

## **The world according to social movement journals: a preliminary mapping**

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### **Introduction**

In his recent book on the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Oriola notes liberal democratic states in core countries constitute the epicentre of social movement scholarship 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). While he observes a “tremendous increase” has occurred in studies of protest in authoritarian countries since the 1990s, he claims they often confine their scope to state repression of protest. He further claims that ‘with very few exceptions, the use of violent repertoires of contention has not garnered sufficient attention in social movement literature’ (Oriola 2013:10). On similar lines Dufour, Masson and Caouette (2010; 2) note regarding research on transnational social movement organisations (TSMOs) ‘the strong geographical homogeneity of those who have researched and published on the topic of transnational social movements. Most social movement discourse is circulated in the English language, is produced by researchers living in the North (North America or Europe) and privileges Northern perspectives. Yet we know that some of the most radical transformations are occurring in southern countries –in Latin America, Africa and Asia’. There is nothing particularly novel about these claims, which are a manifestation in social movement studies of a general critique in the social sciences as being –in various iterations- colonial, , ethnocentric Eurocentric, imperialistic, Orientalist and/or Western. (Alatas 2000; Alatas 2001, 2003; Connell 2015; Mentan 2015; Mlambo 2006; Wallerstein 1997).

In considering these claims it occurred to me that it should be possible to empirically examine them by looking at articles published in the major social movement journals, selecting *Mobilization* to represent the American tradition and *Social Movement Studies* to represent the English and European tradition. However while beginning this work I discovered that an article examining these journals had already been published in *Social Movement Studies* (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014). To add to that contribution, it seemed essential to widen the sphere of investigation to further sources, such as the American *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, the German journal *Moving the Social* and *Interface* itself, while a number of other newer journals –*Contention*, *P&C* and *Resistance Studies Magazine*- were available online and were relevant. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks are due to Laurence Cox for drawing my attention to a number of these journals, as well as other sources.

Of course work on social movements is not confined to social movement journals but also appears in journals dedicated to anthropology, area studies, development studies, disability studies, environmental studies, geography, globalization, health, media studies, network studies, peasant studies, political science, social policy and sociology, among others. Nevertheless it may be argued that the journals studied represent the core of attempts to form a social movements sub-field and by looking at the coverage of social movements in these journals it should be possible to produce a preliminary mapping of the world as seen by social movement journals. The chosen journals may also be seen as illustrating various stages in the growth of social movement studies. *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, established as an annual publication in 1978, shows social movement studies as one of a group of subjects in the sociology of change, before it had solidified into a subdiscipline of its own: its scope was broad enough to include, for example, an article on changing leadership in the Coast Guard. *Mobilization*, with editors in both the US and Europe, though with the senior editor definitely American, can be seen as a result of the intercontinental research project in the 1990s saw the American discipline annex European research on social movements<sup>2</sup> while *Social Movement Studies* represents the English tradition. All of these journals place economic barriers to accessing the knowledge they publish. Individual copies of *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change* cost £72.95. A personal sub to *Mobilization* costs \$49.50, or \$59.50 for subscribers outside the US. For *Social Movement Studies* individual subscriptions cost Euro 212, while purchases of individual articles cost Euro 33. I regret my ignorance of German and Italian research traditions does not allow me to place the journals *Moving the Social* and *P&C* in such a context.

However with the move online by *P&C* and the arrival of the other online journals, we see a new generation in social movement research which is concerned with removing blocks to access research. *Contestation* describes itself as a ‘multi-disciplinary journal of social protest’ and its editorial board reflects this multi-disciplinary orientation, taking in not only sociology and politics but also –among other- English, history and psychology. The most interesting is *Interface*, which describes itself as a journal *for* as well as *about* social movements.

Given I was going to be doing this research it seemed worth adding a number of other questions to the mix, as well as keeping one’s eyes open for whatever else might pop up. The most obvious extra question was to look not only at the geographical spread of movements, but also at the type of movements covered. Another interesting question is whether the journals covered left-wing and

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<sup>2</sup> The stages in this process are proudly recounted on pp. 2-4 of van Stekelenburg and Roggeband (2013). One edited collection they omit is the collection edited by Diani (1993), presumably on the basis that all its contributors were European. None of the many worthies that contribute to the volume to which van Stekelenburg and Roggeband (2013) is the introduction, on the future of social movement research, appear to raise the issue of the unequal distribution of that research attention to core and non-core regions. (This is based partly on chapter titles and partly on the summary of chapters provided in van Stekelenburg and Roggeband (2013)).

right-wing, reform, revolutionary and reactionary movements equally. I decided to extend the analysis to include conservative or right-wing movements, which are described by some analysts as ‘awkward movements’ –awkward in a number of ways: first, in that their politics may be distasteful to ‘liberal’ social movement analysts; second, that their (sometimes illegal) methods and (sometimes covert) organisations may make academic access difficult and third, in particular for illegal and covert activities, ethical issues arise regarding protection of research subjects. I decided to add one further type of social movement to the mix, elite social movements, social movements from above, or movements of the rich and powerful which are extremely underrepresented in the social movement literature.

The article therefore begins by examining the geographical spread of journal coverage of social movements, while also providing a list of the ‘top 30’ movements studied, as well as the distribution of movements studied across journals, before moving to examine what sorts of movements are covered in articles about movements in the periphery and the semi-periphery. To investigate Oriola’s claim that the study of non-core movements is often confined to state repression I look at articles dealing with repression and policing of protest. The article then turns to look at the issue of armed organisations and their coverage in the social movement journals. Following this we look at the issue of repression and continue with a short glance at the efforts the journals have made to cover elite social movements. The intention is to provide an empirical basis to assist further debate and discussion.

## **Method and sources**

Book reviews are not included. Analysis is confined to article titles, abstracts and key words, where available: the articles themselves have not been consulted. This is based on the supposition that an abstract defines the subject of an article, at least to the satisfaction of the author. A number of articles in each journal provided no information on the location of movements studied, while a number of others did not specify the movement under discussion, or used vague terms such as ‘civil society’ or ‘popular struggles’. These were often theoretical or methodological contributions and are not included in this survey. In comparison, some articles either deal with social movements in a number of locations or a number of different social movements: these locations and movements are counted independently. Work has been done by hand and eye, with no use of computer programmes. All numbers have been counted three times, and the author apologises in advance for any errors that may have occurred. No statistical analysis is attempted. I will happily provide the basic data from which the tables were produced on request.

The journals examined are as follows.

*Research in Social Movements. Conflict and Change* was first published in 1978 and was seen as an annual research publication. The journal's website can be found at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/series/rsmcc> I deal with volumes 22 (published in 2001) to 38 (published in 2015), with a total of 162 articles, in 33 of which location is not given and 15 of which do not cite a specific movement.

*Mobilization: an international journal* is unusual for a journal of its type in its not being published by one of the large academic journal publishers. Its first volume appeared in 1996 and volumes contained two issues until volume 7 in 2002 when the journal began to publish three issues each year. In 2006 with volume 11 the journal moved to its current schedule of publishing four issues annually. The journal's website is at <http://mobilization.sdsu.edu/>. Volumes 1 to 20 yield 351 articles, 75 of which do not give location and 80 of which do not give a specific movement.

*Social Movement Studies*: the first volume was published in 2002, with 2 issues per volume, until volume 4 (2005) at which stage a volume expanded to three issues a volume; with volume 8 in 2009 a volume increased to contain 4 issues; with volume 14 (2015) contents of a volume increased to 6 issues. The journal's website is at <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/csms20/current>. Volumes 1 (published in 2002) to volume 14 (published 2015) produced 307 articles, 39 of which give no location information and 25 of which do not specify a movement.

*Interface*. The first issue appeared May 2009. It accepts articles in many languages, not simply English, and has a wide variety of editors. It is unusual in the involvement of activists as well as academics and in that it publishes more than articles and book reviews, welcoming items produced in the form of action notes, events analyses and bibliographies. The website can be found at <http://www.interfacejournal.net/>. Volumes 1 to 8 yield 223 articles, 38 of which fail to give location information and 23 of which fail to specify a movement. The multilingual nature of the journal and the bilingual situation of the author means a number of articles in languages other than English have not been included in this survey, specifically those which do not offer an abstract in English or where the non-English-language abstract did not easily yield either a specific location or movement.

*Contention* describes itself as 'a multi-disciplinary peer-reviewed and open access journal dedicated to research on and about different forms of social protest'. Volume 0 Number 0 appeared in December 2012. Since then a further 5 issues have appeared, with two issues to each volume. Its website is at

[http://contentionjournal.org/?utm\\_content=bufferdc31b&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://contentionjournal.org/?utm_content=bufferdc31b&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer). For 27 articles, location is not given in 7 articles and movements are not specified for three articles.

*Moving the Social: a Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements* is a journal published by the Ruhr-Universität, Bochum, Germany, which welcomes English- and other-language articles. A number of articles from issues 25, 32, 33, 48-52 were listed on the journal website, eight issues which yielded 41 articles, two of which did not specify social movements. Decisions were made on the basis of article titles only, except in the case of issue 33 which, for some reason, provided English-language abstracts, which allowed the addition of two German-language articles to the mix. The website can be found at <http://www.isb.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/publikationen/mitteilungsblatt/index.html.en>.

*P&C*, an Italian journal which ‘specialis[es] in social and political studies’, was first published in 2008. In 2014 it began a new series with volume 7, switching to the English language and becoming an open access online journal. While abstracts in English for issues published by the previous publisher are supposed to be downloadable from the publisher’s website, this proved beyond the technical competence of the author. Thus my analysis is confined to volume 7 (issues 1-3) and volume 8 (issues 1-2). Only one article is included from issue 8(1) as all other articles in the issue deal with political parties rather than social movements; similarly only three articles from 7(3) and four articles from 7(2) are relevant. For the 29 articles of relevance, two do not cite locations and one does not specify a movement.

*Resistance Studies Magazine* First issue appeared in 2008, during which year three issues appeared. This was followed by one issue each in 2009, 2010 and 2012. The website is at <http://www.rsmag.org/>. The five issues yield 17 articles, eight (8) of which do not specify location and six (6) of which do not mention a specific movement.

## Results

### Geographical location of movements studied – core/non-core

Table 1 provides geographical details of the geographical spread of locations of movements studies by journal divided by region.

*Table 1: Location of movements studied in articles published by journal*

	RSM	MOB	SMS	INT	CON	MTS	P&C	RES	TOTAL
Nth Am	64	93	80	34	3	9	1	-	284
W Eur	22	113	106	62	11	20	21	2	357
Aust/NZ	1	1	20	7	1	-	-	-	30
Core	<b>87</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>671</b>
Cen/LatAm	17	43	28	26	2	9	3	-	128
MidEast	10	20	12	29	5	2	-	1	79
EastEur	11	17	12	18	1	9	3	1	72
E&SE Asia	3	22	12	8	1	1	-	1	48
Sth Asia	3	7	9	6	-	-	2	-	27
Africa	5	19	13	15	-	1	1	3	57
Total non-core	<b>49</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>411</b>

MOB = *Mobilization*; SMS = *Social Movement Studies*; RSM = *Research in Social Movements. Conflict and Change*; INT = *Interface*; CON = *Contention*; MTS = *Moving the Social*; P&C = *P&C*; RES = *Resistance Studies Magazine*.

Nth Am = North America; W Eur = western Europe; Aust/NZ = Australia/New Zealand; Cen/LatAm = Central/Latin America; MidEast = Middle East; EastEur = (central and) eastern Europe; E&SE Asia = East and SouthEast Asia; Sth Asia = South Asia.

If we define the core as consisting of North America, western Europe and Australia/New Zealand, we find the total number of articles on core social movements is 671, while articles on social movements in the periphery and the semi-periphery (or, if you prefer, in the rest of the world) total 411<sup>3</sup>. To be rigorous we would need to subtract from the latter total the small number of

<sup>3</sup> To avoid squabbles over what countries may be considered peripheral or semi-peripheral, I have remained at the level of core and non-core in the analysis.

articles dealing with Japan and Korea (and, probably, Taiwan), but these numbers are small and don't hugely impact on the overall conclusion.

Oriola is thus definitely correct in his claim that the world social movement journals portray is overall more concentrated on core countries, liberal democracies, though it should be noted that the results vary by journal, with one journal –*Interface*– paying pretty equal attention to both core (103 article mentions) and non-core (102 article mentions). This important exception to the rule is obviously related to the journal's political and ideological orientation and the practical measures the journal has undertaken: on one side, the openness to articles in languages other than English has removed one major block to contributions from activists and scholars in non-core countries (Hayes 2014: 245) while on the other the extension of the editorship to scholars (either outside core countries or specialising in studies of non-core country movements) has helped the journal's diversity. However even in this journal we can see gaps in global coverage evident in an uneven distribution of attention to movements by region: coverage of Asia –both South and East and Southeast– is noticeably weaker than that of other regions. Here again however the situation with *Interface* mirrors that of all the journals surveyed: Asia is the least covered of all the continents, despite its global importance.<sup>4</sup>

### **Geographical location –top 20 countries**

The pattern is repeated in the following table which lists the top 20 countries by number of articles across all journals, which lists only seven non-core countries, while also showing the dominance of studies of social movements in the US. The pattern is obvious in the example of the six counties of British-occupied Northern Ireland –with 19 articles– and the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland –with 13 articles: this small island off western Europe is the subject of 32 articles while the vast People's Republic of China (PRC) –subject of 11 articles– does not make it into the top twenty.

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<sup>4</sup> A further question arises as to whether authors of articles on non-core movements are nationals or come from core countries. (I do not wish to denigrate articles written about non-core movements by scholars from the core in raising this issue). One of the more striking observations made in Yeung's editorial of 2001 notes first 'Although three countries (China, India and Indonesia) make up over 40% of the world's total population and a large chunk of the world's total land mass, they are poorly represented in most of the top journals', which is consistent with my findings, before continuing that 'A more disturbing finding is that, barring all language barriers and other difficulties, a large proportion of publications on these four Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia and Japan) originate from scholars based outside Asia, in particular the United States and United Kingdom. Measured by their institutional affiliations and addresses, authors from these four Asian countries make virtually no appearance at all in several leading discipline journals' (Yeung 2001:6)

*Table 2: Top 20 national locations of movements studied by journal*

Location	RSCC	MOB	SMS	INT	CON	P&C	MTS	RES	TOTAL
US	58	86	63	24	3	1	7		242
UK	2	13	40	12	6		2		75
Mexico	4	15	10	4	1	1			35
Spain	1	7	14	10	1	2			35
Canada	5	7	14	8			2		36
Palestine/Israel	8	8	11	4	1		1	1	34
Italy	1	7	7	6		12			33
France	3	13	8	1	2	3	1		31
Australia	1	1	17	6					25
Brazil	2	6	3	10			7		28
South Africa	1	8	6	9				1	25
India	1	7	9	6		1			24
Germany	1	1	4	9	1	1	4	1	22
Northern Ireland	8	7	4						19
Poland		5	3	10	1				19
Sweden		7	7	1		1	3		19
Netherlands	2	8	6	1					17
Belgium		11	2	1		2			16
Ireland	2	1	1	9					13
Egypt	1		2	7	2				12

### **Movements studied**

The next table lists the top 30 movements studied by journal. The designation of a movement in an abstract is taken at face value: no attempt is made to critically interrogate movement designations. Movement descriptions are hopefully self-explanatory: the one designation I feel requires some explanation is that of ‘pro-democracy’ which involves both movements for democratisation of authoritarian states (as in the “Orange Revolution” in the Ukraine and the Arab Spring) and attempts to increase public participation in democratic politics in core countries, such as Move.on in the US. Some movements of course cross categories: for example the protests against the wall being constructed by the



Israeli state involves a peace movement (in Israel), a nationalist movement (in Palestine) and also elements of the anarchist movement.

*Table 3: Movements studied by journal*

TYPE OF Movement	TOTAL	MOB	SM	RS	IN	CO	MT	P&C	RE
	L	B	S	M	T	N	S		S
Women	139	34	29	30	23	6	4	1	2
Labour	100	22	22	8	27	-	20		-
Environmental	99	45	26	7	17	1	-	2	1
Anti-globalisation	72	20	26	5	20	-	-	-	1
Peace	68	18	15	23	5	1	5	-	1
Pro-democracy	54	20	5	9	15	2	1	2	1
Indigenous	45	7	17	10	9	1	-	-	1
Urban	36	3	11	1	17	7	-	2	1
Nationalist/separatist	30	17	6	5	3	2	2	-	1
Ethnic	29	13	9	6	1	-	-	-	-
Occupy	40	-	28	2	7	2	-	1	-
LGBT	28	5	9	8	6	-	-	-	-
Religious	35	10	9	8	-	1	-	8	-
Student	24	3	10	3	6	1	-	-	1
Civil rights	25	14	1	8	2	-	-	-	-
Anti-austerity	19	3	7	1	4	1	-	2	1
Rural	19	3	1	2	8	-	1	4	-
Cyberactivism	21	6	7	1	7	-	-	-	-
Migration/Refugees	22	7	7	1	5	-	1	1	-
Health	14	1	5	6	2	-	-	-	-
Squatting/housing	13	1	3	2	3	2	1	1	-
Human rights	13	4	4	3	-	-	-	1	1
Animal rights	11	1	5	2	3	-	-	1	-
Youth	15	3	4	1	6	-	-	-	1
Consumer	9	-	5	-	2	-	-	1	-
Anti-privatization	7	2	1	-	2	-	-	2	-
Anti-apartheid	5	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Communist	6	1	1	-	2	-	3	-	-
Media activism	12	-	4	-	8	-	-	-	-
15M	7	-	3	-	4	-	-	-	-

The table shows the extreme diversity of movements studied, though for the full diversity to be seen, movements studied only one single time would need to be listed. It is interesting, in terms of emphasis on the new in social movement studies, that anti-globalisation is the only movement of recent vintage to make it into the top five, with the environment movement seen as appearing in the 1960s, while the other three movements stretch back at least to the beginning of

the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is also impossible not to note how little attention the journals have paid to traditionally two of the largest and most powerful movements of all, the socialist and communist movements.

### Non-core countries: what movements are studied?

Table 4: *Movements by region: non-core regions*

Movement	EastEu	SthA	MidE	Africa	LatAm	ESEA	TOTAL
Pro-democracy	8	-	35	4	5	6	58
Women	5	5	13	5	14	4	46
Environmental	7	6	1	2	13	6	33
Indigenous	-	1	-	3	27	-	31
Labour	2	1	3	3	16	6	38
Peace	1	1	14	2	2	3	23
Urban	1	2	4	8	8	-	22
Nationalist/Separatist	2	2	17	-	-	-	21
Anti-globalisation	3	-	1	4	6	-	14
Anti-austerity	8	1	2	-	2	-	13
Rural	1	2	-	2	9	-	14
Religious	-	2	4	-	3	4	13
Others	-	-	7	1	4	1	13
Youth	7	-	2				9
Student	3			1	3	1	8
Islamist			7	1			8
Armed		1			6		7
Human rights			5	2			7
Anti-privatisation		1			5		6
Poor people's				4		2	6
Ethnic	1	1			2	1	5
Anti-apartheid				5			5
LGBT			1	1	2		4
Migrant/Refugee			1	1		2	4
Squatting/Housing	2				1		3
Welfare rights		3					3
Anti-Nazi <sup>5</sup>	2						2
Anti-corruption		2					2
Peasant		1			1		2

Table 4 lists the major movements studied in non-core regions in descending order from the most studied to the least studied movement. It shows a similar diversity of movements as does the list for all movements studied by journal

<sup>5</sup> Anti-Nazi in this case relates to death camp and ghetto resistance in eastern Europe during World War Two.

(Table 3), as well as a commonality: 21 of the movements listed are common to both lists.

To attempt to verify Oriola’s suggestion that most protest occurs in authoritarian states is beyond the capacity of the author as an adequate analysis would require correlation between levels of authoritarianism across the regions involved and the historical periods covered. This analysis would also need to be undertaken at the national level, if we wish to distinguish authoritarian regimes from ‘liberal democracies’. Similarly one would need to account for changes from authoritarianism to varieties of democracy, for example in Korea. Also countries which are ‘liberal democracies’ can behave in certain ways, in certain areas and at certain times as authoritarian states: the most obvious example here would be India, a liberal democracy which operates a police state in certain regions of the Indian subcontinent.

However a number of articles specifically present themselves as looking at issues of mobilization under authoritarian conditions. These articles are confined to two regions, both peripheral: the Middle East, with four articles on Egypt and one each on Palestine and Syria, and central and eastern Europe, with two articles on death camp and ghetto resistance during World War Two and one on the ‘Orange revolution’ in the Ukraine. This needs to be placed in the context of the following table which looks at articles dealing with policing and repression.

*Table 5: Repression/policing of protest*

Region	NAm	WEu	CEEu	ESEA	LatAm	MidE	SASia	Africa
REpr	22	20	2	5	4	5	2	1
Total	Core	42	Total	Noncore	19			

Articles on repression reproduce the already noted predominant orientation towards core countries, with the US again the most studied country. The figures do not support Oriola’s contention that studies of non-core country movements confine themselves disproportionately to state repression of protest.

*Table 6: Organisations embracing violent tactics or armed struggle*

Region	NAm	WEu	CEEu	ESEA	LatAm	MidE	SAsia	Africa
	4	7	1	4	7	7	1	3
Total	Core	11	Total	noncore	23			

Finally we arrive at a table where attention to non-core is greater than to core countries. For the non-core, there are articles dealing with armed guerrilla groups or national movements in Burma, Cyprus, Guatemala, India, Mexico, the Middle East, Nicaragua, Palestine, the Philippines, South Africa and Turkey, while for the core we have the Republican movement in Ireland, New Left clandestine groups in Germany, Italy, Japan and the US, while for the US we also have ‘ecoterrorism’ and (nonspecified) extremist groups. The figures support Oriola’s position that violent repertoires are under-studied, a problem however that effects not only non-core but also core regions.

### **Right wing social movements**

Coverage of right-wing social movements does not seem to be a priority for any of the journals examined, with a total of 33 mentioned in abstracts, and no right-wing movement making it anywhere near the top 30 movements. The top right-wing movement studied is the anti-abortion movement with five mentions, followed by the Tea Party, the general right wing movement and the anti-immigration movement with four mentions; after this we have the anti-gay and ex-gay movement, on the one hand, and on the other the white power and neo-nazi movements with two mentions each, leaving the rest of the right-wing movements with one each: right wing anti-globalisation and environment movements, anti-Muslim, Ku Klux Klan, fascist (Italy), pro-war, unionism (Northern Ireland), peasant anti-revolutionary (Nicaragua), the America First Committee and the John Birch Society. Here again, the major concern is with movements in the core.

### **Elite social movements**

For social movements from above, the haul is minimal: there are only three articles which fit this description. One article describes how the School of the Americas reframed itself (Gallo-Cruz 2015), another looks at *Fortune 500* corporate responses to campaigns (Banerjee and Buroway 2015), while a third examines Texaco’s corporate communications strategy regarding its extraction of oil from the Amazon region of Ecuador (Matelski 2015). These movements are seen as difficult to access, but it is still possible to research them. Editors should be recommended to encourage future work of this type as there is great potential here for expanding the range and scope of social movement analysis.

### **Possible future research**

Among other possible developments of this inquiry, an examination of the academic affiliations of authors could be a useful addition. Similarly an examination of the board of editors of the journals might be revealing, perhaps using the methodology that has previously been used to investigate boards of directors of TNCs. As one example, the list of editors and editorial board of *Mobilization* (taken from the latest issue –vol 20 number 4), while listing no

less than 60 worthies, lists only one editor from an educational establishment outside Europe and North America, that being Israel. A further question worth examining is whether authors of articles on social movements in non-core countries are nationals of these countries or are core country nationals? Another approach would involve examining the details of what funding agencies supported research, if those details were provided by authors. Another possible approach would be to approach the journals through the book reviews that they've published, which might show similar or different patterns in book-length publications on social movements. A very useful addition would be to extend the research to, for example, French and German language journals to see if a similar pattern is exhibited outside the Anglo-American sphere.

### **Discussion: diagnoses and remedies**

This paper now turns to a discussion of the main findings above regarding core and non-core country movements, leaving aside discussion of the minor findings regarding armed organisations, repression, right-wing and elite movements. A useful start can be made by looking at the research of Poulson, Caswell and Gray (2014) which provides a content analysis of articles published in *Mobilization* and *Social Movement Studies* from the years 2002 to 2010. This study, which uses statistical analysis, is much more detailed than mine: it coded 'any substantive discussion (usually two paragraphs) of a movement or a people in a geographic region'. It is also more generous in its inclusion of articles as dealing with non-core countries than I am: their coding decisions 'clearly caused us to overrepresent the geographic diversity represented by studies in these journals' (Poulson, Caswell and Gray (2014:228); as an example of their inclusive approach, they cite Carty's paper on the cybercampaign against Nike. 'The study was almost entirely focused on technological innovation and movement organizing in the global north, but it did briefly mention (in a few paragraphs) a strike in Puebla, Mexico that was the focus of cyber-organizing. In this case, the study was coded as including information about movements in both USA and Mexico even though the information concerning the strike in Mexico was cursory' (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014:228). In my reading this study is considered purely as transnational and certainly not included with non-core country articles.

Their results found 'the content of social movement journals is disproportionately focused on the study of Western society' with 72% of the content in *Mobilization* and 77% of the content in *Social Movement Studies* including the study of western peoples, leaving 38% of *Mobilization* and 34% of *Social Movement Studies* including the study of non-western peoples. (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014: 230) For the regional breakdown, they give articles dealing with US and Canada 40%, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand 37%, Eastern Europe/Russia 6%, Middle East 8%, Africa 6%, Asia 10% and Central/South America 16%, with 'the percentages sum[ming] to more than 100 per cent due to comparative studies' (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014: 231). While this may be disappointing for two journals that, they point out are

‘avowedly ‘international’ in scope’ (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014: 225) they note ‘the field of social movements is appreciably more diverse than the broader field of sociology’ (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014: 232), citing figures from a study of the *American Sociological Review* from 1952 to 2008 which found 49% of non-comparative studies focused on the US, while non-comparative studies of sub-Saharan African countries represented 0.1% of articles published in the journal (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014:226) . It is indeed a consolation that social movement journals can do better than this.

Poulson, Caswell and Gray also examined awkward or conservative movements as studied in these two journals for the same period, but in a rather strange decision include in their definition of conservative movements the study of policing and state repression. They found 37 such articles in *Mobilization* and 19 in *Social Movement Studies*, with the combined figures over the ten years representing 20% of studies published in both journals (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014: 234). However when studies of repression are eliminated ‘conservative movements account for 6% of all movements studied’ (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014: 236).

A judicious rejoinder to Poulson, Caswell and Gray by the editor of *Social Movement Studies*<sup>6</sup> provides further material to support their analysis, noting the journal’s ‘readership base is essentially located in North America and the UK’ (Hayes 2014: 244) while a similar geographical bias towards core countries can be seen in authors of submitted articles: of manuscripts submitted to the journal in 2012 ‘a third had single or lead authors based in the USA, and a fifth in the UK; the next most frequent countries were Canada (5%), followed by Australia, France and the Netherlands (3.5% each)’ (Hayes 2014:245).

To add to these details, it’s worth noting that Shigetomi found references to social movements in the developing world in databases of social science literature (Worldwide PolSci Abstracts and EconLit) to amount to 30% of all references to social movements (Shigetomi 2009:6,12); he also found that 30% of articles in the *New York Times* (for the twenty years from 1 January 1985 to 31 December 2004) ‘containing the words ‘protest’ and ‘rally’ refer to areas in the developing world’ (Shigetomi 2009:1). Thus, research by Poulson, Caswell and Gray, Hayes and Shigetomi confirm my main findings regarding core and non-core movements, while the work of Poulson, Caswell and Gray also confirms that right-wing social movements are a minority interest in the literature.

### **A partial explanation: parochialism**

Poulson, Caswell and Gray attribute this problem to parochialism or isomorphism, the tendency for social scientists to study societies that they know or that are like societies that they know. They use this to explain not only the predominance of core country studies, but also to explain studies of non-

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<sup>6</sup> I have not seen any response from the editor of *Mobilization*.

core countries by core country academics, noting that 45% of these academics who study non-core countries have personal or affective connections. (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014:233).

Parochialism certainly explains some of my findings: thus it is no surprise that the greatest number of articles on Italian social movements should appear in the Italian journal *P&C*, or that a similar situation exists with articles on Irish social movements and the journal published in Ireland, *Interface*.

One further example of parochialism may be cited, which may help to account for the minimal appearance in core country journals of one non-core region, South Asia, and India in particular. In India there is a strong academic profession, with its own academic apparatus with all the accoutrements, including the publication of many national social science journals, and a strong publishing industry, including local branches of Oxford University Press and Sage. Given this, it would make sense that Indian analysts would prioritise publication in journals from the Indian subcontinent over publication in core country journals. Thus Shah's survey for the Indian Council on Social Scientific Research in 1990 on publications on social movements (when none of the journals analysed here aside from *Research in Social Movements. Conflict and Change* were in existence) details an already reasonably extensive literature in chapters on peasant movements, tribal movements, dalit movements, backward caste/class movements, women's movements, students' movements, middle class movements and industrial working class movements, while noting their authors are mainly historians, sociologists, political activists and journalists, as political scientists, partly due to the influence of the British and American academic traditions locally, have largely ignored the area. (Shah 1990). Since Shah produced his survey, social movement research has continued to expand in India, reflecting the continuing contention that characterises the subcontinent. Interestingly much of the more recent research builds on European theory, but one not often glimpsed in North American social movement research circles –Marxism: opposition to SEZs (Special Economic Zones), mining and other projects has encouraged renewed interest in primitive accumulation or accumulation by dispossession. Indian research on social movements also has its patron saints –like Rajni Kothari- as well as the publication of stunning research –both empirical and theoretical- by authors such as Baviskar and Sethi, while its development of subaltern studies has captured the interest of (part of) the northern academy (see Nilsen and Roy 2015).

Parochialism may also be partly explained by considering the material conditions under which social movement knowledge is produced within the academy. It is cheaper to undertake research on a local/national movement in circumstances where research grants are scarce, postgraduate student fees high, student grants replaced by loans, etc. Mexico's position as joint third most studied country may relate to the simple fact that it is next door to the US and travel and subsistence costs there may be cheaper than in alternative study locations.

However, parochialism strikes me as an incomplete explanation, as it ignores questions of power and the hierarchies involved in the global production of knowledge. It seems to me that wider explanations can be found in a variety of critical analyses of this global structure, as well as of the development of social movement theory. I hesitate to tread in these deeper theoretical waters and so will confine myself to a quick survey of some of these critical positions, beginning with some empirical evidence.

### **Another explanation: global structures of social science knowledge production**

Social movement studies is not the only area in which non-core countries are underrepresented as regions to be studied. Poulson and Campbell have published research on the same subject in the sociology of religion, drawing on data from two journals in the field from 2001 to 2008. Their results found that ‘studies of Christianity dominated the content of sociology of religion journals (Poulson and Campbell 2010:38), while ‘inclusion of non-Western societies in studies of both journals was 17.4%’ (Poulson and Campbell 2010: 87).<sup>7</sup> Murphy and Zhou (2012) in their analysis of authorship and editorship data for 2010/2011 top management journals found that ‘world-leading’ business and management journals are dominated by Anglo-American scholars, noting that ‘the dramatically skewed production of management scholarship is both ethically problematic in terms of Anglo-American domination of leading journals and the exclusion of many developing regions, and anachronistic given the shift of global production away from the North Atlantic in recent years’. Collyer’s analysis of articles from Australian, UK and US journals in the sociology of health and medicine found that ‘core-periphery relations define significant features of sociological work, impacting on citation patterns, inter-country collaboration and the selection of reference materials’ (Collyer 2014). For international relations, Aydinli and Mathews found non-US authors in seven predominantly theoretical US journals to make up 15.25% of all authors, while non-core authors made up 3.28% (Aydinli and Mathews 2000:293), coming to the conclusion that ‘the overall picture of the IR [international relations] discipline as revealed over the past decade in its leading scholarly journals remains unchanged, with very little contribution from the periphery being recognized by the core’. (Aydinli and Mathews 2000:297)

It seems then that what we are seeing here is simply a local expression of a structural problem across the social sciences. This structural problem relates to the unequal distribution of power globally, which mirrors/replicates a similar unequal distribution in economic terms. Alatas (2003: 603) summarises this as ‘a centre-periphery continuum in the social sciences that corresponds to the North-South divide.’ There are a number of material factors that both embody and explain this inequality.

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<sup>7</sup> Israel was counted as a non-western society in this study.



First, history appears to be on the side of powerful, that is social science, as Wallerstein argues was a Western creation and remains predominantly western. Wallerstein clarifies the material conditions under which social science was developed when he points out ‘as an institutional structure, social science largely originated in Europe... The social science disciplines were in fact overwhelmingly located, at least up to 1945, in just five countries –France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and the United States. Even today, despite the global spread of social science as an activity, the large majority of social scientists worldwide remain Europeans’ (Wallerstein 1997: 93).

Second, reinforcing this latter point, the core has more divisions and, even in the core, the US has the most divisions, or a greater number of social science knowledge workers. As Paasi (2005: 777) notes ‘The ‘hegemony’ of the USA is easy to understand because the total volume of its research activities and the number of researchers is larger than that of the EU countries put together’. The effects of this is shown by the figures given by the International Social Science Council which found the US was responsible for 52% of papers (indexed by World of Science or in journals in Uhlrich’s), Europe for 38% and the rest of the world for 10% (Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson 2010: 3-4).

Third, the structural imbalance is underpinned by a global division of labour which to an extent again mirrors that in the production economy, where design, marketing and other higher cognitive (and higher value) work is undertaken in the core, while actual manufacture occurs in the non-core. Connell argues that social science developed with a division of labour between the core and the periphery, with the periphery providing empirical data about which the core theorised. Connell (2015) argues ‘the process produces a structural division of labour that is still deeply embedded in modern knowledge systems. The colonized world was, first and foremost, a source of *data*. The metropole where data from different parts of the colonized world were aggregated (a process now automated in databanks) became the site of the *theoretical* moment in knowledge production’.

Fourth, the means of communication (predominantly the ‘important’ journals, but also international conferences, symposia, colloquia, as well as the funds that sustain the latter and the multinational corporations that publish the former) are in core country hands and again predominantly in American hands. This concentration of control is shown by the 2010 report of the International Social Science Council when it observes ‘by publishing more than 1,000 refereed social science journals, the USA is the first country (with one-fourth of the social science journals), followed by the UK, the Netherlands and Germany. Together, the four countries publish two-thirds of all social science journals.’ (Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson 2010: 5)

Fifth, the most important measuring system (the former ISI Social Science Citation Index, now reborn as Thompson/Reuters Web of Science) is not only in western hands, but operates in a biased manner in favour not only of the west, but also of one western language, English. As Cameron (2005:110) notes ‘The built-in bias of ISI’s selection means that many foreign language journals are

excluded. English language journals, as a result, have much higher impact factors. The result is a citation database weighted heavily in favour of English language American journals.’<sup>8</sup>

These then are the key structural and material factors that underlie the ‘unconscious’ choices of Poulson, Caswell and Gray’s researchers.

If I may digress for a moment from the main argument, this western hegemony or American hegemony does not automatically translate into American social science being a creature or servant of American imperial interests. While there is indeed some strong historical evidence for some American social scientists operating for the good of the American empire (with the greatest evidence available in the case of anthropology) (Price 2000, Simpson 1999; for a recent example see McFate and Laurence 2015) this is not inevitable (see Vu (2006)’s excellent work for evidence of this in US research on contentious politics in South East Asia). The obvious illustration here from the social movements journals examined in this paper is the minimal amount of work on armed organisations and, in particular, the little attention paid to Islamic radical movements, especially given the amount of research money that must have been available in the aftermath of the attacks on economic and military targets in the US in September 2001, which gives the lie to the vulgar suggestion that US social science research is at the service of the US imperial project. A similar result was found by Poulson and Campbell (2010:39) which found no appreciable increase in research on Islam in the period following those attacks.

### **Why does this matter?**

Why does this matter? The main reason is that the dominant social movement paradigm may be unfitted to helping explain social movements outside the core. The issue of unequal attention to core and non-core movements in social movement studies is not a new one. The journals have occasionally published articles which critique core-centric theories and examined how such theories succeed or fail in helping to explain social movement developments in non-core countries. Pilati (2011), for example, uses data on protest mobilization in 18

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<sup>8</sup> This issue leads to some very interesting questions regarding ranking of articles, authors, research projects, university departments and universities, which are beyond the scope of this article, though of major interest to the increasingly unfortunate employees of universities. Technically much of this relates to citation indices and the use of what is called bibliometrics. Kosmopoulos and Pumain (2007) conclude that ‘these instruments give a biased information about the scientific output of research in Social Sciences and Humanities’. Cameron (2005) is a useful examination by a professional librarian of the use of citation data, warning of the troubling trend of using ‘citation data, particularly impact factors, as a performance measure by which scientists and faculty are ranked, promoted, and funded. Such ranking has expanded to departments, laboratories, universities, and even countries’. Klein and Chang (2004) provide what appears to be the only critical analysis of the procedures of this private company in deciding which journals to include in its database and rankings. Readers should be aware that this critique is from the libertarian rights, but only a fool would discount it on that basis. For a radical critique, see Sosteric (1999).

African countries ‘to test whether Western-driven theories provide useful insights for analyzing protest dynamics in developing countries’. Boudreau (1996), noting that protest outside the core is undertheorized, extended the political opportunity structure approach to non-core protest. In a unique departure from the usual disinterest Anglo-American research on social movements shows in research in non-English languages, Neveu (2002) provided access to French-language research studies ‘that are highly relevant to the international community of social movement researchers’. Nor have these issues been raised only in connection with core and non-core countries. Cox and Flesher Fominaya (2013) have critiqued the application of North American models to European movements, while Gyagi (n.d.) has also criticised the use of west European models in relation to movements in eastern Europe.

These problems with the dominant theory can be traced to a number of causes. One is a linguistic parochialism. Flesher Fominaya and Cox (2013:1) note ‘the failure of Anglophone social science movement theorists to pay attention to the substantial literatures in languages such as French, German, Spanish or Italian’. Another cause is a result of the global distribution of power cited above, resulting in the core being blind to most work being done in the non-core, thus minimising its chances of adapting the dominant theory to encompass and interpret new evidence and new movements. But the major problem may be related to the effect that the historical situation in which the currently dominant social movement theory was formed had on the development of that theory.

Gagyi, who criticises application of that theory to Eastern European movements, presents a very interesting perspective on the development of social movement theory as a product of a highly specific historical period:

In both the US and European contexts, the separation of the systematic study of social movements from long-term historical and economic causation happened in an era when, exactly and only in these two locations, the affluence of post-war western societies made it possible for the first time in history for entire populations to participate in material welfare. It also created a so far unseen growth of US and European middle classes –a basis for their paradigmatic participation in non-material movements in 1968, the inspirational moment of both US and European SMS scholarship.

This context of affluence, and consequently, the relative lack of material focus, can hardly be generalized throughout space and time. (Gagyi n.d.: 19)

These might be considered, then, to adapt Murray Bookchin’s phrase, post-scarcity movements. Habib and Opoku-Monsah (2009:47) also point to the importance of the context in which social movement theory originated: ‘Largely developed to explain the rise and influence of so-called ‘identity-based’ movements –racial or religiously constructed, women’s, gay rights and even environmental collectives- in economically developed western democracies, it

challenged Marxist interpretations that placed distributional issues at the centre of explanations of social movements’.

However it also needs to be pointed out that social movement theory did not provide a full picture of social movement activity at the time it was formulated, specifically by failing to pay sufficient attention to the activities of the labour movement. Cox and Flesher Fominaya point out ‘the period under discussion in ‘NSM [new social movement] theory’ was not only not a ‘post-Marxist’ period by any means, but the canonical account’s caricature of labour movements also fails to correspond to their actual diversity and activities’ (Cox and Flesher Fominaya 2013:14). Indeed some would argue that in this period the labour movement at the point of production in the core was approaching its most radical period, exhibited in the ‘refusal of work’.

The emphasis on identity and the lack of emphasis on material and distributional factors is one reason for the disjoint between theory and the reality it’s supposed to describe/interpret. Habib and Opoku-Monsah note, from a typology of African social movements, the continued importance of distributional conflict for these movements; they further note that, even in the context of ‘identity’ movements, distributional issues are of major importance: ‘The case studies in South Africa of the gay, environmental, women’s and refugee movements show that even while identity is an important driver within these movements, distributional questions have by no means been marginalized’ (Habib and Opoku-Monsah 2009:56).

Finally, in what seems fitting irony, the dominant theory has also been criticised for failure to account for actual protest in the US itself. In an interesting echo of Gagy’s position, McAdam et al (2005) suggested that social movement theory’s roots in the New Left family of movement created a model of contentious activity that was historically limited and did not accord with the (then) current situation in the US: ‘contemporary social movement theory is essentially based on intensive interrogation of this new left ‘movement family’ ‘ (McAdam et al 2005:4), which they identify as ‘the women’s movement, the environmental movement, the Vietnam antiwar struggle, the anti-nuclear movement, and the gay and lesbian movement’ (McAdam 2005:3). (Funnily enough the civil rights and black power movements seem to be missing here). McAdam et al then proceed to provide empirical evidence from Chicago that they claim contradicts the four essentials of the stylized social movement theory resulting from being ‘overwhelmingly rooted in and shaped by empirical work on the cluster of movements identified above’ (McAdam et al 2005:4). These authors ‘worry that their [those movements]’ features and the general dynamics of contention typical of the period are often represented as a set of universals applicable to contentious episodes in all (or most) times and places’. (McAdam et al 2005:4).

### **What is to be done?**

It seems unacceptable to examine this problem without suggesting some remedies for it, yet it also feels presumptuous to make such suggestions. From

the point of view of journals, Poulson, Caswell and Gray suggest ‘actively solicit[ing] scholarship that is produced by people who have an intimate association with people in the global south’ (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014:239), and ‘actively forg[ing] connections with scholars who maintain an association with communities in the global south’ (Poulson, Caswell and Gray 2014:240) while Paasi (2005: 785) notes that ‘[s]ome Anglo-American journals (*Social and Cultural Geography, Geoforum*) have taken a proactive role in this problem by helping foreign geographers with language problems’. One simple suggestion is that editorial advisory boards be widened outside core country institutions: the example above of *Mobilization*’s board shows the need for this. Here *Interface* seems a model of best practice<sup>9</sup>, both through regionalising editorial control and through opening the journal to contributions in many other languages than English, though the former also produces its own particular problems. Of course remedying this problem requires journals to recognise that there is a problem in the first place. If this article has done nothing else, it hopefully has demonstrated the existence of this problem.

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<sup>9</sup> This is not sycophantic but descriptive.

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