

Social movement learning: a contemporary re-examination
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If you want flowers you must have flowers, roots and all, unless you are satisfied, as many people are satisfied, with flowers made from paper and tinsel. And if you want education you must not cut it off from the social interests in which it has its living and perennial sources. (Richard Tawney, 1926, Address to the Workers' Educational Association)

Welcome to this bumper special issue on social movement learning which, we believe, makes a timely and important contribution to the literature on the subject by exploring and articulating the links between adult learning and movements for progressive change.

From the Arab Spring, to the democracy demonstrations in Spain, the new student movement in Chile and student and public sector mobilisation against welfare cuts in the UK, there are emerging signs and stories of public disquiet and unrest, new citizen action and social movement activity, which are questioning the hegemony of 'there is no alternative'. Not surprisingly interest in social movements, their formation, growth and ways of working, is growing within the academic world and research can help inform the practice and activities of these movements. The study of social movements has never attracted such a level of interest since the late 1960s and the mid 1980s. Unlike the academic writing that emerged during this period however, the contemporary academic social movement scene is experiencing a growing number of scholars, from the 'majority world' and the Global North who are looking at the learning dimensions of social movements (see <http://www.interfacejournal.net/>). Many of these are 'engaged scholars' who are linked to local, regional or global movements themselves. Social movement learning, which has to some extent always been part of the radical tradition of adult education, is now attracting new and more sophisticated analyses, new research and new forms of expression and academic engagement.

This special issue of Studies features what we believe is a stimulating mix of established scholars and newer voices. It features genuine diversity in terms of the range of social movement represented, the theoretical resources and interests which are drawn on, the research approaches and methods that have been utilised and the geographical scope of movements, their constituencies, and the aims they seek to achieve.

It may seem patently obvious that movements move people, but the important point is that they do so in concerted ways and the knowledge they create, and the learning that occurs, is critical to this mobilisation. The distinction between 'learning in movements' and 'learning from movements' draws attention to different types of learning, through participation in movement activity and to the wider public education that is often critical to achieving social movement goals. This distinction is very evident in a number of the articles in this issue. Moreover, included in these pieces are fundamental challenges to theoretical orthodoxies, such as the often used dichotomy between 'old' and 'new' social movements and the dominance of euro-centric theorising in the face of emerging subaltern voices from the vast numbers of people living on the periphery of the economy and society.

In the first article, John D. Holst rehearses the case for moving beyond the 'old' and 'new' social movement framework. Historically, the direction of development for movements was captured in the term 'old social movement' (OSM), which largely referred to the labour movement and the goals of a socialist ideology. The rise of 'new social movements' (NSMs), around issues of identity politics and recognition questioned the central role of OSMs in the politics of social change. Whilst these distinctions are still useful they are also problematic in a number of ways. Holst argues that the rise of new social subjects, whose lives are played out in poverty and destitution and who inhabit the growing number of city slums across the globe are articulating demands to be included in society and this presents a fundamental challenge to the existing social order. The emergence of new social subjects overlaps with the constituencies typified by the OSM/NSM dichotomy but is not captured by the politics or associated pedagogies of either. These new social forces require new theorising, and new pedagogies for engaging with them. This is the challenge for socially purposeful adult education in the 21st century.

Indicative of these new social subjects, Dip Kapoor bases his article on research with Adivasi/dalit social movements in India. He argues that theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding social movements and social movement learning that originate in the global North are insufficient for understanding how these subaltern movements function. He calls for attention to the emergence of subaltern intellectuals whose scholarship and activism are linked to these and other movements. He notes for example, the dependence on Marxist and neo-Marxist frameworks in the global North compared to the deep spiritual-material knowledge which characterises the Adivasi movements. Readers will be interested in his work with the newly established Centre for Research and Development Solidarity in Orissa, India.

From the African continent, Jonathan Langdon's article is based on a participatory research project that focuses on how people in Ghanaian movements of the disenfranchised have been learning to transform the democratic terrain in Ghana over the past 15 years. His article addresses the power of a series of demonstrations that represented the most significant challenge faced by the military-turned-civilian Ghanaian ruler, Jerry Rawlings. According to one of the participants in the study, "the greatest amount of learning happens in these concentrated moments of struggle". As people learn it is possible to challenge what seemed unchallengeable, even as they also learn the practical processes of making this happen. He also notes the ambiguity of the social movement learning that obscures the role of politics in social movement processes and the nature of leadership.

Straddling the overlap between old social movement politics and those of 'new social subjects', David Meek's article takes us to Brazil and specifically, to the Landless Workers movement whose struggles were based in bringing about alternative land allocation policy and practice. As perhaps the most successful social movement in Brazil's history, many of the pedagogical strategies used have been analysed extensively. However, Meek takes us beyond these by using a content analysis approach to explore twenty-five years of the movement's journal, the *Jornal Sem Terra* (JST), to show how this radical social medium, with its implicit pedagogical strategy, is invaluable in terms of continuing to educate and

motivate workers long after the initial struggles that gave birth to the movement have ended. Moreover, as a process of political education, JST helps to actualise what Gramsci called the 'war of position' – the continual creation of new identities, new subjectivities and a new society.

Still in Latin American, but with a prime focus on the role of old social movement concerns, Manuel Larrabure, Marcelo Vieta and Daniel Schugurensky draw attention to the knowledge and learning that occur in the emergence of the socialist production movements in Venezuela and the worker run enterprises in Argentina. They argue that these examples represent a 'new co-operative movement' that has more egalitarian practices than the older co-operative movements. The 'new co-operatism' they note involve stronger links to their surrounding communities and other social movements than previous co-operative enterprises. In a world which badly needs alternatives to the dominance of neoliberal values and the polarisation of poverty and wealth, within and between societies, how people learn to create values-based and socially just economic structures is of critical importance.

John Grayson's article documents the role of 'learning in' and 'learning from' the broad coalitions between activists and organisations from old and new social movements, and community and faith groups, which have come together in the struggle to support asylum seekers and refugees struggling against deportation and poverty. The context of the research is Sheffield in the UK, an old industrial heartland of social democratic politics that has been transformed through processes of deindustrialisation and migration, which have been the background to the emergence of a 'common sense racism'. In opposition to this, the contribution of 'teach ins' and educational work at Northern College and in community groups, has been an integral part of anti-deportation movement activity, public education programmes and collective self-education. Based on committed, 'activist research', and a popular education approach, the aim is to produce movement relevant knowledge and to rehistoricise social movement theory by locating it in the political culture of a specific place.

The focus of Peter Rule's article is the new social movements addressing HIV and AIDS and the disability movements in Uganda, Zambia and South Africa. Drawing on nation wide case study research he examines the possibilities of a learning dialogue between these movements and identifies strategic directions for making linkages to address these stigmatised identities. As people with disabilities are more vulnerable to infection from HIV and AIDS, and are often ignored in mainstream education campaigns, then the role of social movements in educating the wider public is critical. On the other hand, people experiencing illness from living with HIV and AIDS may require support from disability organisations as a result of their illness. The potential for learning between these movements to advance their common interests is therefore significant.

Our final two papers draw on 'new' social movement developments and raise critical concerns about the theorising of knowledge and learning in social movements. Rick Flowers and Elaine Swan from Australia base their concerns on how knowledge is constructed in the analysis of social movement learning and environmental adult education,

by focussing on food social movements. Although food-related social movements take different forms, they argue that knowledge about food and the politics of this knowledge is at the centre of these movements. Their analysis focuses on the film *Food Inc.*, an important activist resource and documentary film about a particular social movement. The authors identify how the film legitimates certain forms of knowledge about food production and consumption and de-legitimizes others. Whilst a useful case study on knowledge and film activism in itself, the article seeks to challenge what the authors see as some key tenets about knowledge in social movement learning literature.

Małgorzata Zielińska, Piotr Kowzan and Magdalena Prusinowska present us with an interesting and open account based on reflections and research amongst a small group of students at the University of Gdansk. Their work addresses the kinds of learning that took place when students began to organise and object to the introduction of a wall as well as additional security measures on their campus. Transferrable knowledge and skills from experience in other social movements helped the students to organise and articulate their demands as well as act in ways that sought to educate the wider public. Whilst the students gained some notable concessions from the university management the authors question to what extent significant change really occurred. Moreover, learning in the process was not straightforward and sometimes resulted in a few students learning, unintentionally, that change is limited or unlikely. In this way, the authors seek to underline the sometimes confusing and contradictory nature of learning in struggle.

We welcome your own reading of these pieces and your contributions to the growing body of scholarship on social movement learning.