

A River of Life:

Learning and Environmental Social Movements

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Socialist Dreaming is not about the liberation of the individual from the social, but is about a collective dreaming (McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2004: 213)

What constantly recurs is that these movements are involved in doing, where the senses are at the heart of action (McDonald, 2006:214)

The best route to social transformation lies through the synthesis of action, learning and social change (Edwards, 2006: 12)

Introduction

Learning, both intentional and incidental is that embodied place that enables those of us in the diverse movements of our times to feel that river of life; that space where our knowledge, our hopes, our dreams become somehow connected to each other, to those of others in our communities and the world and to those who have both come before and will follow us. Social movements are intense locations for knowledge coming together and for learning to occur. By social movement learning I refer to several interconnected phenomena: a) informal learning occurring by persons who are part of any social movement; b) intentional learning that is stimulated by organized educational efforts of the social movements themselves; and c) formal and informal learning that takes place amongst the broad public, the citizens, as a result of the activities undertaken by the a given social movement (Hall, 2005).

I believe that the catalytic power of learning and its sister activity knowledge creation have been undervalued and under-theorized in the discourses of social movements. Indeed without an understanding of the role of learning and

knowledge creation, I contend that it is very difficult indeed to explain the power and potential, which social movements represent. I am delighted to make a modest contribution to correcting this and welcome any fellow travellers in this journey, fellow paddlers in the river of life!

The adult education movements of Europe arose with the major social movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Movements about lessening the horrors of early capitalism and industrialisation, reduction of child labour, health and safety in the workplace, obtaining the vote for women, movements for peace in the context of the two world wars all had powerful educational or learning dimensions. Indeed how could they have existed outside of the context of learning? What we have come to understand as the foundations of the Eurocentric adult education traditions include such mythic efforts as the Mechanics Institutes and the Workers Education Association originating in England, the study circles from Sweden, the folk high schools in Denmark, and the Antigonish Movement in Canada. These movements were created and nourished within a social reform climate and went on to create their own robust institutional structures. Indeed many of the organisational forms of these early learning movements still exist even though with some it may be difficult to ascertain their current connections to contemporary social movements.

The Popular Education movements of Latin America of the 1980s and 90s, of The Philippines of the same period with significant influence back into Canada, the United States and Europe (the later thanks to the organizing work of people like Liam Kane of Glasgow, Mae Shaw, Jim Crowther and Ian Martin of Endinburgh, Scotland) have also illuminated the links between learning and social movement aspirations. There have been movements one could argue over the years of adult literacy, much of that supported by UNESCO at the international level. The International Council for Adult Education with its partner organisations in Europe, Asia, Latin America and elsewhere has been an important network since its founding in 1974 where the learning agenda and the social movement agendas have come together. The journal of the ICAE, *Convergence*, has been the main vehicle for carrying this discussion forward.

But for purposes of this article, I am not going to refer in any depth to the more organized parts of the adult or lifelong learning movements although I commend that literature to readers as they are an important element of the overall understanding of the contemporary links between learning and social movements. I want however to share my evolving thoughts about *social movement learning* itself with special reference to the forms of learning that I studied in the mid 1990s as part of an extensive study on learning in the context of a number of environmental action campaigns and movements around the world.

Social Movements: An Evolving Concept

What is a Social Movement?

It goes on one at a time

It starts when you care

To act, it starts when you do it again after

They said no

It starts when you say we and know what

You mean, and each

Day you mean one more

- Marge Piercy, *The Low Road*

The poetic definition of Marge Piercy is, to my mind, the clearest and most easily communicated statement about how we understand a social movement. There are, of course, many others definitions of social movements. And as the first decade of the 21st Century draws to a close with its thrilling and horrifying forms of globalisation, our understandings of what social movements are and how they work or if they are still robust enough concepts to help us understand what is

happening in the world expand. The conceptualization by David Snow, Sarah Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi in their Introduction to the *Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* has the advantage by being more broadly inclusive as to what gets counted as a social movement.

“Social movements” according to these scholars, “can be thought of as (*italics original*) *collectivities acting with some degree of organization, and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture or world order of which they are a part* (2004:11).

In addition, Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani have, in synthesizing an enormous variety of European and North American literature, noted that most social movement scholars share a concern with four characteristics of movements: “informal interaction networks; ...shared beliefs and solidarity; ...collective action focusing on conflict; ...use of protest”. (1999, pp. 14-15)

Kevin McDonald offers us extremely useful insights into understanding the global movements of the early 21st century in much more complex ways. He looks at the emergence of new kinds of networks and flows of communication, action and experience. “The forms of practice and communication we encounter in these movements are more embodied and sensual than deliberative and representational” (2006:4). McDonald writes of new grammars of experience, grammars of action and culture. He argues that we are witnessing a move from social movements as forms of representation with direct action for political gains as a goal to movements of experience, of drama, of theatre, of taste and touch and even ritual (59). Moments in the midst of the anti-globalisation protests, the ecological struggles, or struggles for indigenous cultures and language are immediate experiences of a different world, a new life enacted through ritual, ceremony, dance, or play. They are not the indirect struggles for power that will one day make a change; they are the world we want experienced right now! The movements of the present are less about organisation and community and more

about event and experience (84). McDonald refers to the work of the German Hans Joas (1996) who puts forward a robust a fresh understanding of action within social movements. Joas suggests that the dominant forms of understanding of action are flawed in that they largely framed in terms of intentionality, which focuses on control, purpose and cognition. Movements illustrated by the Zapatistas, healing movements such as Qigong or the spiritual movements of global Islamic are about flow, networking, connectivity, immediacy, creativity and an immediate sensual intimacy.

The links between social movements and civil society or global civil society organisations are complex and intertwined. Social movements are collective expressions of a given group of people intended to resist, transform or in other ways have impact in the political, social or policy worlds; the worlds of governance. Global Civil Society refers most often to the explosion of small and large non-governmental organisations and networks which have arisen in the past 20 years and which have become particularly prominent in the context of the World Social Forum (Hall, 2000). Some would say in fact that the phenomena of the World Social Forum are a global social movement or a set of social movements in and of themselves. What the global movement(s) is/are named differs. We are alternatively speaking of a movement for alternative globalisation, an anti-globalisation movement, a movement for the world we want or a movement for redefining community. A quick stroll through the World Social Forum and related websites will reveal thousands of non-governmental civil society organisations. These thousands of organisations at the global level are part of what we refer to as global civil society. Global civil society can be understood as at least two phenomena: the sub-total of all local and national civil society organisations or the total of the international or transnational civil society organisations. Whichever definition one chooses, the fact remains that the actual governance of the global commons is being deeply influenced by the actions and aspirations of people of the world expressed through their staggeringly diverse organisational forms.

The examples of social movement learning in this article are based on data on the *Transformative learning Through Environmental Action Project* that was undertaken between 1992 and 1994 by the Transformative Learning Centre at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education or the University of Toronto, the Faculty of Environmental Studies of York University and CEMINA, a Brazilian-based environmental NGO. This study was the largest qualitative research project ever undertaken on learning within and because of environmental social movements. It has had little dissemination so I welcome the opportunity to share some of the findings with readers of *Interchange*. This comparative and international research project was funded by the International Development Research Centre of Canada to investigate ways in which learning emerged, and was stimulated and supported, in different environmental social movement contexts around the world. These were in Brazil, Canada, El Salvador, Germany, India, Sudan and Venezuela. Coordinated by Moema Viezzer in Brazil, Darlene Clover, Budd Hall, Edmund O'Sullivan, the late dian marino and Leesa Fawcett in Canada, the project developed as a contribution to, and a way of following up, the adult education dimensions of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June of 1992.

The several years of networking in the international adult education community, especially in preparation for the Earth Summit raised a number of questions:

- 1) How could the learning dimension of the environmental movement be strengthened?
- 2) What can be learned from social movement environmental action campaigns about the ways in which learning takes place and can be most enhanced?
- 3) Which combinations of pedagogical practice hold out the most promise for transforming relations of power and perception?

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- 1) Identify indicators of success for social movement learning within environmental action contexts;
- 2) Undertake an international survey of transformative education initiatives,
- 3) Develop a number of conceptual working papers and case studies dealing concepts of social movement learning through environmental action; and
- 4) Organize a collaborative workshop for the analysis of how social movement learning works.

Methodology

The study was a participatory and collaborative effort by the teams at the three sponsoring organizations that brought diverse approaches and experiences in partnership with a team of scholar-activists who were responsible for writing the case study reports. For example, OISE/UT had extensive experience in adult and popular education theory; the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University with environmental education, nature and society; while CEMINA brought experience in feminist environmental popular education.

Early in the design of the study, it was agreed that the range of experiences of social movement learning in the field of environmental action was too large and diverse to be able to provide enough points of comparison for one study. As a result, it was agreed that the case studies would be drawn from experiences of environmental action in the context of food production, distribution and consumption. Food is life itself and all social economic and political relations with nature can be understood from the point of view of food, or even, as we were to discover in the study of the Navdanya (nine seeds) project in India, from the point of view of the seed. As Leesa Fawcett (1993:5) noted in the final report of the study, “Everything we put into our food, we eventually eat”.

The Case Studies

The chosen case studies were action-oriented, social movement based and concerned with food and its production, consumption and distribution in some ways. Case study activist-researchers, working in the groups associated with the case study, were invited to research and write the individual case studies and to participate in the collective analysis workshop at the end of the process. The case studies included: Navdanya: A Grass Roots Movement in India to Conserve Biodiversity and Sustain Food Security; El Daen- Environmental Conservation in Western Sudan; Berlin and Brandenburg as Centres of Environmental Activism: Organic Food consumption and Organic Gardening and Farming; Food, Aboriginal Ownership, Empowerment and Cultural Recovery at the Six Nations Community in Canada; Women's Citizenship in Action: The Struggle Against Hunger and Poverty and in Defence of Life in Brazil; Social movement learning in the Venezuelan Urban Amazon; People's Rights, Environmental Education and Ecological Action for Sustainability in El Salvador.

Findings: Principles of environmental social movement learning

Recovery of a sense of place

The propensity to destroy the ecological balance in our communities varies, in part, according to the degree of 'sense of place', which we have. . Place refers to our locations in bioregional terms and also in terms of such social indicators as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and able-bodiedness. As Meyer-Renshausen (1994: 8) noted in her case study in the *Awakening Sleep Knowledge* report of linking organic vegetable growers to Berlin consumers, "the members (of the food co-op) now know exactly where their cabbage comes from". As a result, we concluded that principles of bio-regionalism are important to developing a sense of place and that we need to think of ways of building practical and theoretical ways to recover our sense of place when planning learning, experiences

The importance of bio-diversity

Bio-diversity is that complex celebration of difference that allows for the flowering and survival of the world. Respect for bio-diversity means honouring space for bio-diversity to flourish. Bio-diversity performs its magic best when performing in settings that most humans understand as wild. As Vanasa Ramprasad (1994:9) noted in the case study of Navdanya, "Biodiversity is vulnerable, and left unprotected it tends to erode". The reduction of bio-diversity in the form of fewer seed varieties, extinction of animal species or the disappearance of other life forms threatens our survival. The full implications of concepts such as bio-diversity have broad meanings even for our understanding of the roles of our particular human species. Respect for education of a transformative variety increases the visibility and understanding of the importance of bio-diversity in ways that make sense in the particular context involved. Again from Ramprasad, "Conservation of biodiversity and crop varieties in-situ on farmers fields is a security imperative in the context of the North-South conflict over genetic resources" (p. 13).

Reconnecting with the rest of nature

Our pedagogical practices, according to our understanding of social movement learning, need to seek specific ways for us to reconnect with the rest of nature. As Vizier and Moreira (1994: 17) say in their case study of the Jardim Kaghora community in Brazil, "It is necessary to share the joy of living without domination among human beings or between human kind and nature". The first aspect of this is to recognise that we are part of nature and not apart from nature. We are connected with every form of life as we share the same molecular building blocks. Our collective ability to survive as a collectivity of all living beings depends on each of our species surviving in ecologically interconnected webs of life. This means that opportunities of a theoretical, practical, experiential and participatory nature need be sought so that everyone can begin to recover a sense of the natural.

Awakening “sleepy knowledge”

Increasing attention is being paid to the role of indigenous knowledge, even within academic settings (Dei, Hall and Goldin-Rosenberg, 2002). The concept of ‘sleepy knowledge’ came from the Venezuelan Puerto Ayacucho movement for the recovery of traditional environmental knowledge to help urban indigenous migrants cope better with the new conditions facing them. As knowledges and system of thinking have come to be so dominated by Eurocentric, rich country, patriarchal paradigms, older and non-dominant forms of knowledge have been allowed to “go to sleep”. Ovalles (1994) describes the educational process of “awakening” being done in Puerto Ayacucho as:

... a social process through which the values, principles, knowledge, etc learned from the practices of past generations and found in the personal and collective consciousness of people are critical. These values, principles and knowledge come from the experience and relationships between societies and their natural environments throughout history. Due to the socialization process, this knowledge has been lost, and no longer transmitted from generation to generation until now. (p. 2)

In addition to the knowledges of ancient peoples, the knowledges of women and of those who live closest to subsistence have much to offer us for environmental adult education. As the keepers of seeds, primary care givers in communities, farmers, haulers of water and wood and vibrant social and environmental activists and educators worldwide, many women bring more life-centred visions and ideas to environmental discourse.

Acting and resisting

Facilitating action and supporting resistance is a key principle for transformative adult environmental learning. As Ovalles (1994: 4) says about the work in the urban Amazon, “learning becomes transformative in the moment that it starts to

influence power, work, management and cultural relations". It might well be argued for example that even Western science, with its built-in biases, offers us sufficient proof of the declining health of our biosphere. But that knowledge alone cannot help us if it is not linked to social and political actions that can make changes in the laws or practices which destroy us. Resistance, itself a form of action, is that quality which allows us, as individuals and as collectivities, to maintain our sense of integrity and community thereby denying others of power over us in important ways. Social movement learning seeks out action and supports resistance.

Building alliances and relationships

In each of the examples of social movement learning which we researched, there was a strong emphasis on the importance of people working together. This is because change of a systemic nature is a long-term matter that requires skills and energies beyond any single person. Each of our cases of social movement learning involved the creation of alliances across diverse groups. In Sudan, the rural environmental association created an alliance with adult educators at the University of Khartoum. In Brazil, popular organizations of street kids, workers, women and others came together in a poverty and hunger campaign. In El Salvador, former members of the armed opposition established new alliances with peasant leaders. Social movement learning needs to find ways to strengthen our skills in working with others. It has to do with organizing, understanding difference, respecting diversity, learning how to build consensus, reaching out to those who do not share our views and with sustaining long term political and operational strategies. This may be shantytown women coming together to start a food bank. It may involve *campesinos* in El Salvador eating together or joining the Rural Leadership Network. Ovalles (1994: 4) says that in Puerto Ayachucho, "each meeting they tried to make up networks of individuals and organizations which would permit continuing of the process"; while in Brazil, Moema Viezzer and Teresa Moreira (1994: 9) noted that "In November last year we organized a

committee which has worked on three fronts all along. We established a bridge between middle-class schools and committees from middle-class apartment buildings and committee again hunger set up by the Neighbourhood Association from Jardim Kahohara (the slum community.”

Skills are important too

Social movement learning is not just about understanding concepts and connections; it is also about learning and teaching specific skills. Words such as “empowerment” sometimes obscure the fact that specific skills are involved in environmental action and that learning how to do something may be as empowering as a new insight that gives broader meaning to one’s daily life. In the Six Nations of the Grand River in Canada for example, learning how to farm in the traditional way of the ancestors involves skills as well as consciousness. In the Sudan, “Women started to exchange information in ways and means of preserving food” (Hijazi, 1994: 10) Successful organic bio-shops in Germany requires skills in running a small business. Similarly, several skills were needed in the Navdanya project, including “cleaning and documentation of seeds, seed conservation, varietal improvement, in field agronomy trials” (Ramprasad, 1994: 16) The challenge to those of us who work or seek to work with transformative forms of learning in these contexts is to identify the specific skills needed for the actions intended and to arrange ways to learn them.

Valuing process in learning

Many of our most unsuccessful educational experiences have focussed on trying to get the most “facts” across in the shortest period of time. In social movement learning, however, the process of the learning is as important as the content of learning, beginning with the daily lived experiences of those involved in social movement learning for increased attention to the relationship of the learning processes to the overall goal of our movements.

As Ramprasad (1994: 18) noted:

In the Navdanya project this is referred to as evocative forms of training. Instead of trainers transferring knowledge and information as if into an empty cup, the trainer draws out the wisdom that is lying dormant within the vast range of agricultural experience that the farmer has. By doing this active thinking is awakened within the inner life of the farmers.

Deconstructing relations of power

Learning for transformative purposes involves understanding relations of power within a specific context. Understanding relations of power helps in understanding the exploitation or abuse of nature and people in particular situations. For example, an important part of village level seed projects in the Navdanya project in India involved understanding the relations of power within the Indian state, agri-business global corporations and the sale of hybrid seeds and fertilizers. A seed conservation project would not be effective if the conservation practices were learned in the absence of any understanding such relations of power. Benevides (1994: 3) noted that in El Salvador, many farmers had to use their small plots as collateral for loans to buy seeds or fertilizer, and soon found that they lost their land as soon as they were unable to make repayments. Understanding the relations of power also allows for the potential to alter those relations and, most importantly, provides a framework for analysing future actions by agri-business interests. Power flows through each and every practice in everyday life via gender relations, race and ethnic relations, class relations and more. Sensitivity to the complex relationships of power and knowledge in ecological contexts is a goal for social movement learning.

The practices and processes of social movement learning

The collective analysis workshop process generated nearly one hundred specific practices and processes of transformative environmental adult education that

had been used within the case studies. Many of the practices that formed the heart of the environmental actions under discussion had not been intentionally designed as educational practices but became key moments for very powerful learning, which deepened the understanding of the actions at hand and reinforced the sustainability of the overall work. Many of the principles identified in the section above are incorporated in these practices. Two or three examples from each of these categories are used to illustrate the diversity and creativity of the practices. The practices identified include: celebrations and rituals, "on-the-spot" learning, learning from elders, community meetings, nature tours or study visits, gender analysis, medicinal plant collections, kitchen composting, marches and protests and the creation of community markets.

Celebrations and rituals

Celebrations and rituals represent an important form of environmental adult education. They have the capacity to combine new and old knowledge's, spiritual and physical activities and various ways of coming closer to the earth. Meditation was also used in some of the case study contexts. In making use of celebrations and rituals for environmental education, we are drawing on some of the most powerful and ancient methods we know. The following are but two of literally thousands of such activities.

The Navdanya project in India saw social movement learning as an awakening of the spiritual facilities that slumber within the farmer. Learning is a drawing out of the wisdom lying dormant within the vast range of agricultural experience that the farmer has. One of the practices used by Navdanya was to integrate the work of identifying and preserving the best genetic stock for the coming seasons into traditional seasonal festivals. In this ceremony women played the central role as "keepers of the seeds" as they participated in an elaborate festival of song and dance that focused the entire community on the process of seed preservation. The seeds that had been selected for keeping were identified by the local farmers who elaborated their own criteria for selecting seeds based on qualities derived from

their very specific contexts, including the desire to grow without imported fertilizers.

The Rural Leaders Network in El Salvador believed that their cultural, spiritual and agricultural work feeds empty stomachs, supports the community and feeds the soul. Noting that the spiritual aspect of life must not be underestimated, they made extensive use of song and music in their training programmes. They also pay particular attention to sharing traditional histories when they begin a training workshop by asking leaders from the different communities to tell the stories of their communities. These are communities with many thousands of years of history and the telling and exchanging of each story calls forth the years of resistance of the people of the region and shows common elements among them.

A number of small celebrations were also held throughout the collective analysis workshop. These culminated at the closing ceremony through collectively weaving a web of sisal twine, pausing each time to think about what our experience had meant to us.

"On-the-spot" learning

A second broad area of practice that emerged from the collective analysis process of the project was labelled "on-the-spot" learning. In India they spoke of "in situ" learning as opposed to "ex situ" learning which was compared to the practices of in situ preservation of seeds compared to ex situ preservation of seeds. It was pointed out that the communities than are doing maintenance control of the genetic stock more responsibly by private companies.

If we think about educational work, the same thing might be said; education works best when it is kept close to the communities and suffers when others design it at a distance. In all of the case studies we examined, a majority of the learning was done in the farms, homes, shops, workplaces or elsewhere that work

and daily life was going on. The links between action, relevance and natural processes are so much more obvious when one is standing in the field.

An example of on-the-spot learning was identified in the Community Garden, an integral part of the project at Six Nations in Canada. When Leman Gibson, the Mohawk Elder works with the trainees at Six Nations of the Grand River near Brantford in Southern Ontario in Canada, he does so on the gently rolling land behind his home, which is one of two community gardens and test sites for growing traditional varieties of indigenous foods. His stories grow out of the land much as the corn, the squash and the beans (these three foods are known traditionally in Iroquois culture as the “three sisters”). Whether thanking the creator directly in a prayer before working or simply through the respect he shows for the earth which brings so much each year, the trainees get spiritual, technical and philosophical learning while they work on the spot.

In Sao Paulo, Brazil, as part of the large-scale food for life campaigns of the mid-1990s, a practice of reclaiming urban space for gardens was established. Homes are small and close together in the shanty towns of urban Brazil and, while we may be used to thinking of gardens and farms as rural experiences, the women's groups in the Hunger Campaign re-appropriated urban space to create gardens for the cultivation of what they called ‘seeds of diversity’. In spaces that have usually been used for garbage, women have reclaimed the land for gardens where women grow different crops and share what they grow. It is very difficult to provide security for crops in a community where hunger is prevalent, but the urban gardens provide more than just a source of food. They are at the same time a place for women to come together to figure out a variety of other ways to survive. The gardens also offer ideas about other more productive uses for the urban land that all too often becomes just another dump.

Learning from elders

To some extent all of the case studies examined had an element of learning from elders. In Germany, the urban women and men of Berlin went to some of the

older organic communes in the surrounding countryside to learn from the elderly farmers. In the Six Nations agricultural project two elders, one man and one woman are recognized as key advisers for the project and as teachers on practical farming and gardening techniques. The members of the Six Nations community could not work at a community level without the involvement of some of the elders. Similarly in the El Daen area of Sudan, the Elders (all male in this case) were at the heart of the conservation decisions and leadership.

Who are our elders in the various educational contexts that we work in?

Community meetings

Community meetings of both an informational and participatory nature were common across all the case study projects. Social movement learning made full use of the very wide variety of popular education and adult education methods in these community settings. These included cinema study groups, storytelling, cartoons, posters, community theatre, role-playing, song, music and art. The Brazilian campaign, the work in El Salvador, the work in Venezuela and India all had a rich and imaginative use of participatory approaches for use in community meetings.

Nature tours or study visits

Nature can teach us much if we can learn to hear its messages and read its signs. Sometimes other species and plant life are all around us. In these cases educators need to learn to be quiet and become more open to the world around us. Sometimes in urban settings we feel distant from and apart from the other parts of our natural world. In these cases it is useful to go to places where nature is more healthy and sustainable from an ecological point of view.

One of the study visits in Sao Paulo, involved taking the women from the shanty town to the areas water treatment plant. Here it was possible for the women to see all the chemicals put into the city water and to talk with the workers about

how water becomes contaminated in the first place. The results of this visit were clearly seen when the women's group reclaimed a spring in their neighbourhood by removing all the surrounding rubbish and putting up a barrier around it so that it would be kept clean. In Berlin, urban environmental activists in search of a way to strengthen their relationship with nature began to make visits by bicycle to organic farms in both the former west and former eastern parts of Germany around Berlin. Similarly, study visits of townsfolk to villages were organized. In the Indian case study where one of the objectives is to educate the consumers of various food products

Gender analysis

Women and their lives are at the heart of social movement learning. Understanding the differential impact of environmental destruction on the lives of women is critical to being able to find a solution in most cases. In all of the case studies, women, because of their central role in food growing, food preparation, and care-giving in general were fundamental to transformation. Practices such as consciousness-raising, feminist popular education, cooking classes and other activities that simply allow women to be together outside of the very heavy load of daily work were found in most of the case studies. This means that educational practices that directly or indirectly allow for increased visibility of the roles of women, particularly among men are important.

Medicinal plant collections

Plants were used for various medicinal purposes in the case study projects in El Salvador, Six Nations of the Grand River, Venezuela, Germany and the Sudan. In El Salvador in particular, the growing of medicinal plants is a central part of the rural leadership work. Recovery of knowledge about medicinal plants strengthens the self-sufficiency of communities and reduces the dependence of expensive imported medicines for many common ailments. There has been a revival of such

interest in each of the countries and the active tending of such herb gardens has proven to be an excellent adult education tool.

Kitchen compost piles

In Brazil and Germany the keeping of a kitchen compost pile was an intentional part of the work of environmental activists. The use of a compost pile with its direct and visible lesson about reducing organic waste and the power of nature to nourish itself by turning waste into good soil is one of the best ways of letting nature teach us. Along with reducing our creation of rubbish, learning to recycle organic products can make a substantial difference in our communities.

Marches and protests

Environmental action takes many forms. Sometimes it is important to take collective action in order to bring certain information to the authorities involved. Marches, protests and other forms of non-violent action are powerful ways to learn about the distribution of power, the role of different kinds of knowledge and the strength that comes from acting together. Whether in India protesting the patenting of the Neem tree or in Brazil going to local authorities to provide clean water, the right to take collective action were one of the most powerful learning tools and a means of responding to unfair environmental practices available.

Creating community markets

In both the Berlin and Six Nations case studies, creating a community market was seen as an educational as well as an economic activity. The large food producers and food marketing organizations that have historically had a monopoly over food distribution have prevented green activists in Berlin from using plants for medicinal purposes or buying local organic produce. The creation of local “bio-shops” where local producers can find buyers has proven to be both

a functional marketing arrangement as well as an excellent place for informal education to take place. The buyers, sellers and shopkeepers educate themselves about so many issues having to do with ways to live more lightly on the earth. At Six Nations, market research at the start of the project indicated that the community spent nearly \$11 million dollars a year for food. None of that money was spent in the community. So there were plans for an integrated community market and educational centre as part of the recovery of traditional food crops and better use of the land in the community. This centre would provide the community with films and talks about aspects of indigenous agricultural and culture as well as be a destination for visitors wanting to buy locally and learn something about the area.

Power and Globalisation

Social movements are instruments, means, and imaginaries for dealing with the issue of power where power is understood to be the process turning imagination into lived reality. So our understandings of power are critical to our understandings of social movements and indeed to our understandings of globalisation and obviously to our understandings of how learning and knowledge interact with social movements, power and change. I indebted to John Gaventa for drawing my attention to his and others recent work from the intersection of international politics and international development studies that offer us extremely useful ways of understanding the nature of power in our globalised world. Gaventa offers what he has called the “power cube” which can be imagined in the form of a Rubik’s cube with three sides representing the three different dimensions of power (2007:206). On the vertical axis of the cube are levels of power: supra national or global, national and sub-national or regional. At this level we consider the way that power is expressed at the local or the national or the supra national levels. The horizontal axis describes spaces where power takes place including closed spaces, invited spaces and claimed/created spaces. Closed spaces for example would be inner circles of corporate life,

military planning, vast areas of political spaces where people are intentionally excluded from discussion. Invited spaces can be understood as the various participatory governance initiatives that governments create for citizen involvement. Claimed or created spaces might for our purpose include social movements. These are spaces where those excluded create or take up their own spaces. The third dimension of the cube is forms of power: visible, hidden and invisible. Forms or dimensions of power theorists refer to a public space of political negotiation that represents most of what we experience as political life in our communities. Hidden forms are those where the very agendas for political negotiation are determined. Invisible forms of power are the dark experiences of internalised powerlessness where no political action is even imagined let alone acted upon.

Many development professionals and activists working on issues of citizenship, governance and poverty reduction within international donor organizations and international non-governmental organisations have taken up the power cube. Understanding power along the three dimensions suggested gives us both a practical analytic tool and a complex understanding of power itself. The Rubik's cube, which can be turned along all three axis allows for billions of permutations as does power itself!

Social Movements lie at the heart of change

My deepest understandings of relations between women and men are not primarily as a result of the reading of feminist literature, although I have done so. My understanding of white heterosexual privilege has not come primarily from reading of anti-racist or queer studies, although I have done so. My understanding of the risk to our environment has not come primarily from my reading of environmental literature, although I have done so. In each of these cases my most profound learning of new ways of seeing and living in the world have come as a result of direct and indirect impact of these social movements on the daily practises of my life. My learning about gender issues began when in the

1970s; my home became a place for weekly women's meetings. My understanding of white privilege began most sharply from being on the wrong side of debates about who to hire in a community organisation and from challenges to racist assumptions in my classrooms. My learning about homophobia began at a poetry reading session when another reader shared his stories of exclusion and pain.

Social movements have what I suggest is a 'magic power'. They have a capacity to create change among persons who are not even members of the movement in question. We *learn* or come to new understandings of different dimensions of life as a result of the actions taken by those engaged in the movements themselves. In 2008 members of Greenpeace, in England scaled the smoke stack of a coal powered electrical power plant and painted the letters of the first name of Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister down the side of the smoke stack in massive letters. GORDON was splashed across the front pages of the newspapers in England and persons who may have not thought at all about what was going on in the debates about alternative power sources were offered a new framework, a new way of understanding. The GORDON effort created a public learning moment for thousands of people who never intended to learn about the issue; a kind of magic power of learning.

I would argue that in every area of sociological analysis or political theorizing, the new frameworks for understanding power in relation to race, dis/ability, gender, the rest of nature or even spiritual life have originated in the movements of our times. Academic literature was either years or decades later with their theoretical explanations or explanations. Social movements and Eyeman and Jamison tell us create epistemic communities where new knowledge is generated and shared. The ripples from the social movement stones reach out to those of us who are not part of the movements, to those in the academy looking for more reliant ways of explaining things and eventually to the changing of institutional behaviours. The process is not smooth, it is not fun, it is not predicable, but it comes at us continually and is, from my perspective, the very core of social and cultural transformation.

In the reading of the literature on social movements it has become clear that each of us might agree with the notion that social movements exist. We would also each be able to perhaps name a social movement or social movements. But when one tries to pin the elusive social movement down to more precise definition, the frustration grows. We learn of old social movements such as the labour movement, which have largely taken on organisational forms. These movements most often have identified leadership structures and fixed sets of values and objectives. Members in these movements often have cards and can be found on lists. We learn of new social movements, which often include women's movements, peace movements or environmental movements, which have a combination of identifiable and diffuse leadership. These movements are most often unified through common sets of values and perspectives. Of course well-articulated forms of both the women's movements and the peace movements have existed in 'old' forms as well. And as academics we are now trying to come to grips with the multi-faceted face of the variety of global anti-racist, anti-imperial, anti-globalisation and anti-capital movements which are understood as having continual emergent leadership and organisational forms. Some forms of these social movements are expressed through religious discourse such as fundamentalist movements of Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism or Islam. At specific moments such as the World Social Forum in 2004 in Mumbai, India, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings in Vancouver in 1998, the Quebec Summit of the Americas or the Calgary, Canada G-8 meetings in June of 2002, representatives of these various movements come together with a remarkable range of creativity and alternative visions.

New generations of social movements are not merely oriented to "critiquing" dominant society but they are simultaneously engaged in regenerative activities and offering alternatives to reshape the very grammar of life. In short, we see the transition from a phase of "protest" to a phase of "proposal". I am interested in giving close attention to what these proposals represent and signify, what is their intent and content in rebuilding both human and non-human collectivities. These new generations of social movements are not single issue based or enveloped

within the larger narratives of nationalist struggles or 'equal opportunity' within the state and/or the market but they have opened the Pandora's box of multi-issues and multi-actors. Most important for us is the fact that each actor is embodied with his/her own pragmatic and symbolic productivities. Finally, whether social movement leadership is aware or not, there is a creation of knowledge arising and taking shape as well as the appearance of a wide range of pedagogical and social learning strategies. Thus we value social movement space as much for its process as for its results.

Adult and Lifelong Learning developments

The emergence of several more recent streams of learning discourse come together to make the study of social movement learning particularly rich at this point in time. First, there is new interest in educational discourse about learning that occurs over a life span and the educational processes that occur in out-of-school settings. One example of this increased interest was found at the UNESCO Fifth International Conference on Adult Education in July of 1997 where some 1600 persons from 160 countries met and endorsed among other things a Declaration which accorded special reference to the many "new agents of social change" (UNESCO, Hamburg Declaration, 1997) which generate many new forms of adult and informal education.

Second, there has been considerable research into the informal learning of adults as part of the work done by David Livingstone and his team at the University of Toronto within the New Approaches to Lifelong Learning research network (2000). Through work carried out in this network we have learned that all adults learn by their own recognition, 8-10 hours per week through informal learning processes. The work of the NALL project researchers has documented the rich learning environments in social movement settings such as trade unions, community-based environmental groups, ex-psychiatric survivors.

The Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex team, which looks at Power, Participation and Social Change, has been elaborating a series of

reflections on the practices of learning, knowledge gathering and social justice. Peter Taylor and his colleagues have assembled a useful report on *Learning for Social Change*, which drew on the reflections of diverse groups of international development social change agencies, educators and communicators. (2006). They draw attention to the importance of attending to the practices of facilitation of learning for social change. They note “power relations constrain or broaden and create hierarchies of knowledge” (2006:16). What is most useful perhaps for an evolving understanding of social movement learning is the rich elaboration of forms of learning which includes: emotional, propositional, indigenous, insight, tacit, collective, expert, lay, discursive, wisdom, experiential, revealed, and practical.

There is an opportunity beyond the scope of this article to explore how the varying discourses of adult and lifelong learning, learning for social change, popular education, social movement learning, Aboriginal ways of knowing, critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogies, queer pedagogies and more can deepen our understanding of the role and potential of learning in the context of social movements. As I reflect on the extensive dimensions of learning I suggest that we could construct a “Learning Cube” very much like Gaventa’s power cube, which would illustrate the billions of permutations for a learning world.

The two most cited figures in the literature on social movement learning are Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Peter Mayo (1998) has rendered the most succinct comparative analysis of these two intellectuals. Both Gramsci and Freire see the learning process most fully flourishing within social movement contexts. They both stress issues of commitment, agency, and political or structural change. While Gramsci (1971) contextualized his work in the notion of a working class movement of the early 20th century in Italy, Freire (1970) understood his work as relating to women and men in a wide variety of social movement contexts even though his own roots were in Latin America. The Freirean understanding of dialogue as a transformative educational practice, while powerful, is sometimes criticized for being silent on questions of gender, race or other forms of difference. What Freire does seem to get right is his

emphasis on the importance of people writing their own history. Time is ripe to re-evaluate the Gramscian and Freirean explorations of the relationship between expert's knowledge over the knowledge of the subjugated.

The adult education literature has recently seen several theoretical explorations of social movement learning. Mattias Finger (1989), Michael Welton (1993) and John Holford (1995) have each put forward a kind of map of the linkages between social movements and adult learning. According to Finger, new social movements are the catalyst for personal transformation and the environment within which transformation occurs. They define the future topics of adult education. Learning within these movements is more powerful than the impact of schooling

Welton (1993) argues that new social movements are both personal and collective in form and content. He sees them as 'privileged sites' of social movement learning or emancipatory praxis. He asks the question, "What are adults learning?" in new social movements, but does not go much further than outlining some ways of understanding what the new social movements are responding to. He asks one of the key questions that we are trying to answer, "Is something of great significance for the field of adult education occurring within these sites?"

Holford (1995) goes beyond both Finger and Welton. Holford finds much of importance in the work of Eyerman and Jamison (1991) who speaks of social movements as a location of "cognitive praxis". Eyerman and Jamison suggest that it is "through tensions between different groups and organizations over defining and acting in that conceptual space that the (temporary) identity of a social movement is formed." Through the notion of "cognitive praxis" they emphasize the creative role of consciousness and cognition in all human action, individual and collective. They look at social movements through the complex lens of social theory of knowledge that is both historically and politically informed. They focus simultaneously on the process of articulating a movement identity (cognitive praxis), on the actors taking part in this process (movement intellectuals), and on the context of articulation (politics, cultures, and institutions). What comes out of

social movement action is neither predetermined nor completely self-willed; its meaning is derived from the context in which it is carried out and the understanding that actors bring to it and/or derive from it. Eyerman and Jamison emphasize that social movements are not merely social dramas; they are the social action where new knowledge including worldviews, ideologies, religions, and scientific theories originate.

Social movements are a socially constructive force and a fundamental determinant of human knowledge. As such they have profound implications for learning theory. Social movements are far more than 'sites of learning', but lie at the heart of the content of learning itself.

Griff Foley of Australia wrote an extensive study of what he calls "Learning in Social Action" (1999). He looks at a number of case studies of local social, environmental and political social action. His key concepts are learning through struggle, struggle being the action of those who have less power against those who have more. His work drawing on a largely political economic tradition asks never-the-less similar questions as the others. How do the political economic contexts of a given struggle shape education and training? What are the ideological and discursive practices of social movement actors? To what extent do these practices hinder or facilitate learning and action?

Several authors have provided answers to these questions. Darlene Clover, at the University of Victoria, has written extensively on learning with the environmental adult education movement and on women's learning in a variety of community-based cultural movements (Clover and Hill 2003). A good example of how cultural artistic forms of expression have informed popular protests is Carole Roy's research that looks at the learning dimensions of Canada's "Raging Grannies" (Roy 2004). The Raging Grannies are older women who turn the stereotypes of old age upside down as they sing songs of political protest on the steps of the legislature while dressed in old fashioned bonnets and dresses. Butterwick (1998) has written on the social movement leadership of women in

Canadian adult education history. Cunningham and Curry (1997) have explored social movement learning within the Chicago African American Experience.

New utopian visions and practices are being created everywhere in profusion

Ulrich Beck has noted that, “The blueprints for alternative world views are carried about in the breast pockets, backpacks and hearts of social activists today” (Beck 1997, 23). These new blueprints are deep, elaborate, practical and even spiritual approaches to another world where fairness and respect form the heart of the human and more than human relationships. Whether in the oral naming of our world by the Aboriginal People; or the documented practises of green economists; or the business successes of women’s grassroots saving groups in Asia and Africa; or the community business incubators of Van City Credit Union in British Columbia, Canada; Or the participatory budget of the city of Porto Alegre Brazil; or the thousands of groups building the world social movement; or the sustainable forestry of small holder loggers in British Columbia; in spite of the attempts of the global market forces to silence or render invisible other ways of being, our world, our imagination and our creativity has not been stopped. The anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist movements are creating a powerful epistemic community where learning is accelerating. Attention to the power of learning, the power of knowledge making in social movement contexts is a contribution that those interested in learning and engagement of civil societies can make.

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URL for this article:

<http://www.interfacejournal.net/2009/01/river-of-life-learning-and.html>