

Book reviews: *Interface* volume 7(2)

Reviews editors: Bjarke Skærlund Risager and Mandisi Majavu

Books reviewed this issue:

Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, 2014, *We Make Our Own History, Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism*. London: Pluto Press (272 pp., \$34 paperback).

Reviewed by Christopher Gunderson

Chris Dixon, 2014, *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements*. University of California Press (363 pp., \$27.95 paperback)

Reviewed by Lesley J. Wood

Theresa O'Keefe, 2013, *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (247 pp., £68 hardback)

Reviewed by Annette Behrens

Betsy Leondar-Wright, 2014, *Missing Class: Strengthening Social Movement Groups by Seeing Class Cultures*. Ithaca: ILR Press (274 pp., \$21.95 paperback)

Reviewed by Bob Eastman

Wolfson, Todd, 2014, *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press (248 pp., \$30 paperback).

Reviewed by Gino Canella

Martinot, Steve, 2014, *The Need to Abolish the Prison System: An Ethical Indictment*. Los Gatos, CA: Smashwords, Inc. (84 pp., \$1.99 e-book).

Reviewed by Nick J. Sciullo

Oriola, Temitope, 2013, *Criminal resistance: the politics of kidnapping oil workers*. Ashgate. (xvi, 243 pp., £68.00 hardback)

Reviewed by Tomás Mac Sheoin

Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, 2014, *We Make Our Own History, Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism*. London: Pluto Press (272 pp; \$34 paperback)

Reviewed by **Christopher Gunderson**

We Make Our Own History promises to spark lively debates on the future direction of social movement theory. Discontent with mainstream social movement theory on the part of activists and activist scholars has become almost a fixture of the field. While there have been many criticisms of the limitations of the dominant paradigm elaborated in the works of Tilly, Tarrow, McAdams and their many co-thinkers, attempts to articulate a comprehensive alternative approach have been considerably fewer and, in any event, have heretofore been largely ignored. Cox and Nilsen, however, have written a book that will be much harder to dismiss.

An element of this is timing. As the authors quip in their account of the difficulties they encountered in finding a publisher when they first proposed the work a decade ago, “what a difference a recession makes.” The global wave of protest movements that erupted in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown and the subsequent “Great Recession” have prompted many scholars to question the strange silence of definitive theoretical works, like *Dynamics of Contention* (McAdam et al 2001), on how class and other social antagonisms of capitalism generate and structure contentious politics. This questioning has contributed to a revived interest in Marxism among social movement scholars that is reflected in the recent publication of the collected volume, *Marxism and Social Movements* (2013), of which Cox and Nilsen were two of the editors.

While the timing of the book is auspicious, it is its success in fulfilling its considerable theoretical ambitions that will continue to command our attention in years to come. *We Make Our Own History* gives us, for the first time, a serious, comprehensive and unapologetically Marxist theory of social movements – of what they are, of where they come from, of how to understand their successes and failures, and of where they stand in relationship to the larger historical development of human society. More than a welcome response to a new conjuncture, *We Make Our Own History* is a major challenge to the reigning theoretical perspectives in the study of social movements.

Movement relevant theory

While the authors occasionally draw on their own experiences and research in Norway, Ireland and India to illustrate particular points, *We Make Our Own History* is fundamentally a work of theory and an erudite one at that. It is also, however, a remarkably accessible work. This is no doubt in part a reflection of Cox and Nilsen’s talents as writers, but more importantly of their view of what

a proper theory of social movements needs to do. Building on Bevington and Dixon's (2005) call for "movement relevant theorizing," Cox and Nilsen start from a view of social movement activism as a process of learning that is itself productive of theory. While social movement scholars will correctly perceive within it a pointed polemic against the method and approach represented by McAdams et al (2001), it is first and foremost addressed to movement activists who recognize the practical necessity of a theoretical understanding of their own activity.

Marxism, in the authors' view, is a theoretical approach that, in contrast with the mainstream of academic approaches, emerged directly out of the efforts of participants in social struggles to understand their own experiences. If Marxism is not the only theoretical tradition rooted in social struggles with important things to say to social movements (anarchism, feminism, post-colonialism, and queer theory are others), the authors argue persuasively that it is the most comprehensive and offers the most robust point of departure. The introductory chapter of the book is thus dedicated to making the case, on the one hand, to activists of the need for theory, and on the other, to scholars, for the need for such theory to be movement-relevant, and finally to both, that Marxism's understanding of history as a process of emerging collective human agency – or "historicity" – is best suited to meet those needs.

Species being

The second chapter is an extended elaboration of ideas sketched out in the first. It begins with a discussion of Marx's understanding of human *species being* as an expression of our unique capacity to satisfy our needs by making and remaking our world through conscious collective activity. This process is both shaped by and constitutive not just of the particular historical social formations within which it occurs, but of corresponding forms of consciousness. Cox and Nilsen argue here that Marx's approach represents a decisive break with the subject-object dualism of western philosophy that imagines theory as existing outside of or separate from the social practices it purports to understand. Marx's break with this dualism is expressed in his understanding of the dialectical interplay of theory and practice which he calls praxis in which our subjectivity emerges through our critical reflection on our conscious efforts to transform our world. Social movements are thus understood, not simply as objects of academic study, but as themselves productive of our understanding not only of episodes of contention, but of the social totality that gives rise to them.

Thus, in contrast with the ways that

academic social movement theory today often sees capitalism and the state as a taken-for-granted framework within which movements represent a particular 'level' of political action. (p. 25)

Cox and Nilsen give us

a picture of social movements [...] in which they have been, for at least 300 years, part and parcel of struggles over 'historicity', the ways in which human beings create their own societies and orient their priorities and development. (p. 26)

From above and below

After establishing the general orientation and philosophical foundations of the book, Cox and Nilsen lay out the core of their approach in the third chapter. Rejecting both mainstream academic social movement theories and more structuralist versions of Marxism that "treat popular agency as a theoretical afterthought set against the more significant role of political economy" the authors

posit social movements – from above as well as from below – as the fundamental animating forces in the making and unmaking of the structures of needs and capacities that underpin social formations. (p. 56)

Conceiving of social movements not simply as instruments of the oppressed and marginalized, but as the collective projects of any social groups, acting from above or below, to either change or maintain existing dominant structures, Cox and Nilsen give us a theory of those structures as the product or "sediment" of social conflict.

The implications of the recognition of social movements as coming from above are significant. Elite interests and strategies are not presumed to be either obvious or inevitable, but rather mediated by understandings that are often contested among elites. Similarly, exploitive class relations are not presumed to be automatically self-reproducing, but are rather recognized as requiring conscious efforts to maintain. Social structures are thus understood not as necessarily stable configurations but as "truce lines" to be "continually probed for weaknesses by both sides and repudiated as soon as this seems worthwhile" (p. 57). This is not so much a theory of social movements as it is a theory of society as a whole in which the development of contending social movements explain its configuration at any particular moment.

The making of social formations

The last two chapters of the book consider the role of social movements in the long development of contemporary global capitalism. It is really in the fourth

chapter, which charts the role of social movements, from the enclosures of commons lands in 16th century England to the recent global financial crisis, that Cox and Nilsen demonstrate the power of their theoretical approach to cast the whole field of social movement studies in a new light. From the primitive accumulation of capital to the major bourgeois revolutions that birthed the capitalist state in the 17th and 18th centuries, to the consolidation of liberal regimes in the 19th century to the “organized capitalism” that emerged in the mid-20th century, they trace how the initiatives and counter-initiatives of specific class forces have both precipitated and resolved periodic crises.

These crises revolve around the failure of particular accumulation strategies and state forms, and the inability of hegemonic states to direct and lead the capitalist world-system. In this manner we arrive at an understanding of the global neo-liberal order as a response to the failure of an earlier configuration – the era of “organized capitalism” that followed the Second World War – to both ensure continued capital accumulation while containing insurgent political challenges. Neoliberalism is, in this view, a social movement from above that successfully sought to regain the initiative against the subaltern classes, nations and other social groups that had forced elites in the middle of the century to exchange concessions for social peace.

The final chapter of the book seeks to apply the framework and insights developed over the course of the rest of the book to the problems confronting contemporary movements against neoliberalism. In so far as it attempts to grapple with the question of what it would actually mean for these movements to win, this is the book’s most ambitious chapter. Not surprisingly, it is also where the book encounters its greatest problems.

Bringing socialism back in

In its account of the role of social movements in the historical development of capitalism as a world system, *We Make Our Own History* is characterized by a very peculiar omission. While discussing the contributions of many other movements, it barely even acknowledges, much less analyzes, the most significant social movements from below of the 20th century – the communist-led socialist revolutions that occurred in Russia, China and several other countries.

There is really no way to engage the complex strategic and organizational questions tackled in the final chapter of the book without first reckoning with these experiences. By effectively excluding them from their account, the authors let stand, and at moments themselves even appear to embrace, the anti-communist verdicts on these events that have become the “common sense” of our age and that so effectively grounds the neoliberal insistence that “there is no alternative.”

So, while Cox and Nilsen rightly give considerable attention to the agitation of Chinese labor in the 21st century in their discussion of contemporary

challenges to neoliberalism they have nothing to say about the social revolution that abolished the Chinese landlord class, freed a quarter of humanity from the terrors of famine and foreign rule, and that more than any other single event accounts for the first sustained reversal of the ten thousand year-long global trend of rising economic inequality.

The socialist revolutions of the 20th century and the regimes that they brought to power raise many complex questions that a Marxist theory of social movements must be able to address. Conflating processes, in which literally millions of the poorest and most oppressed people in the world took history into their hands, with the wholly top-down national development projects pursued by post-colonial regimes such as those established in India or Egypt, as Cox and Nilsen seem to at one point (p. 125), impoverishes our understanding of both the real extent of the accomplishments of movements from below as well as of the challenges that so persistently arise when they are able to take power.

Excluding the socialist revolutions leads to a North Atlantic-centered account of the periods of capitalist development that ignores not just how the example of the Russian Revolution loomed over the transition from liberal to organized capitalism, but also how what Hinton called “the Great Reversal” of the egalitarian thrust of the Chinese Revolution represented by the defeat of the Cultural Revolution and the rise of Deng Xiaoping, was pivotal in the transition from organized to neoliberal capitalism.

Whatever their deficiencies, the socialist revolutions of the 20th century were popular upheavals that radically altered the balance of power between oppressors and oppressed for the better part of the century. They gave courage everywhere to the downtrodden and put fear in the hearts of ruling elites. The concessions made to organized labor, the negotiated decolonization of much of Africa and Asia, the extension of suffrage and other rights to women, the civil rights movement in the U.S., all of these obtained significant momentum from the socialist revolutions. We forget this at great expense.

Similarly, the complex unravelling of those revolutions and the reintegration of the countries in which they occurred back into the capitalist world-system did much to put popular movements on the defensive worldwide and thus to facilitate the rollback over the past several decades of many of the gains secured under organized capitalism.

One need not adopt an uncritical view of the regimes established by the socialist revolutions to recognize this dynamic. Indeed, Cox and Nilsen’s recognition of social structures as unstable truce lines between movements from above and below has enormous potential to illuminate the richly contradictory historical experiences of socialist revolution. Regrettably this potential is not developed where it needs to be.

Dare to win

The concluding chapter of *We Make Our Own History* includes some interesting reflections on how the reluctance to talk or think about winning “contribute to the current stalemate between the institutions of the ‘New World Order’ and the movement of movements” (p. 182) as the authors characterize the diverse range of forces challenging neoliberalism. In opposition to what they regard as a crippling fear of really winning on the part of social movement participants, the authors argue that

if we want to create movements that pose a serious threat to those in power, we had better be very serious about winning. [...] To say ‘another world is possible’ and effectively resist the system, while planning to leave those in power in control of armies, prisons and police forces is to risk the lives not only of activists, but of their partners, families and friends, and of anyone who might be seen supporting them (pp. 183 – 184).

Here, however, we see the real costs of not looking more closely at those moments when the movements from below actually did win, and were confronted with the very real contradictions involved in assuming power because the alternative of leaving it in the hands of the old ruling classes carried too high a price. The valuable distinction that Cox and Nilsen make between movements from above and from below is complicated by those moments when movements succeed in capturing state power and then use it with varying degrees of popular participation to simultaneously restructure social relations within a national territory while resisting the efforts of global capital to reintegrate them into the world-system. Instead of grappling directly with that complication the authors fall into a meandering rumination on the pitfalls of entanglements with the state that does not meet the high standards of theoretical rigor set by the rest of the book.

Whatever weaknesses there are in *We Make Our Own History*, however, should be seen as very much secondary. Cox and Nilsen have written a book that should redefine the field of social movement theory. It will quickly find a place in both graduate and undergraduate courses on social movements and its tightly argued challenges to reigning orthodoxies should make it the subject of fruitful discussion and debate across the field. Movement activists and organizers will also find much of value here. *We Make Our Own History* will help them locate their own experiences within larger, indeed global, processes of social change and will give their discussions of movement strategies a theoretical grounding that is so often lacking. It is an exciting and important book that deserves a wide readership.

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Chris Dixon, 2014, *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements*. University of California Press. (363 pages, \$27.95 paperback)

Reviewed by **Lesley J. Wood**

Chris Dixon introduces his book *Another Politics* with a quote from Detroit writer/facilitator/healer Adrienne Maree Brown,

A lot of our movements are shaped defensively, necessarily. It can be easy to set our dreams only on the horizon of what seems possible in circumstances largely controlled by oppressive systems. It feels like radical work to actually stretch our imaginations and recenter ourselves in the long arc of what we need to survive (p. vi).

The quotation is well chosen as this book pushes those of us trying to build powerful anti-authoritarian movements to think critically about our current movements and imaginatively about how, sometimes, they succeed.

Dixon is respected as a writer and organizer in movements in both Canada and the US – having lived and organized in both countries over the past twenty years. A white, middle class guy from the punk scene in the early 1990s, he began to organize within anarchist networks around animal rights, the US sanctions against Iraq, the prison industrial complex, and against sweatshops. He is part of an anti-authoritarian tendency within these movements that combines direct action with an emphasis on prefiguration and draws inspiration from intersectional anti-racist feminism. His book joins a cluster of rich reflections about movement building produced over the last five years, including those by Harsha Walia, Chris Crass, Marina Sitrin, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Dan Berger, Alex Khasnabish, Dean Spade, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

The book is divided into three sections, Politics, Strategy and Organizing. In Politics, Dixon describes 'Another Politics' as anti-statist and anti-capitalist, and notes that it is most easily defined by what it is not. This approach is not bound up in political parties nor the non-profit or agency sectors, not in the counterculture of contemporary anarchism. Four key principles define this politic – first, struggling against all forms of domination, exploitation, and oppression; second, developing new social relations and forms of social organization in the process of struggle; third, linking struggles for improvements in the lives of ordinary people to long-term transformative visions and fourth; organizing that is grassroots and bottom-up.

On the one hand, this is a book for those already engaged in this set of politics – rich with insight into strategy, organization and relationships. Dixon uses dozens of in-depth and frank interviews with contemporary activists in Canada and the US to illustrate this politics and its practices. But it avoids navel gazing

and nepotism as it identifies the limits, tensions, possibilities and contradictions within these movements. But one doesn't need to be an insider to appreciate the book – those interested in recent movements such as Occupy, student movement, No One Is Illegal, Palestine solidarity, indigenous solidarity movement, environmental justice, anti-war, feminist, and anti-racist organizing, or the political landscape more generally will find the book rewarding.

The stories and the clear language make it a fast read for busy activists who will appreciate the clear articulation of a politics that has emerged over the past twenty years. They will also appreciate the clear-eyed recognition about the weaknesses. In particular, Dixon shows us how we often set up our own obstacles to effective strategizing. We do this by prioritizing principles over plans, tending to fetishize particular tactics and forms of organization, and organizing as if everything was a crisis. These three problems have different but related consequences: they limit the openness of our movements to new people and new ideas, they tend to stop us from evaluating the context and goals, and they burn us out.

Strategy, the second section of the book, ends with a quote by the Team Colors Collective: “The seed of the new society is not just created in the shell of the old, (to use an old but still very true metaphor), but seeks to organize toward the point of confrontation” (p. 105). Dixon continues:

When we consciously link ‘against’ and ‘beyond’ in our organizing, we create possibilities for collective action that fundamentally challenges what is while practically building what we want. This dyad, the two aspects intentionally fused together, is the core political promise of another politics. (p. 105).

This is one of a number of points in the book where Dixon challenges existing dualisms in movement thinking. He cites Ashanti Alston in noting that the strategic framework of this politics is at its best when it is both in the world but not of it. By this he means that movements shouldn't isolate themselves into activist enclaves, but engage in movements that are relevant for a broader set of people, even while keeping our imaginations open about what real transformation might look like.

The third section on Organizing looks at key questions of tactics, and forms of organizing. Across the board, Dixon emphasizes base building, strategy, experimentation and compassion. Particularly interesting is his section on organizations – or what he nicely calls ‘Vehicles for Movement-Building.’ The argument against fetishization of tactics is more well known, but here Dixon moves us to a useful recognition that fetishization of form is also a problem. He notes that although many activists get stuck in the ‘ruts’ of organizational forms, including affinity groups and non-governmental organizations, there is dissatisfaction about these forms. Instead of insisting on a particular form, many activists long for particular organizational experiences, including

accountability, flexibility and support.

Dixon concludes with the recognition that there are two different ways to see 'another politics'. The first is as a political pole, and second as an open political space. As a pole, this politics asserts a way of understanding and acting in the world – a particular articulation that challenges many past efforts. As a space, the goal is to generate new conversations and possibilities among movements. He notes that although there are tensions between these two projects, we need to embrace both and push forward. He then builds on the resonance of the Occupy/99% frame and proposes that it would be particularly effective to tap into a broad understanding of anti-capitalism and class struggle in order to build an inclusive movement that targets "those who are profiting off the system "and the structures that sustain their power and profit- making" (p. 225).

Throughout the book Dixon hammers home the need for our movements to create open, respectful, collaborative relationships and dialogues. But to do this, we need to abandon our purism. I found this insistence particularly relevant, having seen how movements in decline often fall back on defences of 'solid politics' or 'correct line' thinking that exclude those with even slightly different approaches as 'fucked up.' Such divisiveness doesn't build movements.

Dixon refers back a number of times to the Zapatista phrase of "Walking we ask questions." He concludes with six questions.

1. How can we foreground the interconnections among multiple forms of oppression while also making strategic choices about which fights we take up?
2. How can prefigurative praxis be intentional and yet avoid reinforcing insular activist communities?
3. How should we relate to electoral politics?
4. How can another politics foster visionary organizing approaches that are useful and meaningful to ordinary non-activist people?
5. What kinds of organizations and institutions should the anti-authoritarian current build in order to further movements, consolidate gains and lay infrastructure for a new society?
6. How should anti-authoritarians relate to liberal, social democratic, Leninist and other left political currents?

These questions and the dialogue that they inspire are part of the gift that Dixon offers. Both hopeful and practical, *Another Politics* helps us in our struggle to build a different world.

About the review author

Lesley Wood is interested in how ideas travel, how power operates, how institutions change, how conversations influence practices, how people resist and how conflict starts, transforms and ends. She is an activist and researcher in Toronto, working at York University. She can be reached at ljwood AT yorku.ca

Theresa O’Keefe, 2013, *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (247 pp., £68 hardback)

Reviewed by **Annette Behrens**

Theresa O’Keefe has written a book that addresses complex questions on feminist identity development through feminist political theory, nationalism and social movement theory. *Feminist Identity Development and Activism in Revolutionary Movements* is based on a case study of the Irish republican movement through ethnographic interviews with women activists. The aim of the book is to show how feminist identity development and nationalism can be interlinked. This is the book’s main intervention, where it provides a critical take on feminist contemporary discourse, which draws a negative relationship between feminist identity and nationalist activism. O’Keefe prefaces her intervention as an intersectional one, which allows her to suggest that “women did fare well by partaking in republican nationalism” (p. 14) and that nationalist movements can be sources for feminist activism.

The book provides a practical example of how different and perhaps at first sight incongruous struggles may intersect both in terms of knowledge production and political strategies. O’Keefe’s intervention may be useful to both scholars of social movements and activists in asserting the complex ways in which movement formation and political identity development take place. While the book challenges the feminist discourse that engages with nationalist movements as inherently patriarchal, the author acknowledges that the Irish republican movement and the mobilisation of women are ambivalent, fragmented, intricate and contextually specific.

O’Keefe starts the book by setting out a brief review of the current literature dominating the different sets of theory on nationalism and gender. As anyone familiar with these discourses knows, women are often remembered as ‘victims’ of nationalist struggles, rarely as violent insurgents or as beneficiaries of revolutionary counter-violence. Nationalist movements are indeed unlikely spaces for feminist praxis because they are often embedded in traditional patriarchal gender roles, where women’s bodies and their reproductive capacities are used as symbols of the nation’s virtue and prosperity. Thus, women’s bodies often become objects of contestation, which materialise through sexual violence. As such, the figure of women-as-victims has become important to scholars of nationalism and gender in an effort to make women’s suffering in war and conflict visible (see Cockburn 1998, 2001; Eisenstein 2000; Mostov 2000). As O’Keefe argues, women’s agency in nationalist struggles remains underexplored within this literature. When their agency is highlighted, women are re-essentialised as peacemakers, through the trope of women as universally non-violent and having a natural preference for peace.

The second chapter describes the way in which British state violence was the primary source of abuse against women during the Irish Troubles (1968-1998) and a main contributor to the politicisation of women in the struggle joining the armed resistance. Excerpts from O'Keefe's interviews give a particularly graphic description of the violence that both women and men endured through the internments, imprisonment and strip searches. To me this is an interesting second chapter because of its privileging of raw interview transcripts that, set against the critique of conventional sensationalism of women in conflict in the previous chapter, reads as an interesting, yet ambiguous representation. On one hand, it seems as if O'Keefe is merely reproducing the sensationalism she is critiquing in the first chapter, that women in conflict are only viable as victims through the uninhibited reproduction of violent images. On the other hand, I found the structure of the chapter also subversive of this kind of familiar sensationalism. Precisely because the author allows the description of violence to not only stand by itself but rather she surrounds these excerpts of violence within a wider context of women's emancipation and agency, that is in particular set against the structural abuse by the British state as a colonial force.

The third chapter draws these questions in closer, describing the roles that women undertook during the struggle, including combat, their role through IRA policing and informants, military training and leadership. In this chapter O'Keefe argues that women refused passive roles and committed to violent resistance feeling frustrated about the escalating violence and societal instability brought on them and their communities by British and anti-republican brutality. Simultaneously, although women clearly proved a strong collective commitment, they were continuously pathologised, either as temporary replacements for men in prison or through their caring responsibilities or other patriarchal inventions against women's participation and agency. This culminated in women being completely side-lined, underrepresented and unheard during the 1993 peace talks. The author notes that this disappointment contributed to stronger gender awareness amongst the participants in her study. Republican women began to better recognise the unequal treatment they received from their male comrades, and "feminism was nourished in reaction to the patriarchal elements of republicanism" (83).

The fourth chapter explores the other side of the pathological dichotomy of women's participation – the dangerous 'femme fatal' and the passive 'unusual suspect'. O'Keefe addresses this detrimental dichotomy by demythologising the iconography that follows the imaginary of women's participation during the Troubles. Indeed, this representation of women is severely skewed as portraying women as victims helped the movement politically as women's agency was not seen to be a garner of sympathy from the masses.

O'Keefe not only challenges this detrimental dichotomy but she also notes the narrativisation of history through cultural memory, which entails the privileging of the male hero and the writing off of women's contributions. Consequentially, she argues, that even when women are doing the same tasks as men, and countering the same dangers as men, they tend to be nevertheless written out of

history, and their participation and actions are either downplayed or forgotten altogether. O'Keefe does a particularly good job in reiterating the way in which women have been left out of history books by detailing her own struggles in completing the research.

The next two chapters focus on the notion of republican feminism and demonstrate the space that raised gender awareness through nationalist struggle can provide. The author's concluding argument in chapter five, that "[t]he politicisation of republican women and subsequent feminist development are inextricably linked to and are a product of their participation in the national struggle" (p. 148), is posed against the attempt of mobilising women through the autonomous, or mainstream, women's struggle. While she asserts her use of intersectionality to prove this lack, O'Keefe could utilise the framework of intersectionality more specifically to make this argument stronger as I found it the weakest in the book. Intersectionality is a complex concept that requires a more careful outlining than the "recognition of interlocking systems of oppression" (p. 10), particularly in the author's departure from the origin of intersectional thought located in Black feminist epistemologies. Thus, I propose two suggestions that would have made a more specific intersectional framework work in this book. First, it appears as though the broader feminist significance here could be supported better with links to other anti-colonial nationalist movements and struggles. Second, O'Keefe claims that Irish autonomous feminism failed to take up the radical project of republican feminism (she gives the example of abortion here) through their rejection of an intersectional analysis of the feminist struggle. However, there needs to be a better justification for this than the claim to identity politics and the ways in which intersectionality works both to analyse struggles of the less powerful and those of more dominant standing. A more detailed and broader definition of intersectionality would explicate this further.

O'Keefe both starts and ends the book with problematising McClintock's claim that "Nowhere, has feminism been allowed to be more than the maidservant to nationalism" (1993:78). This sentence suggests to O'Keefe that feminist nationalism is an oxymoron because of the supposed anti-violence stance inherent in feminism. It also favours women's autonomous organising, and construes nationalist movements as being invariably homogenous. O'Keefe's counterargument raises the question of anti-colonial struggles that are simultaneously nationalist but provides a ground for fighting patriarchal values and structures. While this book is unique in the sense that it provides a detailed look into women's participation in the Troubles, and a nuanced view of their participation. However it would be interesting to see a more comparative analysis, where more focus would be paid to other movements that are affected by different kinds of intersectional complex inequalities. A comparative analysis of this kind would make the argument stronger. However, as a contribution to the bodies of literature on conflict and peace studies, gender studies, theory on nationalism and critical social movement theory, this book supplies the

discourse of 'women in war' with a fresh disrupting of the boundaries constructed around the representation of women in armed conflict.

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Betsy Leondar-Wright, 2014, *Missing Class: Strengthening Social Movement Groups by Seeing Class Cultures*. Ithaca: ILR Press (274 pp., \$21.95 paperback)

Reviewed by **Bob Eastman**

Over the years, the various left-leaning oppositional movements in the United States have been limited by the complex realities of and history of race, gender, social position, and identity. While great strides have been made in advancing radicals' understanding of how these manifest themselves within both our movements and our lives, much work remains to be done. In particular, the role that class plays is frequently neglected, with both activist and mainstream discourse oscillating between downplaying the role of class (assuming that everyone can come together equally in a movement because it is "horizontal") and over-simplifying it (for example, the 99% rhetoric of the Occupy movement). In *Missing Class: Strengthening Social Movement Groups by Seeing Class Cultures*, Betsy Leondar-Wright challenges this limited view, presenting a compelling look at how class informs activism in the United States.

Leondar-Wright's book is the result of fieldwork studying 362 participants in 25 different "left-of-center" groups ranging from professional progressive activist groups to non-profits and even anarchist groups. The work builds on Leondar-Wright's experience as a self-described progressive activist who became politicized through the anti-nuclear struggles in the 1970s and the Movement for a New Society (MNS). The roots of *Missing Class* lie in the limits of that organizing, as Leondar-Wright came to realize that in some cases the "inessential weirdness"—aspects of counter-cultural identity not essential to a participant's identity (for example, eating granola as opposed to sexual identity)—often limited their potential mainstream support and erected barriers that prevented collaboration (p. 134). In many cases, these barriers had strong class undertones. In the years since Movement for a New Society, Leondar-Wright has continued to explore how class functions in the United States, working for the progressive group United For A Fair Economy and ultimately undertaking the fieldwork necessary to produce *Missing Class* as a graduate student.

The result is a very nuanced discussion of how class plays out in various social movements in the United States. Leondar-Wright begins by acknowledging the paradox that while many leftists in the United States reject the myth of a "classless society," they often embrace the idea of a classless movement (p. 29). This is seen in the limited discussion of class amongst various social movements in the United States. Contrasted with other identities—for example race or gender—class has received less focus. Leondar-Wright argues that this is in part due to the lack of shared vocabulary for even talking about class in the United States. To help the discussion, Leondar-Wright introduces some of the concepts first articulated by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, especially the idea of predispositions and learned behaviors that grow out of our class positions and

cultural capital (p. 32). The author is especially interested in these concepts as they are often the hardest for individuals to self-identify and overcome.

Leondar-Wright categorizes the 362 activists observed in the book based on four broad class categories: life-long-working-class, life-long-professional-range, upwardly-mobile, and voluntarily-downwardly-mobile (p. 38). Based on interviews that explore their current occupations, education, and family backgrounds, Leondar-Wright is able to note each activist's class position and then study how those positions influenced their opinions and behaviors within groups. From there, the information is used to make larger observations about shared actions, behaviors, and dispositions. A real strength of *Missing Class* is the detail through which this is explored. It moves beyond simple assertions of what people do based on their class position or background and instead examines the complex ways in which class manifests itself. Still, there are broad sets of behaviors associated with specific class positions, such as working-class activists' tendency to talk about the concrete and specific aspects of an issue, for example, what needs to change or who is the problem, whereas college-educated activists tend to talk in more abstract and theoretical terms. In addition to examining behavior based on class, Leondar-Wright also explores how movement traditions impact behavior. The twenty-five observed groups are divided into four broad traditions: grassroots community organizing, professional antipoverty advocacy, the labor movement, and social change groups working on both global and local causes (a category that is sub-divided into three ideological tendencies: progressive/nonprofit, anarchist, and anti-imperialist) (p. 64). The author provides a brief historical introduction to each of these broad groupings, which is particularly important for those like the anarchist tradition that might be less familiar to some readers.

All of these different categories and classifications could make for a somewhat disjointed study that doesn't flow well or offer much to readers, but the author does an excellent job of organizing the book around how class cultures affect specific, concrete issues within social movements. After the introductory chapters that explore class, the various movement traditions discussed, and define the necessary terminology, the remaining chapters are organized around common problems faced by social movements and how class influences the ways in which they are approached. The problems—recruitment and group cohesion, leadership and group process, anti-racism, over-talking, and extreme behavior violations—are issues that come up repeatedly in social movements. In between the chapters, there are brief interludes that explore how language differs as it relates to class. Organizing the book in this way really brought a sense of cohesion to the book and helped to illustrate how differently activists approach things based on class. For example, when it comes to low attendance, the contrast between working-class centered groups who emphasized the importance of food, community, and concrete benefits with professional-middle-class activists who emphasized ideological agreement, vividly illustrates a real difference.

It is in these chapters that the real value of the book comes through, as readers will likely see bits of themselves in the discussion, which is helpful for identifying behaviors that may otherwise have gone unnoticed or unconsidered. As someone who has been involved in various anarchist and anti-authoritarian groupings over the years, I was particularly struck by some of these discussions. For example, I found myself cringing when Leondar-Wright discussed how people in anarchist groups avoid conflict, as is shared in a story about how one anarchist collective allowed a problematic situation where a member was taking money from the collective go unresolved for years. While one would like to think that it's an extreme situation, it's symptomatic of the kind of avoidance of conflict inherited from the activists' professional class backgrounds. Another example is how anarchist groups sometimes deal with those who engage in more minor transgressions—for example over-talking—by referring to the problem individual in the third person, rather than dealing with them directly. It's a behavior that I've definitely noticed over the years, and if I think critically, have likely engaged in some variation of it myself. It was in these moments of critical self-reflection that I found myself most engaged with the text.

In many ways, *Missing Class* is an example of how writing on social movements should be done. It is written by a researcher who has an intimate familiarity with the topic and a vested interest in social transformation. Leondar-Wright's personal experience with the broad social justice tradition in the United States since the late 1970s allows them to share insights that a researcher approaching the topic from more distance—for example a sociologist without prior experience—might not see. For example, connecting the experiences and flaws of Movement for a New Society, the anti-globalization movement of the early 2000s, and the Occupy movement, would likely be missed by someone without a broad personal experience. Similarly, as a participant in social movements, Leondar-Wright knows that much of the audience for *Missing Class* will be those interested in applying the ideas it raises, and as such, the book is written in an accessible way in which there are few unnecessary barriers created through the use of excessive academic or theoretical terminology. Similarly the organization of the book around key problems activists face—attendance, diversity, leadership, etc—makes it easy for activists to identify the concrete ways in which class influences their work. In the final pages of the book, Leondar-Wright's vision of a cross-class movement really shows the strengths that people of each class background and movement tradition can bring to their organizing (pp. 230-231).

If the book has one flaw, I would argue that it comes in terms of its consideration of the politics and affinities of the twenty-five groups in considered as part of the study. While it is interesting to compare the class and racial make up of labor groups compared to anarchist groups, for example; doing so requires a certain amount of vagueness or presumption of some type of unity or common path. In the case of *Missing Class*, Leondar-Wright situates the groups as being concerned with “building a mass progressive movement” (p. 232). The groups studied—which range from explicitly anarchist groups to

professional advocacy organizations—have widely different orientations and assumptions about society. Is describing them as “left-of-center” and assuming that they are all interested in creating a mass, united movement of some kind, the best way to conceptualize these groups (p. 2)? To the author’s credit, Leondar-Wright does a good job of looking at how class dynamics play out in the unique spaces and movement cultures of these different groups, but the assumption driving the book is that all of the groups want to appeal to a “mainstream” or “mass” of some sort. In some cases, I felt like the assumption undermined the analysis a bit, as in the discussion of comparing the working-class base of anarchism in the 1930s (p. 112) to the contemporary anarchist movement. Class no doubt informs practice—as the author shows throughout the book—but it is also worth contemplating how differences in political ideology and goals might complicate the author’s vision of a unified cross-class mass movement.

Overall, *Missing Class* is a strong exploration of how class informs activism in the United States. There is a lot for the thoughtful activist or organizer to consider in the book. On almost every page, there are insights that lend themselves to further discussion, which is the ultimate goal of the book. Leondar-Wright does not provide readers with a blueprint for creating cross-class alliances, but rather asks a difficult but essential question: “What would it look like to openly discuss class, claim class identities, and tap all class cultures to strengthen a group?” *Missing Class* can be an important starting point for answering the question.

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Todd Wolfson, 2014, *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press. (248 pp., \$30 paperback)

Reviewed by **Gino Canella**

Todd Wolfson approaches his analysis of social movement media and the Global Social Justice Movement as a scholar and ethnographic researcher, but what truly informs *Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left* is Wolfson's experience as an organizer, activist, and co-founder of the Media Mobilizing Project (MMP) in Philadelphia. A non-profit, community-media center housed in West Philadelphia, MMP grew out of Wolfson's "disquiet with the logic of the Cyber Left" (p. 8) and produces activist campaigns that focus on public education, labor rights and media policy. In coining the term "Cyber Left," Wolfson draws a connection between the organizing structures and ideologies of the popular uprisings of the 1960s and 1970s – often referred to as the New Left – with the digital technologies and communication tools utilized by recent movements like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, and Black Lives Matter. While recognizing the potential benefits these new forms of networked communications provide for democratic participation and social change, Wolfson complicates several aspects of the "Cyber Left," and these complications are discussed below. Wolfson's time studying and working with indymedia allows him to provide not only a detailed and critical analysis of the "Cyber Left," but offer practical solutions and guidance for contemporary, networked social movements seeking to navigate this somewhat new digital landscape.

After providing a historical review of social movements and the evolution of the New Left in part one of the book, part two of *Digital Rebellion* describes three key elements to modern social movements' "Logic of Resistance": Structure, Governance and Strategy. Defining this "Logic of Resistance" serves as a blueprint for how Wolfson's alternative community media hub, MMP, connects its messages of social justice, through media, to activism and advocacy that is built on (1) relationships with poor and working-class communities, (2) the development of movement leaders, and (3) political education of its staff. By working with local neighbourhood groups and community organizers on long-term campaigns that resonate with the public, MMP seeks to influence and pressure government officials with the ability to reform policy. The organizational structure and campaign strategies employed by MMP create a situation where the leaders are held accountable for their decisions – a major pitfall Wolfson sees facing the "Cyber Left."

Wolfson grounds his historical review of the Global Social Justice Movement from 1994-2006 in political-economic and networked communication theories and focuses on his fieldwork with indymedia – both in the United States and internationally – to present a convincing critique of the "Cyber Left." *Digital Rebellion* problematizes and champions social movement media by seeking a

theoretical space between what Jodi Dean (2009) refers to as “communicative capitalism” and Laclau and Mouffe’s views that socialist ideals are “in crisis.”

Wolfson challenges the notions that a review of materialist economic conditions is reductive and the hope that social change can be generated from the working classes is a “Marxist fiction” (p. 156). Dean defines communicative capitalism as the “participation in information, entertainment, and communication technologies in ways that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism” (p. 2). Inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis and Slavoj Žižek’s work on the decline of symbolic efficiency (1998), Dean’s argument is centered on the notion that an overwhelming amount of news and information available online leads to “a mistrust of what is said in favor of what can be detected” (Andrejevic 2009). Dean cautions online activists about the personalization of politics that may be exacerbated by Web 2.0 and other participatory communication networks. Wolfson, while not going so far as Dean in his analysis of the “Cyber Left,” reviews the strategies of the labor movement, New Left and other movements of the past because, he says, “to understand a specific period of resistance, it is vital to look at historical antecedents as well as the current socioeconomic environment” (p. 185).

The “Cyber Left,” according to Wolfson, emerged out of the logic of the New Left movements of the 1960s and reflects similar characteristics, such as horizontal, non-hierarchical structures that operate with leaderless governance and “radical democratic revolution[ary]” approaches towards social change. These characteristics are foregrounded by an account of the strategies employed by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) of Chiapas, Mexico that proclaimed in 1994, “One NO to neoliberal capitalism, many YESES” (p. 18). While several autonomous actors can indeed unite under this banner, seek to reject neoliberal capitalism, and support issues ranging from labor rights to environmental activism, Wolfson highlights here a critical aspect of the Zapatista’s story that is often missing from the “Cyber Left’s” discourse and strategies and one that is essential to understanding this movement: the on-the-ground organizing and shared messaging that occurred between the Marxist urban revolutionaries and the Mayans that allowed the organization to develop “dialogue, patience, and community” (p. 33).

This relationship-building enabled the movement to proceed with a cohesive and effective strategy, but, because the EZLN used a combination of old and new media to broadcast and promote its oppositional messages in its struggle with the Mexican army, the focus of many scholars and activists has wrongly centered on the technology’s role in the movement. In detailing the community relationships the Zapatistas developed, Wolfson demonstrates how new communication technologies utilized by social movements can benefit activists, but also how these tools distract researchers and journalists interested in understanding these organizations from the social, political and economic conditions affecting the production and distribution of the movement’s messages and the labor of the activists involved. Secondly, and more importantly, by emphasizing the relationships the Zapatistas built with the

Mayans, Wolfson is highlighting the organizing efforts and messaging strategies needed to develop and maintain long-term campaigns for social justice and connect them with poor and working-class communities.

Wolfson also details the rise and eventual successes of the Seattle Indymedia Center (IMC) during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests to describe the potential advantages networked communications have when utilized by activists who are mobilizing and uniting union leaders, community organizers and others. While the open-publishing platform used by Seattle IMC was essential to its distribution of news about the protests, Wolfson makes a deliberate effort to avoid falling into a techno-deterministic analysis. The horizontalism of indymedia, and the “Cyber Left” more broadly, is what accelerates rapid growth in the number of participants – similar to that seen by Occupy Wall Street and the protests of the Arab Spring – and allows more voices to feel connected and empowered by the movement. This structure and the digital media and new communication technologies that come with it, as Wolfson points out, also tend to privilege those with more social and cultural capital to reach positions of authority – typically upper-middle-class, well-educated, tech-savvy young men. Online activists working from remote locations are also placed at a physical distance from those the campaign is aimed at helping, which creates a barrier between them and the poor and working-class communities they are supposedly supporting. For these reasons, Wolfson shares Žižek’s concerns about the “Cyber Left’s” long-term viability and potential to connect its online activism to on-the-ground support. If movements are to utilize these technologies in any sort of shared struggle, it is essential for scholars and activists to return to a critique of capitalism and class, develop leaders who can be held to account for the movement’s long-term campaign strategy and decisions, and promote political education training within social movement organizations.

Digital Rebellion offers tangible advice for building, strategizing, and sustaining durable, networked movements and is a useful and accessible resource for scholars, activists, and community organizers working within the Global Social Justice Movement. Wolfson’s measured analysis of social movements and the media they utilize is useful because there tends to be either an uncritical celebration by those eager to credit new technologies for their role in promoting social justice or vilification by others who only see these movements and their media-making activities as servicing Western capitalism. *Digital Rebellion* offers scholars and activists theoretical and practical frameworks that situate social movement media within historical and socioeconomic contexts. What I would have appreciated more of, however, was a further exploration of the Mayans’ appeal for sensible dialogue. At a time when many social actors appear to be shouting down their opposition and reasoned debate and consensus-seeking seems lost, realizing how and where the Mayans found common ground with the Marxist revolutionaries is a critical place for contemporary movements to begin working towards policy reform. Detailing the work of activists who are producing and distributing messages of social justice in concert with community

leaders, politicians, the public, and other activists, while focusing on the labor that is required to build and maintain these relationships, is critical for understanding social movements operating within networked communications fraught with (symbolic) inefficiencies. Perhaps Occupy Wall Street's introduction of the "99 percent" into the public consciousness was a success.

For others, new legislation or policy reform is the only metric for success. The "Cyber Left," and the movements Wolfson would say are associated with it, has been panned for offering radical messaging in the form of slogans, catchphrases, or hashtags, which disappear from the public discourse within months. Encouraging social movements to follow the community-centered strategies the Mayans shared with the Marxist urban revolutionaries in Chiapas, Mexico is an opportunity to rethink how sensible "dialogue, patience, and community" can foster consistent, inclusive messaging and lasting social justice.

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Steve Martinot, 2014, *The Need to Abolish the Prison System: An Ethical Indictment*. Los Gatos, CA: Smashwords, Inc. (84 pp., \$1.99 e-book)

Reviewed by **Nick J. Scullo**

Steve Martinot's latest book is precisely what it portends to be: an ethical indictment of the U.S. prison system. Martinot is not wrong in theory about the curative force of democracy, but his hope in democracy contains little practical advice for activists and inmates on the ground. Many scholars, activists, and practitioners, particularly since Michelle Alexander's (2010) *The New Jim Crow*, have called for either substantial reform or abolition of the prison system. Now more than ever, it seems as though the movement to abolish prisons is strong. But, as much as theorizing prison's end is necessary, so too do scholars need to think about the ways this theory works on a day-to-day level where activists are engaged in work against the prison system.

Martinot's ethical claim rests on the potential of democracy to produce equality because democracy at least rests upon some notion of equality, fairness, and justice. Democratic theory suggests that the more we rely on more people to shape decisions and decide policy, the more that policy will reflect equality. In practice, though, democracy has become a convenient byword to mask oppression because it functions as a panacea to mask difference and struggle. To be sure, Martinot is no oppressor. His work has been helpful in raising critical consciousness and challenging structural oppression, often while chasing elusive democracy. Yet, democracy, particularly in its representative form, is often structured by leaders who fracture minority groups and has the unfortunate result of leading to quite undemocratic results including structural racism, classism, and sexism. Quite clearly Martinot knows this, and has indeed, in his longer works, addressed these concerns, but this book leaves much to the reader's interpretive schemas.

Martinot proposes five steps toward democracy, but it is not clear what his democracy is, or how his democracy interacts with others' theories of democracy. He wants us to dismantle the prison, bring judicial and law enforcement officials to justice through the creation of a new theory of justice (that remains unspecified), reform the judicial system so that it looks more like the truth and reconciliation model (that could be discussed fully), engage restorative justice as a theory to structure society (that may be the theory of justice he wants established), and rehumanize those labeled as offenders. Again, Martinot is not wrong, but in this short volume he does not provide the mechanisms for accomplishing these noble goals.

Martinot could enhance his ethical claims by substantively engaging Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Derrick Bell, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Genet, Jacques Derrida, and others. Gramsci's theory of hegemony might better inform Martinot's book by helping to flesh out a theory of power. Likewise, Derrick

Bell's theory of interest convergence might help explain how prison activists might gain allies. Jean Genet might have helped Martinot work through embodiment and performance as they relate to prison life and activism. Activists have engaged with these authors, particularly French theorists who worked with the Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP), or Prison Information Group, which provided an intellectually robust as well as active resistance to prisons. The revolution always needs sustained theoretical interventions, to nod toward V. I. Lenin. Martinot's *The Rule of Racialization: Class, Identity, Governance* (2002) and *The Machinery of Whiteness: Studies in the Structure of Racialization* (2010) certainly engage the relevant theoretical literature. His artful and engaging *Forms in the Abyss: A Philosophical Bridge between Sartre and Derrida* (2007) stands as proof that Martinot is an able theorist in his own right. More of this should have been included in his most recent book, and with Martinot's able prose, it would no doubt have been approachable for a broad audience.

Martinot's "What It Will Take" section lays out steps to take toward achieving democracy, but does not describe how one does what it will take. In order to achieve this resistance to racism, capitalism, the carceral state, and more, to transcend of the state, the penal colony, the abject state of permanent criminality, one must consult different works.

This is not to say other authors do a better job describing how to organize against prisons. While Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* provides the first note in Martinot's text, she as well does not explain exactly how to organize. The rage, the passion, and indeed the ethical arguments are clear in Martinot and other authors, but that still brings advocates to the question of how does one mobilize. From an applied ethical perspective, one might theorize organization strategy fruitfully as an ethical orientation toward a recognized evil. This is to say; Martinot could have put ethics to work in a more direct manner to better help with organizing.

Martinot's next book will hopefully tackle this question. The issue of organizing has been well handled by many scholars and activists in many disciplines from Latin@ studies to labor organizing. Organizing manuals abound all over the Internet. Martinot references the Living Wage Movement as an example that moved in the right direction although quite clearly had limited success. Should the prison abolition movement look to the Living Wage Movement for inspiration? What about comparative analysis of the Civil Rights Movement or Black Power Movement? Were either of these on track or instructive? Martinot does not give the reader this analysis in his book.

While it is difficult to fault a humanistic, ethical treatment for not citing to more evidence; this is precisely the problem with which I was confronted. As a rhetorical scholar, I was left wanting more in the way of citations to substantiate arguments. Martinot's activist audience, and based on the reviewer's reading of many pamphlets, blog posts, and organizing manuals from race and class activists, do not require tons of citations, but the reader is left wondering where

the evidence is. For example, Martinot might include the many reports that describe the ways the prison system has endangered families of color, the ways prisons impose environmental harms to communities, and the health-related concerns from which prisoners suffer. The danger in short books is that they only affirm the already supportive instead of shaping the minds of those that disagree. They are, essentially, preaching to the choir. Those that disagree should be the targets as much as the cause's allies. Activists need not only preach to the choir, but must also convert the disbelievers.

While this reviewer recommends those who question prison abolition to read this text, this reviewer's fear is that this book, passionately and not without occasional persuasive flavor, will only continue to affirm those already pursuing prison abolition. That is not all bad. Movements succeed when they are fed and strengthened by the erudite writing, speaking, and acting of their members. To be sure, Martinot is erudite and his prose readable both for its style and substance. But, readers may be left hoping for the next installment. In order to better serve those that believe in prison abolition, scholars must discuss more the ways to organize. In order to convert the un-converted, scholars must provide more evidence to support the arguments they make by using anecdotes, testimony, statistics, etc.

This book, despite qualms, is recommended across disciplines and issue foci to scholars and activists interested in prison reform and prison abolition. Martinot's continued work on prison abolition and publications in the popular press and academic fora must continue for he is a clarion voice in the movement.

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Temitope Oriola, 2013, *Criminal resistance: the politics of kidnapping oil workers*. Ashgate. (xvi, 243 pages, £68.00 hardback)

Reviewed by **Tomás Mac Sheoin**

After the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight comrades in 1995 following conviction by a military tribunal, core country interest in struggles in the Niger delta decreased. There were a number of reasons for this: the hanging appeared to show the failure or at least the limits of non-violent struggles against a state which had no great problems in being violent and new activists in the Delta had guns and seemed to be prepared to use them. This last factor moved the movement outside the limits of permissible action and solidarity in core countries, where Amory Starr (2003) could proudly boast that “there has not been a single case of weapons preparation or use by anti-globalization protestors in North America” and the question of state power was in many cases being ignored as theorists claimed to wish to make a revolution without capturing state power. While this was a reasonable response to the experience in both Europe and North America with leftist armed groups in the 1970s –where the armed group arrogantly claimed for itself the vanguard position the Leninist party had previously claimed- and a response to a situation where some claim core country states are reluctant to use fatal force against protestors (Cox 2014, but see Calafati 2013), these developments were not much use in situations where the state had consistently shown no great problem in meeting protest with lethal violence, whether covert or overt, as illustrated by the wave of the ‘Arab spring’ protests breaking against a state and security apparatus which did not accept the rule of the non-violence game. So possibly one of the ways we may now distinguish between social movements in the core and the periphery is that the latter still consistently face state (and non-state) violence.

As Oriola notes social movement scholarship has mainly concentrated on liberal democratic states in core countries despite the fact that “most episodic or systemic evincing of contentious repertoires of protest takes place in authoritarian regimes, especially in the developing countries of Asia, South America and Africa” (p.9). He continues that, while there has been an increase in studies of protest in peripheral countries since the 1990s, this has mainly focussed on state repression and “the adoption of violent architecture of protest by private, non-state actors has not received commensurate attention” (p.10). Studies of violent movements are thus left to counter-insurgency and other ‘security’ experts rather than incorporated in the study of social movements.

Oriola’s study is welcome purely on the basis that it looks at a social movement that uses a violent repertoire, if for no other reason. The book is also welcome as an example of interdisciplinary work, situated as it is “in the interstitial space between the burgeoning subfield of critical criminology and social movement scholarship” (p.15). It’s also pleasingly eclectic in the theoretical sources on which it draws including Hobsbawm’s social banditry, political opportunity and

new war theories. It draws on interviews and focus group discussions with “activists, military authorities, insurgents engaged in kidnapping, NGO representatives, community leaders” (p.19). Of particular interest is that it draws on interviews with 42 insurgents who took part in the 2009 government amnesty: thus opinions of rank and file militants are articulated as well as the ‘official’ leadership position as expressed in emails from Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

Oriola provides an account of the phases through which kidnapping developed as part of the delta struggle on p.181, somewhat late in the book. The first phase – from 1960 to 1990 – saw Nigerian or foreign oil workers briefly held hostage during periods of communal agitation: in these cases ransoms were neither demanded nor paid. The second phase from 1990 to 2002 saw newly emergent groups kidnapping only foreign oil workers while the third phase from 2003 to date saw an increase in the intensity of oil worker kidnapping as well as a massive increase in the ransoms demanded and involvement of purely criminal elements. Kidnapping is only one of a number of illegal tactics embraced by the movement. Over 400 illegal refineries are reported to have been discovered and destroyed by the military between 2008 and 2009 (p.108), while of the 3203 oil spills reported by the National Oil Spills Detection and Response Agency in the delta between 2006 and 2010, some 45% were attributed to vandalism or sabotage (p.168).

Oriola puts the use of violent methods, including kidnapping, in context, showing that kidnapping exists in other parts of Nigeria not only as a profitable criminal activity but also as part of the normal repertoire of Nigeria’s political elite. Similarly kidnapping is shown to have been a tactic previously used as early as the 1960s, while groups that advocate non-violence have also been involved in kidnapping oil workers. Oriola gives an indication of the number of oil workers kidnapped, citing statistics from a private company, Bergen Risk Solutions: 2006 - 70 workers; 2007 - 165 workers; 2008 - 165 workers; 2009 - 48 workers; January-June 2010 - 31 workers. At least \$100 million was paid in ransom between 2006 and 2009 for kidnapped oil workers. One indication of how serious the situation is is provided by the sums the oil industry spends on security –between 2007 and 2009 industry expenditure on security was \$3 billion annually.

The struggle over oil in the delta is also put into perspective by Oriola when he reports “the three core Niger Delta states comprising Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta have a combined total of at least 120-150 ongoing violent conflicts” (p6), though regrettably he gives no details of the causes, histories or scales of these conflicts. The oil struggle is different, however, as “the explicit aim of MEND is to cripple the capacity of the Nigerian rentier petro-state to produce crude oil –its lifeblood” (p.3). This represents an existential threat to the Nigerian state as “the delta generates about 96 percent of all foreign earnings and 85 percent of state revenues and is fundamental to the existence of the Nigerian state” citing an official estimate that, in the decade 1999-2009, Nigeria earned \$200.34 billion from oil (p.8).

Public support for the insurgency is widespread, which is not surprising given what the oil industry has brought to these communities: “the host communities in the Niger Delta ... have seen little beyond violence, state repression, squalor, unemployment and pervasive neglect” (p.3). One indication of the spread of the insurgency is given by the numbers reported as having accepted the 2009 government amnesty – over 20,000, though these figures are of course contested. Community support is obvious as these illegal tactics could not be used without community connivance, at the very least through turning a blind eye. It is also shown by survey results from 18 Delta communities which Oriola cites showing 80.84% felt a high grievance level against the government while 36% were willing to take up arms against the government.

MEND was formed late in 2005: it was “established as an umbrella coalition to take the credit for various insurgent collective actions. Militant leaders endorsed a pact in late 2005 to credit various successful insurgent activities of their largely independent affiliates to MEND” (p. 93). It has a loose structure and fluid membership, does excellent media work, while its member organisations benefit from the geographical inaccessibility of its bases in the creeks of the delta. Funding comes from illegal fuel distillation and sales, ransoms, protection payments and donations from locals and the diaspora. Rather than draw on material on separatist movements, Oriola draws on Hobsbawm’s concept of social banditry to interrogate MEND’s activities, despite his noting that “attempts to find historical groups and personalities approximating Hobsbawm’s social bandit have yielded little supporting evidence” (p. 53). Bandits are drawn from the ranks of unemployed young men who live in inaccessible areas, have next to no organisation or ideology, flourish in times of impoverishment, economic crisis and transition, respond to perceived injustice and are seen by the communities from which they come as avengers of the poor and fighters for justice.

Oriola is too good an analyst not to record some of the less savoury aspects of the movement he has such high praise for, including ambivalent relations between the movement and the Nigerian political elite; as one example he cites the demands for the release of 24 Filipinos kidnapped in January 2007:

The militants requested to have automatic political tickets –to allow them to run for office through the ruling party –to chair rich local governments such as Bomadi... They also demanded that ‘choice political appointments be reserved for some of their leaders’ (p. 29).

Further he notes that, despite the damage the conflict in the delta causes, it also provides benefits for many of the actors involved in the conflict. (He is honest enough to include in his list of those who benefit academics, analysts and commercial commentators.)

Ending the insurgency is not in the interest of most of the actors involved. Many of them have become entrenched in the ongoing insurgency and will suffer considerable economic and/or symbolic loss should it end (p. 47).

The core of the book is an examination of the framing of MEND's struggle, with Oriola on occasions almost rapturous in his praise of MEND's framing. Here again however the success of the insurgents is facilitated by the inaction of the Nigerian state and the total failure of the state and any of its agent to frame their own efforts. As Oriola notes "the failure of the Nigerian state and its organs ... to engage in any consistent and rigorous counter-framing efforts is a windfall for MEND's framing aesthetics. The entire framing space is thus conceded to MEND" (p. 179).

Frames identified include injustice, human/minority rights, environmental justice, return to (true) democracy and a master frame which Oriola labels the imperative of violence frame. This frame involves a number of claims, that Nigeria is at war with the Niger Delta (shown by military activity, including bombing from the air); that violence is the only thing the Nigerian state understands (as shown by the failure of non-violent protest: "The failure of the Nigerian state to accede to peaceful protest is constantly cited by present-day insurgents as a major reason why they took up arms against the state and began kidnapping oil workers" (p. 59)); that in a state of war kidnapping tactics are acceptable, even mild; that oil workers can be defined as enemy combatants or acceptable targets in a war situation and that the oil industry operates as a substitute target for the state in a situation where "in many cases, oil companies are the only government presence in remote oil-bearing communities" (p. 77).

Oriola's investigation of whether kidnapping is seen as social protest or common criminality by the communities of Agge and Okerenkoko –the test of whether kidnapping is social banditry in Hobsbawm's definition- comes to a not terribly surprising conclusion: where an insurgent commander provides social services or benefits –such as clean water or roads- the community sees kidnapping as protest activity; where such benefits are absent kidnapping is seen as criminal. There are a number of defects which detract from the impact of the book. Given the significance of terrain, the lack of a map is unfortunate, particularly for those of us not conversant with the different states in the Niger Delta, as is the lack of a list of acronyms. Four of the eight chapters are reprints of previous articles or papers which leads to unnecessary repetition. Adequate copyediting by the publishers would have dealt with this as well as ensuring all references in the book are listed in the bibliography –examples of missing references I came across (and I wasn't looking for them) include Tarrow 2008 (p.9), Houreld 2006 (p.31), Courson 2006 (p.63), Curtis and Zurcher 1973 (p.93), Okonta 2008 (p.150) and Weber 1968 (p.187): this is inexcusable for a scholarly volume for which the publishers are asking £68 sterling!

Finally better presentation of the empirical evidence would have been useful: a simple chronological table listing the actions claimed by MEND would have

given some credence to some of the author's more hyperbolic claims such as "MEND's choice of where and whose oil workers are kidnapped, what company's facilities are destroyed and sites of bomb detonations are (*sic*) a work of art" (pp. 95-96). The author's style can become irritating and occasionally result in formulations that hide rather than reveal meanings. He can also be a little fulsome in his praise –for example "insurgent women also display incredible genius in executing their assignment" (p. 126) – and in his estimate of the importance of the insurgency and insurgents – for example "Well-sought for interviews as a kind of *nouveau cognoscenti* with international appeal, insurgents know that the oil-thirsty world leans on every word they utter" (p. 107).

Despite these problems the book is well worth reading. Essential reading for anyone interested in Nigerian politics and the Niger delta, it is illuminating to anyone examining struggles over extractive industries, the resource curse and violent social movements. Oriola is to be congratulated for bringing violent movements into the purview of social movement studies: hopefully this work will encourage further work in this area and thereby extend the reach of social movement analyses.

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