) control*. Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag. (120 pp)

Reviewed by Lucinda Thompson

Observatorio Metropolitano. (2011). *Crisis y revolución en Europa: People of Europe rise up!* Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños (147 pp)

Reviewed by Michael Byrne

Lemonik Arthur, Mikaila Mariel (2011). *Student activism and curricular change in higher education*. Surrey, England: Ashgate. ( 220 pp)

Reviewed by Christine Neejer

MacKinnon, R. (2012). *Consent of the networked: The worldwide struggle for internet freedom*. New York: Basic Books. (320 pp. \$27.00)

Reviewed by Piotr Konieczny

**Chenoweth, Erica and Stephan, Maria J. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent action*. New York: Columbia University Press. (320 pp)**

Reviewed by **Brian Martin**

Imagine you live in a country with a repressive government and you want to do something about it. You are ready to take strong and risky action. What's the most promising way to have an effect? Some of your young friends have left university to join an armed guerrilla movement; others, who don't want to use violence, are calling for protests in the streets. Which of these options is more promising?

The debate over how to challenge oppressive regimes and policies has been going on for over a century with little resolution in sight. Armed struggle has a long tradition, including but not restricted to Leninists. Prominent successes include struggles in China, Cuba, Vietnam, and Algeria. Proponents usually assume armed struggle is the only way to overthrow a regime willing to use unlimited force against challengers.

In contrast is another tradition whose most prominent figure is Gandhi, who led major nonviolent struggles in South Africa and India. Gandhi objected to using violence to promote change; his approach was followed in the US civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, led by Martin Luther King, Jr. Less well known than these campaigns are a host of other unarmed struggles against repressive governments in places like Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran, Philippines, and Serbia.

What do researchers say about challenging repressive regimes? Most attention has been on conditions that enable or hinder success using frameworks such as resource mobilisation and political opportunity structures. Scholars have not systematically compared different methods of struggle. Most of them assume peaceful protest can be crushed by a sufficiently ruthless ruler. As a result, researchers have not provided much guidance for activists. After all, if the key is political opportunities and the prospects are not very good right now, then the methods used by challengers should not make that much difference.

The assumption by proponents of armed struggle and by many scholars is that success without armed struggle depends on a regime being soft. In this way of thinking, Gandhi faced a weak opponent, the kind-hearted British. Likewise, the collapse of Eastern European communist governments in 1989 is attributed more to weaknesses of the regimes than to citizen action.

Due in part to these assumptions, there has been no systematic testing of the comparative effectiveness of armed and unarmed struggles against repressive governments. Until now. Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan in *Why Civil Resistance Works* have provided a powerful statistical analysis that undermines claims for armed struggle and, incidentally, the assumptions of most social

movement researchers. (In the context of their study, civil resistance means the same as nonviolent action.)

The basis for their analysis is a database of 323 campaigns, between 1900 and 2006, of resistance to regimes or occupations -- or in support of secession. Included in the database are, for example, the 1944 October revolution in Guatemala, the 1955 Naga rebellion in India, the 1960–1975 Pathet Lao campaign in Cambodia, and the 1974 carnation revolution in Portugal. The database has all sorts of information, such as locations, key protagonists, lengths of campaigns, maximum numbers of participants, methods used, and outcomes.

For Chenoweth and Stephan's core argument, the key bits of information are the methods used (either primarily armed struggle or primarily civil resistance) and the success or failure of the campaign. Deciding whether a campaign is successful is sometimes difficult; maybe only some of the goals of the challengers were achieved or maybe the goals changed along the way. This is only one of many difficulties faced in quantifying the elements of resistance struggles. The authors report a careful process for validating the information in the database including checking judgements about campaigns with experts on the countries and events involved.

With such a database, it is possible to test various hypotheses. Their most significant and striking finding is that nonviolent campaigns are far more likely to succeed than violent campaigns.

A sceptic might claim the nonviolent campaigns were against softer targets. Chenoweth and Stephan tested this: one of the elements in the database is how repressive the regime is. The answer: the strength of the regime makes very little difference to the success of the resistance. This is remarkable. It means that civil resistance works against even the most repressive regimes, and with a much greater chance of success than armed resistance.

What happened to the idea, widely used by social movement scholars, that movements succeed because political opportunities are favourable? Chenoweth and Stephan have replaced it with a quite different conclusion: the keys to success are the methods and strategies adopted by the challengers. Conditions such as the level of government repression don't make very much difference to outcomes. This means that success depends far more on what activists do than scholars, political analysts, or governments have ever realised.

The statistics in the book are supplemented with many illustrations, including four detailed case studies: the 1977–1979 Iranian revolution, the first Palestinian intifada (1987–1993), the 1983–1986 people power movement in the Philippines, and the 1988–1990 Burmese uprising. These vivid stories give flesh to, and help validate generalisations from, the statistical findings.

If Chenoweth and Stephan are right, social movement scholars should reconsider their frameworks and focus on agency, namely what activists choose to do. Why haven't scholars done this before? One answer is that it means relinquishing some of their authority to experienced activists.

What are the lessons for activists? The first and foremost is that armed struggle is not a promising option. It is less likely to succeed and, when it does, it is more likely to lead to a society lower in freedom and more likely to lapse back into civil war. Mixing armed struggle and civil resistance is not such a good idea either. The best option, statistically speaking, is to forego any armed resistance and rely entirely on nonviolent methods.

Why are nonviolent methods so much more effective? Chenoweth and Stephan argue that the key is greater participation. Most of those who join an armed struggle are young fit men, a relatively small sector of the population. Methods of civil resistance include sit-ins and public protests which allow involvement by a greater proportion of the population. Methods such as boycotts and banging pots from balconies allow nearly everyone to join in. It turns out that participation is a key factor in success. The maximum number of participants, as a fraction of the population, is highly correlated with success of the campaign -- and a large number of participants is more likely to be achieved with a nonviolent campaign.

Participation is crucial, in part, due to spin-off effects. More participants, especially when they include a wide cross-section of the population, means the resistance builds links to more people with the likelihood of causing shifts in the loyalty of security forces, which are absolutely vital to success. This process can happen in both violent and nonviolent struggles, but high participation is more likely in nonviolent struggles because there are fewer barriers to involvement. Joining a guerrilla movement or a terrorist organisation requires high commitment, especially due to a high risk of death, whereas joining a large rally or participating in a general strike requires less commitment, thereby allowing the movement to grow. The case studies -- each of which involves a primary nonviolent struggle in which there was a parallel armed struggle -- vividly show this.

*Why Civil Resistance Works* is an academic work published by a university press. It contains statistical data, explanation and justification of database construction, careful analysis of contrary hypotheses, and much else. Unlike some scholarly writing, it is clearly written, logically organised, and provides helpful summaries. Nevertheless, it is unlikely to become bedtime reading for activists. What then are the takeaway messages?

Here is my list.

- Civil resistance works. A well-organised unarmed campaign against a repressive government is much more likely to succeed than a well-organised armed campaign. The message from nonviolent activists to those who advocate armed struggle should be "show us some good evidence that your approach works better, because the best study so far shows civil resistance has better prospects."

- When civil resistance works, the outcomes are likely to be better. Use nonviolent methods if you want a nonviolent society; use armed struggle if you want a militarised successor regime.
- The key is participation. The more people involved in a campaign, and the more diverse the participants, the more likely its success. Beyond this general conclusion, I think it is a plausible extrapolation from the data for activists to say, "let's choose actions that will involve the most people from different sectors of society."
- Winning over the security apparatus is crucial. Undermining the loyalty of those who maintain order should be a central goal.
- Plan, innovate and strategise. The evidence shows that the methods used by challengers are crucial to success. In other words, how a campaign proceeds sensitively depends on the actions by the players, so it is vital to be creative, respond wisely to opponent movements, and be able to survive repression.

Regimes strategise too, so there is no set of steps that guarantees success; campaigns need to innovate against opponent strategies. Struggle against injustice is like a game: to win, it has to be played well. This is why diverse participation is important, because it brings in people with different skills, ideas, and contacts. Running a campaign from a central headquarters, with a fixed ideology, is not a promising approach. Having widespread participation and encouraging experimentation and diversity is.

The more people understand the dynamics of nonviolent action and learn to think strategically, the more likely a campaign is to develop the staying power, strategic innovation, and resilience to succeed. *Why Civil Resistance Works* is not an activist manual, but its findings should be used by anyone writing one.

### **About the reviewer**

Brian Martin is professor of social sciences at the University of Wollongong, Australia and author of many books and articles on nonviolence and other topics. Email bmartin AT uow.edu.au

**Manji, Firoze and Ekine, Sokari (Eds). (2012). *Africa awakening: The emerging revolutions*. Cape Town: Pambazuka Press. (323 pp)<sup>1</sup>.**

Reviewed by **Karen Ferreira-Meyers**

The editors assembled 32 essays, some of which were previously published as summaries of events in Pambazuka News in 2011, around uprisings and revolutions that took place in Africa since 2011. Although popularly referred to as the "Arab spring," the 2011 uprisings were not confined to the Arab-speaking world. There have also been protests, strikes and other actions -- many of which were brutally suppressed -- in Western Sahara, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Gabon, Sudan, Mauritania, Morocco, Madagascar, Mozambique, Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Djibouti, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Namibia, Uganda, Kenya, Swaziland, South Africa, Malawi, and Uganda. Whether large or small scale, all these are manifestations of an underlying mood of discontent and disenchantment with the social and political order. According to Manji, "we are witnessing not so much an Arab spring as an *African awakening*" (p. 3).

In various articles, reference is made to Franz Fanon (e.g. pp. 94-95) to underscore the idea that each generation approaches "revolution in the context of their moment in history" (p. 23), as well as to the changed use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, which online activists use to spread information and revolutionary ideas. Nani-Koffi's contribution focuses on Côte d'Ivoire and in particular its political crisis since 2000. The author sees this disaster as another manifestation of the crisis of post-colonial Africa. Esam Al-Amin compares the 1978-79 revolution in Iran to the 2010-11 uprising in Tunisia: what took 54 weeks to accomplish in Iran took less than four in Tunisia. His conclusion is that "real change is the product of popular will and sacrifice, not imposed by foreign interference or invasions" (p. 50). Khadija Sharife's overview of Gabon's "awakening" does not directly refer to a possible revolutionary upsurge, but rather focuses on the economic corporate-state deals (like the 25-year tax holiday given to China with regard to the Belinga iron-ore mining deal) of the "focal point of Françafrique," France's Africa policy, for the reader to deduce the possibility of revolution in this country.

Horace Campbell's articles dated 27 January 2011 and 3 February 2011 (the latter directly linking the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions), and Melakou Tegegn's contribution of 3 February 2011 comparing Tunisia to Ethiopia, complement Al-Amin's analysis of the revolutionary process in Tunisia. The Egyptian revolution built on the three revolutionary stages visible in Tunisia (1. self-immolation and sacrifice of Mohamed Bouazizi; 2. Self-mobilization of the popular forces of Tunis and removal of office of Ben Ali; and 3. Dismantling of Ben Ali's regime) by adding a fourth one: "the power of numbers and the test of creative means of self-defense" (p. 70).

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<sup>1</sup> This book is available from <http://www.fahamubooks.org/>

On page 79, Campbell summarizes the key characteristics of the Arab Spring and African Awakening movements:

1. The revolutions are made by ordinary people;
2. Independent networks of networks are typical tools of these revolutions;
3. Self-mobilization of the people;
4. Non-violence; and
5. Ultimate goal: dignified human beings.

On 17 February 2011, Hassan El Ghayes published his personal viewpoint of a middle-class Egyptian of the Egyptian revolts. In this journalistic piece, the author gives a witness report of the Tahrir ("Liberation") Square demonstrations, including the so-called "Friday of rage", 28 January 2011. Another article, this time by Nigel Gibson, looks at the Egyptian situation and explains the notion of "Revolution 2.0," the revolution without leaders, "a Wikipedia revolution" (p. 94) aided by social media. The focus of Fatma Naib's contribution is on women: on Asmaa Mahfouz, the 26-year old founding member of the April 6 Youth Movement, on Mona Seif, researcher and daughter of an imprisoned activist, on 24 year-old political activist Gigi Ibrahim, and on 33 year-old filmmaker Salma El Tarzi.

Kah Walla, the presidential candidate for Cameroon Ô'Bosso, proposes excerpts from her protest diary recounting the peaceful protest of 23 March 2011 which was met by violent police repression. J. Oloka-Onyango writes about Uganda's most recent elections and analyses why ruling president Yoweri Museveni did not suffer from any meaningful opposition while at the same time "warning" the ruling party of similar consequences as those witnessed in Tunisia and Egypt. In doing so, the author uses comparisons with Egypt, Libya and Tanzania to explain the elections' victory: Uganda is not yet a fully functional multiparty democracy, Museveni bribed certain parts of the population during the elections, people feared the omnipresence of the military, and the existing opposition parties don't have firm ideological positions. The diplomatic, financial, economic, and social impact of the Ivorian 2010-11 post-election crisis is discussed by Massan d'Almeida mainly from the viewpoint of two women's rights activists, Mata Coulibaly and Honorine Sadia Vehi Toure.

Protests in Morocco and the Western Sahara are examined by Konstantina Isidoros. These protests surround the "hot geopolitical potato" (p. 122) of the Western Sahara conflict, which started more than 35 years ago with the invasion of that territory by Morocco and which threatens the "fundamental tenets of our modern Western political system, which espouses the inviolable sanctity of a nation-state's own sovereignty, the basic rights of human beings and regional socio-economic stability" (p. 123). The author puts together reactions from bloggers and journalists from Morocco and Saudi Arabia to show the growing discontent about the Moroccan absolute monarch. Lila Chouli's contribution draws the attention on the March peoples' revolts, culminating in the April 8

general strike and a threat of a military coup on 14 April 2011 in Burkina Faso, which explicitly referred to Tunisian and Egyptian revolts through various slogans. Even though "things calmed down from this point on in the capital," "spontaneous protests continued," (p. 142) which needed "marathon negotiations" to bring the country "sitting on a volcano" (p. 145) to proposed political reforms.

In a not always very logical article entitled "North African dispatches: Why Algeria is different," Imad Mesdoua describes some of the attempts by the Algerian people to follow suit of the other Arab Springs. Lakhtar Ghetas complements the picture in his article entitled "Unrest in Algeria: the window is closing fast". Mahmood Mamdani evaluates the humanitarian interventions in Libya, following UN Security Council's Resolution 1973. Jean-Paul Bougala's article gives a detailed account of Libya's financial assets, within the country and abroad, to underline the West's involvement in its events. A further analysis of the Libyan situation is given by Yash Tandon in "Whose dictator is Gaddafi?" and "How might things move forward in Libya."

This author makes a third contribution, "Imperial neurosis and the dangers of 'humanitarian' interventionism," in which the Arab Spring is analyzed in terms of the reactions of the empire. According to the writer, the "imperial neurosis" has only two possible consequences: "tightening of control over the political economies of the neocolonies of the third world" and "the emerging disintegration of the Euro-American system" (p. 232). The last chapter dealing with Libya has been written by Charles Abugre; it makes explicit the "true costs of war" (p. 297).

Peter Kenworthy reports on the 12-15 April "campaign" (p. 155), preceded by the 18 March marches, against financial turmoil, youth unemployment, and the undemocratic political regime in Swaziland. Still in Southern Africa, the recounting of Andries Tatane's murder by Richard Pithouse gives the readers an opportunity to learn about South African police brutality and repression of grassroots dissidents.

Mahmood Mamdani connects the Egyptian Tahrir Square events with the subsequent African "awakenings," but also linking it to the historical 1976 Soweto uprising and the 1987 Palestinian intifada. In addition, in his conclusion, the author states the remarkable fact that "no major event in contemporary history has been forecast, either by researchers or consultants, whether based in universities or in think tanks" (p. 208).

As "the detonator of the wave of protest and uprisings which have spread across North Africa and the Middle East since January 2011" (p. 218), Tunisia's particular context receives further attention in an interview with Sadri Khiari. Samir Amin's analysis somehow counters the viewpoint of the majority of the authors participating in this volume: while these look for similarities in this stories of the Arab Spring countries, Amin warns against easy generalizations about the whole Arab world and delves deep into Egyptian history, socio-economic makeup, and the different blocs constituting the reactionary front



before looking at the peculiarities of some other “awakening” nations and peoples (in addition to others discussed in the volume, Samin adds Syria, Bahrain and Yemen).

As can be seen from the overview above, the first articles/chapters are day-to-day accounts of the heat of the uprisings, what happened where, and who was involved, while the articles towards the end of this compilation are more general in nature, more analytical of the long-term consequences of the revolts and revolutions. While quite often overlapping in content, most articles bring new information and analyses to the fore and therefore contribute to the world’s knowledge and interpretation of the dawn, evolution and effects of the Arab spring and its impact on Africa’s further awakening in which the geopolitical interests of the West (US and France namely) are at stake. This volume delivers on its promises: it contains a rich selection of reports and reviews, it gives links to additional reactions on Twitter, in blogs, newsletters and interviews (pp. 311-312) and has an index which facilitates referencing. The publication is well-edited (in the sense that it contains few grammatical errors or spelling mistakes) but could have benefitted from a general conclusion summarizing a number of cross-cutting assumptions and deductions.

### **About the reviewer**

Karen Ferreira-Meyers is the Coordinator of Modern Languages/Linguistics to the Institute of Distance Education (University of Swaziland) since October 2010. Between 1993 and 2010 she lectured in the Department of Modern Languages and was the Head of the same department between 1998 and 2010. She obtained various qualifications: MA Romance Philology, Honours Portuguese, Post-Graduate Diploma Translation, MA Linguistics, LLM Degree, PhD Degree.

**Starr, Amory, Fernandez, Luis and Scholl, Christian (2011).  
*Shutting down the streets: Political violence and social control  
in the global era.* New York and London: New York University  
Press. (202 pp. plus index)  
Reviewed by **Deborah Eade****

As I started reading this book, the Occupy London encampment in the precincts of St Paul's was in the process of being dismantled, the demonstrators evicted and the cathedral steps ritually cleansed. Within a few hours, there was no physical trace of the settlement. At one level this was a minor news event, although it had already resulted in the resignation of a senior cleric and some consternation about the proper role of the church in providing sanctuary to those opposing the unfettered accumulation of wealth. At another, it symbolised the local expression of a global Occupy movement against casino capitalism -- the "right" of the 1% to become spectacularly wealthy -- even as millions in the North swell the ranks of the Global South. For the popular media, however, the focus was on the dirty, work-shy "occupiers", a stain on "decent" society, and a threat to tourism. Politicians took up some of the agenda issues of "excessive pay" and the "bonus culture" while carefully avoiding expressing anything that might suggest sympathy with the unkempt demonstrators.

The authors of this excellent -- and beautifully written -- monograph examine the expression, representation, and suppression of dissent. What makes it special is that they write not from the outside -- although placing their enquiry within a theoretical framework -- but as activist scholars, who have themselves exercised the democratic right of assembly and been involved in organised, and repressed, dissent.

Their focus is on the series of G8 and G20 meetings held in OECD countries between 2001 and 2010. They describe both the experience of being part of the attempt to influence the outcomes -- or at least to highlight an alternative reading of the agenda -- and the nature and cost of the security measures employed to prevent any interruption to a smooth event replete with "photo-opportunities," eleventh-hour deals, and press conferences for public consumption. The authors show, in almost forensic detail, the choreography of militarised policing as the increasingly visible means of "protecting democracy".

Two themes running through the book are fluidity and fear-- both of which, in different ways, are intended to discredit and demobilise dissent. Although each major event takes its own course, certain features are by now familiar. Locations are selected both because their relative inaccessibility places a physical distance between the public and our elected (and unelected) world leaders, and because they make it possible to cordon off the delegates from the sight and sound of dissent, and whisk them away to safety if security is breached -- a mobile "gated city". The financial costs are all the more eye-watering at a time of global recession. For instance, to "secure" the 2010 meetings of the G8 and the G20, Toronto spent US \$929,986,110 -- comprising "three types of expenditures:

those for security itself, operational costs of a secure summit, and collateral costs to the locality" (2011: 51). The fluidity includes the re-drawing of the geography of a city or region – the 2007 G8 held in the East German resort of Heiligendamm that was supposed to "Make Poverty History" became literally a "no-go" area, ringed with "metal fencing with concrete foundations" and "designed to cradle a curlicue of razor and barbed wire" (2011: 1). At a more mundane level, it includes determining exactly which route a demonstration may take -- those who transgress the proper "respect for democracy" (2011: 27) risk imprisonment, harsh treatment, and aggressively punitive sentencing. Police may even arbitrarily decide on the size of banners and the angle at which they may be displayed, and demonstration marshals are responsible for enforcing such idiocies.

Fluidity also includes the temporary expansion of prisons as de facto police detention in the form of "kettling", or encircling demonstrators and preventing them from moving outside the "kettle", sometimes for several hours with no toilet facilities or water. Although these people are not actually under arrest -- and have been known to include passers-by like office workers on their lunch break who were not even aware of the demonstration -- they are in effect being held against their will, without charge. Yet this is done with impunity, as a means to separate and re-direct marches -- to place opaquely defined restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly. We know from our own particular national history that had women not been prepared to transgress their assigned gender roles, female suffrage would have been an even longer time coming. And civil rights movements, which included resistance and direct action, or civil disobedience, from Gandhi to Luther King to Mandela, helped to usher in more democratic systems of government across every continent.

This very fluidity is where fear comes into play. The show of military force is clearly meant to deter public action more than reassure the general public. Helicopters flying overhead, surveillance cameras, ostentatious riot gear "along with striking weapons, chemical weapons, projectiles (plastic, rubber, and wooden bullets), water cannons (sometimes with pepper spray in the water, which has a high rate of dispersal and which, unlike tear gas, is invisible), and concussion and shock grenades (for former meant to make a scary explosive sound, the latter used to simultaneously create a disturbing flash of light; both have been linked to severe injuries when they land on or close to people). Sonic weapons were used for the first time in the United States at Pittsburgh 2009 G20. The U.S. National Institute of Justice is planning to implement the use of microwave weapons developed by the U.S. military for crowd control" (2011: 83–4). There have been cases of blinding, permanent injury and even death -- and the fear of pain and injury is a major disincentive, to say the least!

Yet the media portrays the protestors as "having brought this on themselves" and, by extension on "us". The focus is on the "need" to enforce security against the "rabble", rather than on the "duty" to protect the democratic right of assembly and to express political dissent. A few people are caught committing overt acts of violence, and the right to protest is tacitly erased, all protestors

labelled as “troublemakers” or worse. This derogatory labelling serves to create a divide among: “law-abiding” citizens, those who assert the right to peaceful protest; those who challenge the obligation to express dissent only within “state-sanctioned” boundaries; and those who find that some previously acceptable activity has been criminalised.

One bizarre example of the latter is of an exclusive shopping mall in the UK that banned entry to anyone wearing a hoodie – yet several of the shops in the mall actually sold hoodies! Shifting boundaries are designed to dissuade people from getting involved in what might turn out to be “subversive” issues. Signing a petition on saving polar bears seems innocuous enough, but who wants to find that having posted an anti-capitalist slogan on Facebook makes them a potential target of surveillance? Let alone risking a criminal record for the sake of joining a march to protest against greedy bankers. This is one reason why demonstrations use the power of laughter – clowns, dance, masks, and music are a means of maintaining a non-threatening approach to maintaining the boundaries of legitimate dissent, although I fear it is easy to lose any serious message in such a carnival atmosphere.

Of the authors’ many troubling insights, two areas resonated for me. The first is of the shifting geography of the repression of the basic rights to freedom of opinion, speech, and peaceful assembly in situations of political violence, such as Central America, where I worked throughout the 1980s. While still committing egregious violations of human rights, the military could easily prevent legitimate access to the rural civilian population via passes and temporary checkpoints -- you could be turned back on the slightest pretext “for your own safety”. The message being: if you go ahead, on your own head be it. Fear instils self-censorship and undermines the trust on which social organisation depends -- confide only on a “need to know” basis, and handle no more information than you need.

But the second area of resonance is that repression is the mother of courageous, but very focused, resistance -- risks limited to the most essential, with no room for derring-do. Women would smuggle out information on human rights abuses written on encoded notes hidden in their plaited hair; villagers created tunnels in which to hide from aerial bombardments, which became -- quite literally -- underground schools; people would “re-invent” their backgrounds by abandoning their traditional form of dress; communities would cultivate minuscule plots that were invisible from an overhead helicopter.

In concluding that “dissent is being treated as insurrection and that political violence is now directed against the foundation of democracy,” (2011: 152) these thoughtful and thought-provoking authors suggest that these resonances are perhaps louder than we realise.

### **About the reviewer**

Deborah Eade is a freelance writer and editor. From 1991 to 2010, she was Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Development in Practice*.

**Kolins Givan, Rebecca, Roberts, Kenneth and Soule, Sarah (Eds). (2010). *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms, and Political Effects*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (270 pp)**

Reviewed by **Cecelia Walsh-Russo**

If nothing else, the recent spectacular displays of protest seen during the Arab Spring and Occupy Movement have served as reminders to analysts and activists alike of the frequency with which social movements as expressions of resistance can be mimicked from one location to the next. Social movements -- as a bundle of protest events, organizations, and committed participants -- can appear to outsiders to spread like a contagious "fever," with little warning of where the next "infection" may pop up.

The spread of movements--geographically, organizationally, among and between individual activists--has been a longstanding focus of studies on social movements. The focus of "diffusion" of social movement ideas, tactics, and personnel features either in the foreground or background of a significant number of studies.

From Sidney Tarrow's investigations into *cycles of protest* (1983) to Doug McAdam's study of the civil rights era *Freedom Summer* (1986) to Nancy Whittier's *Feminist Generations* (1995) examination of how and when movements learn from other, earlier movements presented enough puzzles to consume significant attention for researchers. The recent collection of ten areas of focus within Kolins, Roberts and Soule's *The Diffusion of Social Movements: Actors, Mechanisms and Political Effects* offers a dynamic range of case studies and theoretical contributions to the study of diffusion within political protest. Drawn from a 2007 conference entitled "Contentious Knowledge: Science, Social Science, and Social Protest" held at Cornell University, the editors sought to create a volume representative of the questions and analysis of existing research on the spread of movement tactics, ideas, and social networks.

The goal of *The Diffusion of Social Movements* is a crucial one to the study of how social movement forms--in their varying incarnations--spread. The volume asserts that political agency is at the heart of learning, adapting, and creating something anew in the contexts of diffusion within social movements. *The Diffusion of Social Movements* as a volume seeks to challenge the oft-repeated notion that actors merely imitate tactics and ideas that came before or somehow are known to their movement as "successful."

Instead, the aim of *Diffusion* is to reveal *how* actors make sense, interpret, and respond to whatever is diffused. The edited volume seeks also to tease out the various dimensions of diffusion studies. As such, the volume cyphered its essays into three parts. The first section provides four essays on the dynamics of framing processes. The second provides four studies on the mechanisms of diffusion. The third and final section provides two essays that offer more

theoretical discussions on what may be termed a "contentious politics" approach to diffusion. These final essays synthesize discussions of mechanisms with examination of the consequences of diffusion on broader social processes. The "broader processes" include explaining the impact of diffusion on the broader "field" of social movement organizing particularly in the context of international or transnational institutions and organizations.

The essays included draw from an impressive range of case studies: the spread of sexual harassment claims across a range of European states; US Labour's attempt to reframe labour struggles as human rights struggles; the spread of support for claims of creationism and its opponent, evolutionism; the framing of challenges to the use of genetically modified food; the spread of non-violent tactics between Gandhi's India and burgeoning US Civil Rights activists through personal networks; and so on.

The introductory essay by Rebecca Kolins Givan, Kenneth M. Roberts and Sarah A. Soule provides an elegant and comprehensive account of diffusion studies within social movements. For students of political sociology and contentious politics, the introductory essay is a vital read for anyone seeking a coherent and brilliantly clear narrative of the central questions and research findings within the sub-field of social movement studies. As the editors attest, the authors within the volume pose three central questions in their studies: "What is being diffused?," "How does diffusion occur?," and "What is the impact of diffusion?." The three central questions not only define the volume's content but give readers useful and thoughtful categories for understanding how diffusion within social movement literature may be assessed and understood. For readers with limited engagement with this literature, the volume's introduction does a highly effective service in providing a richly detailed account.

Diffusion is about movement. As a social and cultural process, diffusion presents a research challenge for analysts because observation of it requires stopping or freezing the dynamism and movement of whatever is spread. Given that the often large geographic, cultural and political differences become tangled up and intertwined with the spread of tactical repertoires, this challenge remains particularly acute when studying transnational diffusion processes within social movements. Many of the essays throughout the various sections successfully take up this challenge, including Conny Roggeband's "Transnational Networks and Institutions: How Diffusion Shaped the Politicization of Sexual Harassment in Europe", Lance Compa's "Framing Labor's New Human Rights Movements", Sean Chabot's "Dialogue Matters: Beyond the Transmission Model of Transnational Diffusion between Social Movements", Valerie Bruce and Sharon Wolchik's "Transnational Networks, Diffusion Dynamics and Electoral Change in the Postcommunist World".

In his wonderful synthetic essay entitled "Dynamics of Diffusion", Sidney Tarrow conceptualizes among other processes and mechanism how the effects of upward and downward shifting of the scale of coordination affects international organizations, domestic states and other non-state actors. The varying arguments raised by the authors of the transnational diffusion essays in

particular are nuanced and contribute significant research ground towards an understanding of political agency, adaptation, and creativity as integral to the diffusion processes within social movements.

The remaining five essays offer an equally compelling range of diffusion topics, from James E. Stobaugh and David A. Snow's "Temporality and Frame Diffusion: The Case of the Creationist/Intelligent Design and Evolutionist Movements from 1925 to 2005" to Ronald Herring's "Framing the GMO: Epistemic Brokers, Authoritative Knowledge, and Diffusion of Opposition to Biotechnology" to Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport's "The Diffusion of Different Types of Internet Activism: Suggestive Patterns in Website Adoption of Innovations" to Jayson Harsin's "Diffusing the Rumor Bomb: 'John Kerry is French' (i.e., Haughty, Foppish, Elitist, Socialist, Cowardly and Gay)" and Michael Biggs and Kenneth T. Andrews' "From Protest to Organization: The Impact of the 1960 Sit-Ins on Movement Organizations in the American South."

The particular collection of essays on transnational diffusion—and indeed the entirety of the collection of essays—represent among the most dynamic authors and case studies within the field of social movement diffusion. As such, the volume makes a noteworthy and significant contribution to the field of social movements, not only in terms of discussion of the three fundamental research questions mentioned earlier but as a volume dedicated to more fully expanding how actors themselves interpret and make sense of diffusion processes, mechanisms and consequences.

### **About the reviewer**

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**Heßdörfer, Florian, Pabst, Andrea, and Ullrich, Peter (Ed.). (2010). *Prevent and tame: Protest under (self) control*. Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag. (120 pp)**

Reviewed by **Lucinda Thompson**

Which is more important: the act of protest or the aims of protest? Which is more painful: the cure or the prevention? There is no straight answer but rather a site of debate which requires urgent address. *Prevent and Tame* seeks to challenge the current framing of social movements and protest. It highlights cases where protestors, their campaigns, and the relations of power that shape society are far from separate. It brings together a diverse range of articles to shed critical light on the complex interactions between movements and authorities whether they are the police, the government, or simply workplace bosses. This collection reveals that there is a growing need for public criticism of the typical representations and popular conventions of protest and for recognition of how this impacts on the practice of democracy.

The book begins with a preface by Stephen Gill, who pinpoints the wider implications of the prevention and taming of protest:

What the authorities seem to also wish to prevent when tackling such protest or dissent, is the possibility of a more democratic, public and socially accountable surveillance of the activities, forms of regulation and indeed the social and political links between ruling classes and the upper echelons of capital. (p. 7)

It is becoming clearer in today's society that rights to freedom of expression, speech, and protest are heavily, yet subtly, constrained within regimes of prevention and discipline. With representations of protest come the threat of escalated violence by unknown and anarchic troublemakers; this threat dictates the treatment of protest in popular discourse, expecting protest to be tamed within reasonable boundaries of convention. As Heßdörfer suggests in this volume, there is typically a loud call for protesters to grow up and stop having hysterics: "*Stop that noise! Get a life! Look around you! We understand your anger, but....*" (p. 24) *Prevent and Tame* presents evidence to contend that call as hysterical in its own way.

This collection of papers is the result of two panels in the 2009 conference, *Shaping Europe in a Globalised World: Protest Movements and the Rise of a Transnational Civil Society*. One panel explored "Preventionism and Obstacles for Protest in the Era of Neoliberalism – Linking Protest Research and Governmentality Studies," while the other examined "Taming Protest: The Rituals of Violence." The papers are rich and varied, including a report by Andrej Holm and Anne Roth into Andrej's arrest and detainment under suspicion of terrorism, a case study of the experiences of a non-violent movement at the hands of the authorities in Genoa, 2001 (Boyle), and a



discussion of discourses of prevention in the medical world and its implications for representations of protest (Ullrich).

The variety of articles presented a multi-faceted overview of the issues surrounding protest movements. Indeed, papers spanned a spectrum of debates: modes and motives of protest, authoritative discourses to prevent and police demonstrations, and the neoliberal regime of governance and surveillance that frames the protest environment. Such a diversity of topics raised many questions; the two panels in 2009 must have provoked some discussion. Did everyone, for example, agree that prevention was the most apposite term for organising the debate? The introduction to these works might have benefited from elaboration on the concept and prevalence of preventionism and its implications for the study of protest, as this in turn would have more clearly framed the rest of the papers.

Nonetheless, this book serves as a useful collection of case studies for researchers of social movements, and several articles stood out for their critical and well-structured arguments coupled with detailed examples. Montgomery's critique of traditional readings of counter-hegemony through a case study of the anti-Olympics movement, for example, expressed an empowering re-appraisal of protest strategy. He notes that the lack of a set of coherent demands, alternatives, or claims by protesters may be seen as a weakness in the framework of hegemony/counter-hegemony, but in other contexts serves as an emancipatory politics which is not confined to the State or its authority. For me, this provoked a re-reading not only of protest but also wider politics of conflict.

As Montgomery's article demonstrates, this book brought together a variety of topics and cases with the daunting task of challenging prevailing wisdom and updating theoretical approaches to social movements and protest. As the editors note, the papers:

aim to overcome the common dualistic approach that predominantly sees movements and power (the state, government and others) as independent antagonists and thereby often ignores their entanglement. (p. 11)

Many papers went further than this in the examples they outline, not only demonstrating their entanglement, but also critiquing their representation and highlighting the extent to which these inter-connections can be exploited to reframe the authority of preventionism. Heßdörfer's article highlighted this by demonstrating the pedantic use of anti-social behaviour orders to prevent what might be described as personal acts of protest (or simply odd behaviour) in the UK. A list of seven examples, by no means the only ones to be found, undermine the rationale of preventionism by exposing us (the general public) as over-protective, over-sensitive, and over-irritated and by exposing the authorities as over-reacting and disproportionately punitive. We cannot help but be caught up

in this power play whether as actors, observers, or even authorities, but perhaps we can challenge how our interconnectedness is understood.

Leach and Haunss' article, comparing two events and the differences in interaction between campaign organisers, demonstrated complex relationships between different activist groups, authorities, and standpoints. There was a strong sense of constructed ambiguity in both activists' and authorities' public statements about the use of violence. This highlighted the problematic nature of the term *violence* and the way it is represented in the media. Activists would benefit from reading this collection to affirm how their cause is situated within a macro-political framework: the tactics employed by a movement and the causes for which it fights can be easily isolated from and used against each other.

Indeed, Shane Boyle's article on the colourful VolxTheaterKarawane's experience in Genoa suggests that to challenge relations of power invites violent intervention by the state. What is striking about the Karawane's treatment is that the aesthetics of their non-violent protest (comedy, satirical drama) were marginalised and replaced with the aesthetics of traditional discourses of prevention. Police regularly searched the Karawane's belongings looking for items of black clothing and weapons; ubiquitous symbols of terrorist activity.

Today's demonstrations and campaigns are often inconveniently dominated (to put it mildly) by discourses of terrorism and the threat of catastrophic violence. Such preventionism seems to dictate the (violent) policing of protest and the nature of relations between police and protestors, which all serve to detract from the problems in hand. It is to the authors' credit that the discussions in *Prevent and Tame* overcame the obstacles presented by this discourse and successfully pinpointed some of the issues at stake.

### **About the reviewer**

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**Observatorio Metropolitano. (2011). *Crisis y revolución en Europa: People of Europe rise up!* Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños (147 pp)**

Reviewed by **Michael Byrne**

The notion that the people of Europe can understand neither the financial crisis nor the need for “fiscal restraint” has been recurrent since the emergence of the austerity agenda. The people of Europe, like dumb animals, “feel the pain” of austerity; our protests are seen by the powerful as nothing more than the whimper of a dog when kicked. Meanwhile, the enlightened technocrats take “tough decisions” to solve a crisis only they can understand. This has been the rhetoric of the European political elite since the crisis began.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the political elite, blinkered by the financial interests to which they are tied, and the technocrats, schooled in outdated orthodox economics, who are incapable of grasping the dimensions of the crisis, the power relations at its heart, and the ever increasing contradictions that haunt the hegemony of financial capitalism. It is to the practices of the movements and the “wisdom of antagonism” that we must turn for a real understanding of our political present.

*Crisis and Revolution in Europe: People of Europe Rise Up!* (C&R) is, above all, a book which aims to think from the perspective of the collective intelligence of the networked movements flowering across the Euro-Mediterranean “geographies of crisis.” The book provides an invaluable analysis of financialization, a razor-sharp critique of contemporary accumulation, and a fascinating survey of the social movements emerging to challenge the economic and democratic crises of our time. But C&R is also an intervention into these movements, proposing possible alliances and concrete strategies.

The production of the book also reflects something of the political practices of the movements under consideration. It is written by the Observatorio Metropolitano, a Madrid-based militant research collective, and published by Traficantes de Sueños, which is an activist-led publishing project and book shop committed to creative commons licensing<sup>2</sup>. The free-to-download book<sup>3</sup> is currently being translated by a number of activists working voluntarily and using N-1 software, developed by hacktivists as a resource for social movements. Originally published in Spanish, it will be released in English, French, and Catalan in Summer 2012 and future months will see the release of the German, Greek, Gallego, Italian, and Euskara translations<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> More information about these two projects is available in this English language article: <http://www.observatoriometropolitano.org/2012/04/19/militant-research-madrid/>

<sup>3</sup> Download here <http://traficantes.net/index.php/editorial/catalogo/otras/Crisis-y-revolucion-en-Europa>

<sup>4</sup> The translations will be available here <http://traficantes.net/index.php/editorial>

### **Financialization: “no es una crisis, es una estafa”**

A central insight framing C&R is that the standard distinction between the “real” and the “financial” economy is outdated. In this sense, the analysis differs from that which sees the present crisis in terms of a financial system conceptualized as the overgrown appendix of a more “wholesome” manufacturing and services sector. Such analyses ignore the scale of the transformations of the last decades. What we confront today is a system in which the primary mode of accumulation is financial, a financial capitalism which is “not founded on forms of generating profit based on...the production of goods and services, but...on buying and selling financial assets” (p. 17). In evidencing this claim, C&R provides some dizzying facts. For example, the money in the financial system is between four and seven times greater than the entire global GDP. At the same time, the distinction between financial and “real” economy obscures the fact that even classic industrial companies, such as the car industry, often obtain more profit from financial activities (shares etc.) than by selling the products they manufacture.

One of the most significant elements of this shift is the growing distance between capital and the organization of production. The figure of the capitalist is today closer to a *rentier* than an entrepreneur. Here C&R follows a line of analysis associated with contemporary post-autonomist political economy, arguing that accumulation operates primarily through the appropriation of collective wealth based on ownership of property (e.g. a bond). The “investor” (the prototype of today’s capitalist) resembles the landlord of yesteryear, who simply expropriates collectively generated wealth without any involvement or role in the production process (Fumagalli et al. 2009). As the distance grows between financial capitalism and production, the former takes on a pronounced “parasitic” relationship with the actual forms of social production.

C&R identifies three central dynamics at the heart of financialization. Firstly, it depends on ever-increasing financialization; new money needs to be injected into the system and new areas of life must be opened up to investment (e.g. the price of grain, pensions, health insurance, student debt). All too often, most notably in the case of housing, the financialization of new areas of life depends on the withdrawal of the state from the provision of services and guaranteeing rights (Vercellone 2009; López and Rodríguez 2010).

Secondly, this expansion operates via a multiplication of debt. Increasingly, this debt is not backed up by capital nor is it destined for investment in the “productive economy.” Rather, financial assets themselves are the collateral for issuing credit, credit which is in turn invested in yet more financial products. Hence the “bubble” nature of finance; a bubble which bursts when new money stops entering the system and when, at some point in the great chain of debt, someone can’t pay, as was the case in the US subprime mortgage crisis. Finally, financialization generates a massive concentration of economic power. The authors note that just twenty of the largest financial players manage more money than the annual GDP of the USA while Black Rock, the world’s largest

investment manager, holds financial assets with a value equal to everything Germany produces in a year.

In sum, recent decades have seen a massive expansion of the financial system which has invaded many areas of life, playing with the savings and the needs of ordinary people in order to generate a huge concentration of debt-based wealth and granting finance a hegemonic role in the economy. As such, the financial sector has been able to dictate, with the complicity of the European political class, the handling of the crisis, imposing austerity and pillaging public wealth via bank bailouts.

C&R situate Europe's sovereign debt crisis in this context. Following the crash of 2008 the big financial players searched for suitable investments in a rapidly shrinking financial market. Government debt became an increasingly attractive investment. The turn towards speculation on government debt was made possible, indeed facilitated, by the architecture of the European Union. In addition to the general deregulation of the financial system, the fact that the European Central Bank can not lend money to member states but has been lending cheaply to banks has left member states at the mercy of the markets. Here C&R reveals yet more shocking examples of the sheer extortion rampant in the financial system. Banks and financial institutions can borrow at around 1% interest from the ECB and then use that money to buy government bonds that come with a much juicier interest rate. In many cases bailed-out banks which have swallowed billions of public money in recapitalisations use that money to speculate on government debt, instead of lending to the small businesses we hear so much about.

C&R thus provide an analysis which resonates with the slogans of Syntagma square or the occupy movements, slogans such as "no es una crisis, es una estafa" (it's not a crisis, it's a con); slogans that grasp the consequences of huge concentrations of economic power and the expropriation of collective wealth.

### **Political crisis: "que no nos representan"**

Furthermore, and again much in the style of today's social movements, C&R critiques the role of the European political class in all of this. Our political "leaders" have completely failed to recognize that the massive concentration of wealth, deregulation, and sovereign debt speculation need to be challenged. Instead, there has been a combined effort by politicians, lobbies, think tanks, and the media to single out public spending as the cause of the debt crisis and to propose austerity as the solution. This has left the population of Europe, especially the periphery, trapped in a cycle of debt and austerity. All manner of anti-democratic measures have been employed to back up this discourse, from imposing "technical governments" in Greece and Italy to threatening expulsion from the euro, not to mention the current "fiscal compact" which, in conjunction with existing EU treaties, grants austerity a quasi-constitutional status.

What remains of the traditional left has failed to propose any meaningful alternative, relying on outmoded national Keynesian arguments. In the case of

Ireland, to take one example, socialist parties (such as the Socialist Workers Party and Sinn Féin) have been arguing for a solution which essentially involves leaving the euro and using a regained monetary and fiscal sovereignty to create employment and to tax wealth on a national level. Such approaches fail to recognize that the massive concentration of wealth in the financial system leaves peripheral nations vulnerable to speculative attacks on sovereign debt, a fact which would only be reinforced by leaving the euro or, indeed, the European Union.

What is needed, instead, is a dimension of European resistance with the capacity to face up to financial blackmail and willing to directly attack the international financial oligopoly. One of the most inspiring aspects of C&R is the fact that it identifies such a possibility, or even embryonic reality, in the practices of the movements mushrooming across the Euro-Mediterranean space. The second chapter of the book is a masterful review of the many-headed hydra these movements represent, from the Arab spring to occupy style movements, from the revolt of urban youth to resistance to dismantling the public sector. C&R refers to these movements as the "spectre haunting Europe." But this "spectre" is not the proletariat Marx and Engels described in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; it is a plural movement of new social subjects that emerge at the *point of expropriation* (which financialization generalises across society) rather than the *point of production*.

### **Proposals: "it's not our debt"**

This last chapter of the book is dedicated to articulating and strengthening the potential of the movements. Of course, this is not a "neutral" reflection of what is happening in the movements (if such a thing were possible) but a political intervention.

In my view, the most significant of the book's proposals is the repudiation of illegitimate debt. Here the notion of the "political default" is central; non-payment represents an explicit act of resistance designed to destroy the concentration of wealth in the financial system and extortion by speculators. "It's not our debt" and "we won't pay" are slogans which are brave enough to contemplate a confrontation with the financial superpowers.

What is refreshing about C&R's intervention here is its honesty. In stark contrast to much of the traditional left, who argue that repudiating debt will lead to a Keynesian recovery, C&R fully recognizes that:

Generalized default -- from families to the state -- would accelerate the banking crisis...It would surely set in motion a series of bankruptcies while at the same time undermining private credit and the traditional ways in which states have financed themselves (p. 134).

Despite these challenges, the inequalities and contradictions of financial capitalism -- and the increasingly authoritarian forms of state power needed to

support it -- make it vital to free ourselves from any dependency on the banking and financial system. For C&R, alternative ways of organizing credit and production will need to form part of this process.

This in turn throws up the question of how we manage and exchange resources. The authors propose the "commons" as a useful concept here. The notion of the commons escapes the increasingly meaningless dichotomy between public and private, proposing that resources are common precisely to the extent that they directly belong to all of us. They are neither private property nor property of the state, mediated neither by a bureaucratic institution nor exchange value. The commons is proposed as a weapon to fight against the privatization of public services because it positions the state as a "mere intermediary," thus challenging the state's right to privatise what does not belong to it (p. 142).

Against the crisis of democracy, C&R point towards the movements' invention of new forms of horizontal democratic practice, operating in decentralized networks that connect disparate nodes to create an increasingly effective counter-power (Iceland's "wiki-constitution", the "plazas" of the 15-M movement and the Occupy assemblies being just some examples). The challenge here is "how to institute new forms of democracy: what type of electoral reform, what new instruments of participation and decision making..." (p. 138). More importantly, "the movement has learned that the force which makes democracy effective does not arise solely from institutions, but from something much less tangible" which C&R describes as "the possibility that literally everything can be questioned, the capillary extension of political discussion...and the participation between equals as the elemental principle of decision making" (p. 139). They also set these democratic challenges in a European context, arguing that the movements already enjoy an inherently transnational dimension. This must be strengthened over and above the national-based tendencies which still linger in our movements. C&R is categorical in its critique of national based strategies:

Even if the 15-M movement or that of the Greek squares had the force to challenge the alliance between governments and oligarchies in their respective countries, or to impose a unilateral default on their states, they could not achieve a viable and economic alternative in their own country. The punishment inflicted by the financial markets against those countries would escalate, beginning with a flight of capital, followed by the closure of all channels of state finance and finishing with an exit from the euro and a dramatic economic crash (p. 143).

The empowering alternative they set out is the "extension and contamination of the movement on a continental scale" (p. 143). Here they see the democratization of European institutions as an objective around which movements might coalesce. They propose several reforms including the exclusion of lobbies from Brussels, the democratization of the European Central Bank, and the creation of genuinely democratic institutions in place of the decrepit European parliament. A democratized European political space would be in a position to implement redistributive and regulatory mechanisms that

meet the international scale of capital. The authors propose a number of such measures including the abolition of tax havens, tax on movements of capital and financial transactions, and taxes on "hidden" costs (e.g. ecological costs).

These proposals represent an intervention as innovative as it is challenging. What is most innovative is the capacity to announce effective, meaningful and transformative demands without compromising the radicality of the critique of capital. They transcend the redundant division between "reform and revolution" to engage, from the point of view of the movements, with real challenges in a manner which is intelligent, honest and concrete. What is most challenging in this book is that it slaughters some of the "sacred cows" of the radical left social movements. For instance, they argue that, given that political default would cause an acceleration of the banking crisis, alternative forms of credit such as cooperatives or public credit might be developed. This suggests that the revolutionary process they propose as the only way out of the cycle of austerity and debt would be one in which production continues to be linked to credit. The more "traditional" anti-capitalist wings of the social movements would no doubt see in such a position a failure to fully break with the logic of capital. Likewise, C&R argues that the fact that financialization threatens not just the welfare of ordinary people but also economic growth itself opens the possibility of an alliance between social democratic groups and more radical social movements. Finally, the notion of reforming European institutions will be controversial for many.

To my mind, the proposals put forward by C&R succeed in maintaining their radical edge while developing concrete strategic possibilities because they are founded on a nuanced analysis. This is evident in the form of political economy at stake here, a form which takes full account of the transformations in accumulation linked to financialisation and hence grasps the new antagonisms which are not captured by traditional radical politics (e.g. outmoded conceptions of class). This vision operates from the potentiality of actually existing conflicts discernible in the movements. In this sense, C&R might be described as Marxism at its finest; it is a Marxism of the "real movement which destroys the present state of things."

On the other hand, a nuanced view of the relationship between movements and the state or EU institutions underpins the analysis. Rather than an "all or nothing" approach, C&R takes cognizance of the way in which the very act of forcing radical demands on the state involves its own radical dimension that transcends the terms of the state. They consider the state relevant, but not as a vehicle for emancipation. Rather, they seem to see the state and EU institutions as a kind of presence against which social movements must maintain an antagonism that can subject those institutions to the egalitarian and democratic energy of the movement.

That said, the reader will be left with some questions. The possibility of an alliance between radical anti-capitalist movements and more social democratic leanings is suggestive, but what of the dangers here; for example, in reproducing discourses which are ultimately supportive of capital? How might the tensions



here be negotiated? In addition, arguments about alternative credit sources and alternative forms of production are underdeveloped and ambiguous.

Nevertheless, this book is a manifesto and no one should expect it to develop a blueprint for the post-revolutionary society. The debates generated by the questions left open by the book will no doubt be as fruitful as the book itself.

This book is priceless for anyone who wants to participate in building a critique of financialization, or critically understanding debt, speculation and their relationship with austerity. In other words, this book is for anyone interested in the political economy of the present. But it is also a vital *intervention* into the movements – an invitation and challenge to kick start a series of discussions which are badly needed. What is more, the book is not only a must-read manifesto against a Europe of debt and austerity, it is a manifesto for the power of a form of critique immersed in antagonistic subjectivity and an example of the possibilities of radical analysis enriched by the potentiality of everyday struggles.

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## About the reviewer

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**Lemonik Arthur, Mikaila Mariel (2011). *Student activism and curricular change in higher education*. Surrey, England: Ashgate. (220 pp)**

Reviewed by **Christine Neejer**

From cable news reports to informal chatter, negative portrayals of college students are easy to find. Under the current guise of millennials, college students are often criticized as apolitical, prioritizing career ambition and social networking over "learning for learning's sake." When involved in activism, a notable amount of mainstream media coverage, as well as some activists of previous generations, frame college students' motives and tactics as irrational and poorly planned. News coverage of the Occupy Movement has provided numerous examples, as many journalists conceptualized students' activism against corporate and political greed as a trend lacking sound ideology and strategy.

Fortunately, the recent work of Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur provides a refreshing view of college students' activism that diverges from these stereotypes and assumptions. In *Student Activism and Curricular Change in Higher Education*, Arthur broadens the scope of social change analysis beyond outside actors demanding change from the state. Her project aims to understand the particular process of social change within organizations. Arthur's organization of choice is American colleges and universities and she understands students as both outside and inside actors. Using case studies of six colleges (she gives them pseudonyms), Arthur documents the internal campaigns to bring interdisciplinary fields of Women's Studies, Asian-American Studies and Queer Studies into each school's curriculum.

Arthur opens the text by outlining the activist roots of each interdisciplinary field. Women, Asian-Americans and queer activists challenged traditional curriculums that excluded their lived experience as well as practices which limited their access to higher education. Arthur locates each field within the institutionalization process, positioning Women's Studies as most institutionalized, queer studies as least institutionalized, and Asian-American studies between the two. Arthur then discusses previous models of understanding social change including irrationality, framing, leadership, resource mobilization, political opportunity, and meditation theory along with the market and neo-institutionalism. Arthur believes each approach is limited because they focus on outsider actors addressing the state. She also explains how scholars have given little attention to actually measuring the concrete impact of particular social movements regardless of the actors or targeted institutions.

Arthur proposes the "organizational mediation model" to assess the impact of organizational campaigns by insiders, activism which she positions within the scholarship of social movements (p. 10). Using her case studies to test the model, Arthur argues that the impact of campaigns to establish Women's

Studies, Asian-American Studies, and Queer Studies can be predicted by comparing activists' use of "contentious politics" with the internal dynamics and context of the college (2011: 17). The organizational mediation model suggests that campaigns have a greater impact when they mirror, not conflict, with their context, specifically the organization's mission, openness and flexibility in the administration, and roles of other actors. Arthur therefore argues there is no single activist strategy that will increase the impact of a campaign. She instead proposes that studying activists' choices in their unique context can best assess their impact.

Interestingly, Arthur's model thus suggests that students attending schools already favourable to the incorporation of interdisciplinary studies should use assertive tactics, while students at schools less likely to support such additions should use assimilative tactics. To put concretely, students attending a college with history of activism, progressive mission, or flexible administrative procedures -- all elements that assist campaigns for interdisciplinary studies -- are mostly likely to have an impact if they engage in public, contentious forms of protest, such as media campaigns, picketing, and even chaining themselves on a school building. Students interested in studying these subjects in a school with ideological or bureaucratic barriers, such as a conservative or religious mission, little democratic decision making, or funding issues, should run a less confrontational, assimilative campaign that does not overtly challenge the school itself.

For example, "Abigail Adams College" is a private, prestigious women's college with the longstanding mission to educate women. Students' assertive "pressure campaign" to create a Women's Studies program made sense in a feminist-orientated campus with a vocal student body, active alumni, and engaged local activists (Arthur 2011: 48). Similarly, students at "Jeffery University" occupied a building for six days because the administration failed to respond to their proposals for an Asian-American Studies department. "Jeffery University" has a rich history of student activism, and students have been occupying buildings since the 1960s. The administration, used to aggressive tactics, responded with negotiation meetings and eventually a number of the students' demands were met.

To contrast, students who attended the private, Catholic "College of the Assisi" were able to incorporate Women's Studies into their curriculum when they reframed the subject as womanist and cut ties with polarizing topics such as abortion, birth control, and lesbian rights. "College of the Assisi" students and faculty furthered campus-wide interest in Women's Studies by organizing a symposium of student research on women and incorporating women's experiences into conversations on religion, life and belief. They never used aggressive, public tactics such as protests and they purposefully removed political issues from their campaign that challenged the college's mission. According to Arthur's model, all three campaigns had a successful impact because they were aligned with the existing frames of each college.

Despite the title, students are not the only actors in campaigns for curricular change. In all six colleges, faculty, staff, and students worked together at varying levels of comfort and mutual understanding. In some colleges, faculty directly led efforts to incorporate interdisciplinary fields. While at "Technopark University" for example, students were inspired to advocate for Women's Studies due to informal mentoring from feminist faculty. Non-teaching staff at "Jeffery University," who were not subject to worries of losing tenure, were the central support for student activists advocating for Queer Studies. Throughout the case studies, Arthur highlights the significance of these alliances and their timing. Students' campaigns moved smoother and quicker when a supportive college president was hired or feminist-identified faculty gained tenure. Yet Arthur is quick to note alliances and timing can lessen the impact of campaigns as well. For example, she suggests that the lack of a formal Queer Studies program at "Sagebrush University" speaks not to ongoing homophobia but a remarkably positive campus climate. Arthur argues that "Sagebrush" is currently so supportive to LGBTQ students that many view Queer Studies as unnecessary and mobilize around other issues they believe are more pressing.

This book provides numerous insights that could be useful to readers interested in interdisciplinary fields, campus activism, or social change more broadly. Arthur's case studies are diverse and rich. While the schools represent various levels of acceptance of Women's Studies, Asian-American Studies, and Queer Studies, they illustrate that these fields can interest a wide range of students in numerous educational settings. A history of campus activism, progressive political leanings, size, or prestige does not necessarily predict students' desire for interdisciplinary study or their ability to lead effective campaigns to change their colleges. What does matter, according to Arthur, is their choices. Arthur refreshingly views college students not as apathetic or rash but as "educated and strategic thinkers with sophisticated understandings" of social change (p. 165). Arthur's work also highlights the impact of campus activism from the late 1970s and 1980s, periods that are not commonly known for their activist impulse. Arthur's research reiterates what many activists know well: social change often takes many years. In some schools, decades passed between the first students to advocate for Women's Studies and the establishment of a major. Activists struggling to see the fruits of their labour would benefit from keeping this in mind. Arthur's model is not limited to education and could be used to study activism within other types of organizations as well.

The particular impact of students' socio-economic class could have been more fully explored in the book. For example, "Promenade University" is a commuter school with high dropout rates and little student activism. The working-class student body, many of whom are first generation college students, have "busy lives" and lack "the means and the knowledge" to advocate for curricular change (p. 67). Arthur believes "more could have been done" at "Promenade" as current interdisciplinary programs are small and struggling (p. 70). The case study could be an interesting starting point to discuss how students' socio-economic status can limit their access to interdisciplinary fields as well as their abilities to mobilize.

Perhaps some success stories in the book are in part because those students did not have to care for children or work numerous jobs. They could afford to take theoretical courses instead of pre-professional or vocational programs, and they understood the systems and cultures of higher education because their family members also attended college. Similarly, students able to attend private schools faced significantly different challenges in their activism compared to those in public schools with more direct state involvement. Arthur could have addressed this difference directly in her analysis. Arthur acknowledges that a more in-depth look into resources is needed, and perhaps she will take on such a project in her future work.

These are minor qualms in a book that is engaging, informative, and accessible. The text clearly shows the importance of tracing the history of curricular change and thinking critically about what knowledge "counts" and who engages in the "counting." The book illustrates the potential of the campus as a space for inspiring and achieving social change, an important reminder to activists and academics alike.

### **About the reviewer**

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**MacKinnon, R. (2012). *Consent of the networked: The worldwide struggle for internet freedom*. New York: Basic Books. (320 pp.)**

Reviewed by **Piotr Konieczny**

*Consent of the Networked* has attracted attention even before its release in early 2012. Since then, it has been covered in mainstream media (such as the Guardian) and numerous digerati sites, such as TechDirt and BoingBoing. In the midst of this, a question arises -- should this book be of concern to activists and scholars of social movements?

It is my opinion that yes, this is a book worthy of attention. MacKinnon makes an excellent point that as cyberspace is affecting more and more of our lives, it has become much more than just a tool -- it is a new front in the continuing struggle for our freedoms. As the author demonstrates time and again, the Internet can and does affect our lives to an extent that the online freedoms are becoming an integral part of our everyday rights.

Consider the example of the Arab Spring: it was about much more than the Internet, and there is no denying that to whatever extent the new media were used, they were just tools for achieving something greater. At the same time, those tools proved vital for organization of activists and for their communication with the outside world. Revolutions happened before the Internet, but in the era of the Internet, they have to utilize the net to be effective. If there are forces which are trying to make it harder for us to be able to use the new media for activism, they are striking directly at our ability to speak out as free citizens of the world. As Manuel Castells, quoted in the book, once noted: while online insurgent communities have scored some victories, those are not guaranteed to be permanent, as power holders will try to "enclose free communication in commercialized and policed networks".

Relatively few of us, however, pay attention to the minute details of laws being passed all around the world, or to the actions of for-profit companies delivering our online services. Both of those forces, however, are trying to affect the code -- the underlying software that makes the Internet what it is. The governments do it in the interest of security, the companies -- in the interest of profit. The result is a steady erosion of privacy and restriction of our rights to speak and to congregate in cyberspace.

On the bright side, there are activists and groups (like the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Free Software Foundation, the Pirate Party or the Sunlight Foundation) that are campaigning to protect our rights. The struggle for "Internet Freedom" is not lost yet, but it is quickly emerging as a vital part of the human rights struggle in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (particularly as the question of whether the right to access the Internet is a human right itself begins to be treated seriously).

The book covers many themes in a manner that on occasion seems a little chaotic, as certain issues are repeated several times. This is however only a minor problem; overall, the flow of the book is rather good, making it stand out from the crowd of recent publications on digital activism. The numerous examples are woven into a coherent thread, with the book divided into several distinct parts. After the introduction to the concept of digital commons -- how the Internet has been built "by the people for the people,"-- the influence of governments, both democratic and authoritarian, is covered with a discussion of censorship throughout the world.

One of the book's major strengths is in its coverage of the complex relations between the governments and for-profit enterprises, a relation that often seems to be aimed at -- intentionally or not -- reducing the influence and freedoms of regular citizens. When the governments ask (demands) that corporations do something the government way, they often see no reason not to; and at the same time, if there is something they want from the government (such as a stricter copyright enforcement), they have skills in government lobbying that few can match. This is not something that is unique to places like China; while the censorship that is happening in those places is expected, the attempts to introduce it, often under the guise of fighting crime and terrorism, in the more democratic countries is perhaps even more worrisome. As MacKinnon notes: "Politicians throughout the democratic world are pushing for stronger censorship and surveillance by Internet companies to stop theft of intellectual property. They are doing so in response to aggressive lobbying by powerful corporate constituents without adequate consideration of the consequences for civil liberties, and for democracy more broadly."

Another powerful observation in the book concerns the fact that throughout the world much of the political discourse happens both through privately owned and operated digital intermediaries (Internet service providers) and within spaces that, despite appearances to the contrary, are not public (such as Facebook or Twitter). The companies that run them are at best "benevolent dictatorships," creating and enforcing whatever rules they want, and their customers are bound by the rarely-read, complex terms of service. As MacKinnon points out, those companies "may have deployed tools that people are using around the world in pushing for democracy but they are no democrats."

If the public, led by activists, does not demand that they become more socially responsible, it is unlikely they will do so through their own will. As the book succinctly illustrates, it is rare for the companies to seriously take the initiative and push for individual rights, and neither can we expect the governments or international intergovernmental organizations like the UN to be our ally.

The book ends with the argument that people of the world need to become netizens, educated about and involved with Internet issues, taking action to protect their (our) rights on the Internet, and through it, in the real world. The issues of Internet governance may seem obscure at first, yet the outcome of relevant power struggles can and will significantly affect the extent to which, as

the author notes, "any speech that displeases powerful governments or large brand-name corporations can have safe passage and a safe home on the Internet."

On a final note, there is more to the book than just its printed version. The Web 2.0 website promoting the book has a number of resources, from regular errata to a regularly updated (as of late April 2012) blog (<http://consentofthenetworked.com/author/rebeccamackinnon/>) and a "get involved" section directing readers to places on the web where they can learn more about and join one of many organizations promoting the causes of Internet freedom. This, like nothing else, shows that the author truly cares about the issues she writes about -- something that is not without importance in the fields of journalism and activism.

**About the reviewer:**

Piotr Konieczny is a PhD student at the Department of Sociology, University of Pittsburgh. He is interested in the sociology of the Internet, in particular in topics such as wikis - their impact on individuals and organizations; decision making processes and organizational structure of Wikipedia; patterns of behavior among its contributors; relation between wikis and social movements; and teaching with new media. Email: pik1 AT pitt.edu