

# Educazione Democratica

“ A scuola il bambino si adatta all'idea che la paura sia uno stato d'animo normale e che l'intera vita debba essere vissuta nel timore della disapprovazione, del castigo, dell'esclusione.

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## Adult Education and Social Movements: perspectives from Freire and beyond

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Change and reform of the political and social order have often been key priorities for a number of adult educators, though certainly not all of them. Indeed, we often come across people who frequently see their role in the academy and in the community as educating and learning for change, or what many would associate, albeit romantically at times, with social movement learning. Building in part on Griff Foley's work (1999), Budd Hall and Darlene Clover (2005) note that this social movement learning can be acquired informally as when citizens are directly engaged in protesting logging in Clayoquot Sound in British Columbia, Canada (Walter 2007), or directly when they are trained to monitor elections in South Africa. A classic historical case, with respect to the latter, would be Myles Horton's Highlander Folk School in Tennessee with its links with the miners of Wilder and later the civil rights movement and the training it provided for some of its important leaders and figures such as Rosa Parks (Horton & Freire, 1990). There are those who would argue that social movement learning can also occur incidentally and also more deliberately when engaged in mass protest action, as when citizens in Tunisia in 2011, perhaps spurred by the digitally-mediated protests for democracy and the immolation of a young

unemployed person who could not take the authorities' affronts to his personal dignity any longer, took to the streets. They learned the power of collective action and resistance to corrupt regimes. This was the prelude to other uprisings in the Arab world in which digitally savvy youth played a prominent role stimulating the imagination of some to such an extent that there has been talk of the makings of a «Pan-Arab youth movement». In each case, some aspects of adult learning and teaching are involved and the cause of social change is advanced. Protest movements have been occurring in many parts of the world and the jury is still out on whether the people involved constitute a social movement. We will come to this later, revealing the voices of participants themselves in this issue and on the learning taking place. What complicates the issue of what constitutes a social movement is that movements differ according to contexts. One must be wary of the fact that western models of social movements and their learning are often brought to bear on the analysis of people coming together in action for change or survival in non-western contexts. This is another point which will be highlighted in this canvas that will be characterised by broad brushstrokes given the very expansive nature of the topic. Breadth rather than depth is being aimed for in this paper, which draws inspiration from Freire and other critical pedagogues, and we do not claim to cover the entire field which strikes us as being enormous.

### *Disenchantment with the political class?*

That learning becomes part of a movement's work, whether deliberately so or incidentally, is understandable. Of course, the question is: what form does this learning take? In many places, notably but not only western societies, citizens have often expressed their disenchantment with political parties as elected representatives fail to deliver on their election promises. The great hope generated by such governments often turns into disappointment once they are elected (see Baierle in Borg & Mayo 2007; Giroux 2010). As Brazilians kept telling us soon after Lula's election as President of Brazil in 2003, too much is probably expected of these governments before and immediately after they are elected. Witness Sergio Baierle from the Brazilian NGO CIDADE talking about Lula's PT (Partido Trabalhadores-Worker's Party) government during his first term as President:

If the national PT [*he draws a distinction between the national and municipal PT*] is still a party that is committed to socialism is something that has to be shown. Besides, the Lula government has not opted for a government with a strong PT character, rather the creation of a great alliance with the most varied sectors of national politics with a view to returning to pure and simple economic growth. From this point onward the central axis of the government is a search for governance. Up to recently this search for governance was presented as a conjuncture based on the economic difficulties the country faced early in its mandate. But by now, when almost half the mandate has been reached and considering the maintenance of a continuity with the policies of the previous government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso it is more difficult to maintain that macroeconomic conservativeness is just a tactical move and that further on we will have a strategic turn around. On the

contrary, what appears each time truer is the irreversibility of conservatism, as though new doors were closed at each concession to the international financial system (Baierle, in Borg & Mayo 2007, 146-147).

The same applied to the Blair government in the UK, Zapatero's in Spain and later Obama's US Presidency where, for instance, many of the educational policies associated with the G.W. Bush era, such as the «no child left behind» program, have been maintained (Giroux 2010). Some would reveal the frustration of having witnessed too many «false dawns» and all too frequent collusion of government with transnational corporations and trade regulating organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Exposure of corruptive practices in various countries, as with *tangentopoli* in Italy in the early 1990s, continued to portray political parties in a bad light. More recently, there has been disenchantment with the political class in Greece by citizens of the same country raging in the streets and squares against the «debtocracy». There is the sight of parties that were traditionally socialist turning to the centre or possibly the right with neoliberalism proving hegemonic since it is embraced by both sides of the political spectrum (Mayo 1999). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2003) argue that, despite their presence at the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre in 2002, social democratic forces from various countries have difficulty in advancing their cause and in forming alliances with other groups given that capitalism and exploitation have unbounded repressive authority and continue to control political parties.

The disenchantment with leftist, especially social democratic, parties in the West and elsewhere can easily lead to faith in social movements as organizations which apply pressure, combat co-optation (though not always) and are often perceived to provide the freedom and non-hierarchical mode of operation not found in political parties, although there is often a great divide between the rhetoric and reality in this regard. The purported attributes of social movements might very well be «talked up». One wonders whether social movements have been perceived to constitute an alternative to the «defeated left» as a result of the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Is the invocation of social movements an appeal to a *deus ex machina*? Are they the present day political prophets that need to be invoked, just like those other prophets that Max Weber (2001) invoked, in a different context, at the end of *The Protestant Ethic* when he sought a way out of the «iron cage»?

### *Internal dissension and hierarchy*

There is also the issue of internal dissension within these movements, and within the non-profit organizational realm generally, where insufficient resources are the norm and internal conflict results (English 2006, 2007). All too often, as these organizations and social movements expand, they take on the organizational structures and attendant issues of the groups they are resisting. One thinks of Greenpeace, which has grown to such a level that splinter groups have formed and some within the environmental movement openly resist its destructive tactics.

Yet, social movements generally are perceived, possibly imagined and represented, as being less hierarchical than traditional political organizations such as political parties. The exception is trade unions, often regarded as forming part of a larger «old» social movement, the labour movement, which can become very hierarchical. Traditionally, social movements focused on specific issues and allowed room for popular participation as with the growth of feminism, especially in its third wave phase. This phase, which arose in the 1990s partly as a means of recruiting younger women, allows for quite a diversity of expressions often to the very absurd point that even a Madonna or a Lady Gaga would be considered «feminist». Of course such an open door policy for feminism causes struggles for those second wave feminists who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s when women were paid less, allowed less access to jobs and careers, and had to fight for the right to be mothers and paid workers. Clearly, social movements comprise a variety of organisations and individuals.

### *Inspirational figures*

Because of the above attributes and their often declared emphasis on popular participation, dialogue, conscientisation and *denúncia-anúncio*, it has often been argued (Mayo 1993) that social movements focusing on social justice issues can draw inspiration from a number of inspirational figures, men and women, including Paulo Freire (the MST regards him as inspirational alongside Che Guevara), Simone de Beauvoir (there has been a women's organisation in Spain named after her),<sup>1</sup> Vandana Shiva, Rosa Parks, Mira Behn and others. These other figures are legion and depending on one's intellectual influences, race, gender, class and geographical location, the particular influence will vary. Within adult education, we would, once again, single out Gramsci from among these figures and for a specific purpose.

One cannot talk about social movements without mentioning Gramsci's treatment of the concept of *hegemony* which is actually a Greek concept that was used by others before and during Gramsci's time. Gramsci uses hegemony frequently, even though he never provides a systematic exposition of the concept (Borg, Buttigieg, & Mayo 2002). In our view, one of the best definitions of Hegemony, used in the Gramscian sense, is provided by the Canadian sociologist David W. Livingstone, recently retired from OISE/University of Toronto. He defines hegemony as: «a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are....supportive of a single class» or group (Livingstone 1976, 235). It is through the control of one group by another, often through a complex web of relationships and ideas, that hegemony takes root, even though, hegemony is characterised by negotiation and renegotiation and is therefore rarely settled.

### *Globalisation*

In an interview with Roger Dale and Susan Robertson (Dale & Robertson 2004, 148), Boaventura de Sousa Santos talks of two kinds of globalisation. He refers to «hegemonic globalisation», used in a manner that renders this term akin to that of «globalisation from above» (Marshall 1997), and «counter-hegemonic globalisation» (or «globalisation from below») to use the more popular phrase since we refuse to subscribe to the binary opposition that the term counter-hegemony, avoided by Gramsci, suggests). The first type of globalisation is that which the more progressive, social justice-oriented social movements are presented in the literature as having to confront. The second provides the context for international networking among these movements. We would argue that the two are to be seen as existing in a dialectical relationship. The former seeks to enhance its dynamism by drawing on the latter (appropriating an oppositional discourse as part of gradual renewal – e.g., today’s oppositional or revolutionary figure becomes tomorrow’s commercial icon). On the other hand, as Foucault wrote, there can be no power without resistance but this resistance is never external to the power structure itself. Resistance groups of different ideological orientation use the instruments of globalisation to get their message across, mobilise, recruit, and strike.

Hegemonic globalisation is characterised by the following features, among others:

Mobility of capital and labour not occurring on a level playing field; the presence of multiple regional markets and the occurrence of fast-paced economic and financial exchange; increasing privatisation and therefore the ideology of the marketplace; the dismantling of the welfare state and re-mantling of the state to create the infrastructure for investment and mobility, develop the necessary human resources and exert a policing role. The last mentioned task entails controlling what goes on within and on the country’s borders through the presence of, once again, a «carceral state» (Giroux 2004) – surveillance techniques, prisons, and immigrant detention centres. The United States’ use of a detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is an example of a widely accepted prison system that serves to intimidate, publically humiliate, and physically and mentally defeat the enemy.

### *Neoliberalism*

The underlying ideology of this type of globalisation – hegemonic globalisation – is neoliberalism which owes its origins to such economists as Milton Friedman and which had its trial run in the Pinochet-dictatorship governed Chile in the 70s. It made its way there via the Chicago Boys, students of Friedman who worked in the Ministry of Economic Development. Neoliberal globalisation is referred to by progressives as the «empire», in Hardt and Negri’s (2000) terms, an empire «built and maintained» by the IMF, The World Bank, the WTO, «corporations, banks and the Group of Eight» and sustained by the «Washington Consensus» (Ponniah & Fisher 2003, 6-7). So powerful are these groups that even nation states bow down to them. When the G20 met in Toronto, Canada in the summer of 2010 there were unprecedented attacks on protestors. The powers of the police were extended beyond all reasonable limits to allow brutality and persecution of those who opposed the multilateral economic organization.

## *Globalisation from below*

«Globalisation from below» includes the work of progressive social movements and NGOs, including the efforts of the anti-globalisation movements in such places as Seattle, Davos, Genoa, and Chiapas. It particularly includes the work of those who manifestly oppose the institutions of hegemonic globalisation (the World Economic Forum, the WTO and the Breton Woods institutions, namely the IMF and the World Bank). They include movements and organisations that actively participate in the World Social Forum (Fisher & Ponniah 2003) and its regional offshoots such as the Mediterranean Social Forum. Porto Alegre, Brazil seems to be, nowadays, the spiritual home of those social movements who have met there to form part of the «movement of movements» (Hardt & Negri 2003; OSAL & CLACSO 2003) or the «network of networks». In this city, well known for its participatory budget that entails citizenship learning, a «new internationalism» was said to be born (Hardt & Negri, xvii). This coming together of social movements, including the trade union movement, was hailed by Hardt and Negri to represent the «beginning of the democracy of the multitude» (Hardt & Negri, xix).

Among the many movements worldwide inspired by the World Social Forum, we would find the MST, which has a following in places outside Brazil (e.g. Italy, see Stédile & Fernandes 2001), the Living Democracy movement in India (see Shiva 2003, 120-124), the feminist, LGBTQ, environmental and «justice in trade» movements and those movements interacting internationally to put pressure on governments to comply with Millennium Development Goals and to make good on their one time promise, in the early 1970s, to reserve 0.7% of their GDP for international aid. The list is not exhaustive.

International networking, as a form of «globalisation from below», often entails using technology for counter-hegemonic ends and might also involve learning ICT, public speaking and project promotion skills. This is an important aspect of learning within movements that also involves advocacy skills, learning effective publicity approaches and how to follow up on issues, identifying the right spaces and persons. Learning also involves acquiring digital skills for ease of communication. Some challenge NAFTA by making radically progressive use of the Internet for social justice ends, with all the educational and consciousness raising ramifications this has. They wage an «Internet war» as in the case of the Frente and Ejercito Zapatista in Chiapas or in the democracy uprising in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011 which sought to end decades of oppression from President Mubarak and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali respectively.

## *Protest movements as social movements?*

To what extent are the protest movements we have witnessed recently in Europe and North Africa to be considered social movements? Once again we should not define movements according to set templates or models. This is what a protestor in Tahrir Square, Cairo, said in an email exchange with us, after she took part in the January 28th (The Friday of Rage) and July 8<sup>th</sup> 2011 protests, the second major violent clash between protesters and police forces<sup>2</sup>.

What is currently happening in Egypt is not clear. I cannot call it a movement yet. What happened in January was a whole country saying «That's Enough!». Overthrowing the Government and the President was a decision we all agreed on. Once that was done, people are not sure how to move and in what direction. In that sense, we are faced with groups of people trying to take advantage of this new freedom by trying to stir people in a certain direction, those are the Muslim Brotherhood, or the Salafis, or the SCAF. We can see people taking advantage of the lack of trust in the police forces, and the lack of police forces to begin with, they do so by breaking traffic laws, by attacking the police, by bombing churches and using weapons. We see the former regime trying to create chaos among the protestors, by sneaking thugs in the middle of the protests to start riots and fights, and make people lose trust in the revolution and in the protestors. Finally, we see the majority of the population struck by all this chaos surrounding them, confused by how the values of the 18 days of the revolution have disappeared completely and have been replaced with violence and hatred. A lot of people are trying to get organized into groups and decide on the direction in which to go, but for the most part the majority of the population is frustrated to find that what happened several months ago was as though it never did. People now are divided in how they feel towards this revolution, many are too afraid of the future and of the chaos taking place now, that they feel we should stop all this nonsense. People are good at judging the actions of others and not taking any action themselves.

While this cannot be a fully representative view, it does raise questions as to whether this is just a protest outburst or something having a long term future in terms of a movement. North Africa does not have a strong social movement tradition. And yet she believes learning is taking place:

The majority of Egyptians have broadened their political awareness and knowledge considerably during these times. They have learned how to organize themselves during protests and how to secure their neighborhoods. They have learned to defend themselves against attacks, and how to build homemade weapons. I can't say they have fully learned how to put their differences aside, and that seems to be the main weakness the former regime is playing on to separate the protestors and destroy the revolution. We unfortunately are yet to learn democracy, and how to allow others to have a different opinion from ours.

If I speak for myself, I have learned that it is possible for change to occur, and that sitting back and being passive is a means of self destruction. I have learned that it is our duty to support those who demand their rights, even if we don't face the same problems they do. I have learned that our generation is more assertive and determined than our parents, and that we owe our children what our parents did not do for us. I have also learned that even if 80 million people have the same intention and aim, if they do not learn to put their

differences aside and accept each other the same, they will forever be divided. I feel like what is happening inside Egypt is very similar to what has been happening within the Middle East, countries divided over trivial differences, each worth less alone. Most importantly for me, I have learned not to underestimate someone who seems of lower status, or of lower education. They are not all ignorant, and they are not all useless. They are the masses that made this happen.

.... I believe learning is definitely taking place, as we discuss and question and explore topics we never thought we could talk about, not because we were not allowed to, but because we never thought there was a point to discuss them. We are learning more about our history, and the similarities and differences between the current and last revolution. We are learning about the history and circumstances of the other Arab countries, and why our revolution is more or less successful than others. We are learning to speak with different types of people, we are trying to learn not to judge others, because we can see how this is used as a means to divide us and make us weaker. As I said, we still have to learn about democracy, and about accepting one another's opinion.

Once again, internal divisions can prove the undoing of this protest movement in terms of a long term pro-democracy movement intended to bring corrupt leaders to book and introduce economic reforms. The emailer states that the protests called for an end to the corruption, the resignation of the Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the end to police brutality (quite a well known occurrence in Egypt), the raising of the minimum wage, and a balance between prices and wages. This student, also took part in the July 8th protest («The Revolution First» Friday). The participants demanded the prosecution of all the corrupt heads in the former government, and the prosecution of all those in the police force who were involved in killing and injuring peaceful protesters. They also clamoured for a faster response and action, concerning democratic reforms, from the government and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). These will remain important targets, possibly taking on different hues but which concern such important issues as end to repression and better democratic representation, the integration of a greater sector of the population into the economy and bringing people who abuse of power to book. Can the protestors organise themselves as a movement with a long life of action ahead and connect with their brothers and sisters in Tunisia, Yemen and other parts of the Arab world? She warns: «What is happening is not consistent among the arab world. There is a message of defiance across the Arab Countries, but it does not mean the message will be accepted or followed through. Some countries will not be as lucky as Egypt and Tunisia, and as for those two countries, we are not sure we will end up with what we asked for. It is too early to tell at this point». Is this a spontaneous activity which lacks conscious direction in the sense indicated by Gramsci: *spontaneità e direzione consapevole?*

Others involved in protest movements in Europe such as Greece, in relation to the «debtocracy», the huge debts incurred causing huge bailouts from countries of the EU and austerity measures adopted with deleterious effects on social life, are more optimistic in terms of forming part of a social movement. A Greek activist, currently following events from abroad, talked about the «indignados», the term used for those protesting the «debtocracy» in Greece. Asked whether he sees a movement being born, he responded:



Yes, I think that there is a genuine desire for change that demands a new relation between the state and the individuals as well as the state and society at large. I think that the movement of the indignants adjusts itself with the movements in the south of Europe and Northern Africa that demand democratic reforms, the restoration of moral values in the political field and economic justice. (Greek activist 1)

Another Greek protestor, in an email exchange, agrees:

I'd say yes. Before all these, most people in Greece were not interested in protesting. There were always some million people doing this but they were not as many as they are today. Today, on the other hand, there are more and more people admiring these protests, not believing what the TV says (that protesters are somehow terrorists...), and on many cases, joining the protesters on the streets. I never saw families on the streets but they are [*there*] now. (That's good even though they protest against the Greek Government and not against the whole Capitalism problem...) (Greek activist 2)

He describes the movement thus:

There are many groups of people on these protests: There are families that speak against the Greek Prime Minister (they scream at the Parliament or creating Help Groups / Radio stations / Medical Care Centers for other protesters), there are anarchists that speak against the main Politics and Economies in a global base (they often use violence against Greek Police which is extremely violent of course, they often try to organize neighbourhoods, produce free or cheap stuff, they protect people from violent police arrests or bail them out of prison, they organise neighbourhood talks so that the people can understand that they can give the Big Answer to the Big Problem, they give lessons (eg English / Photography / Mathematics lessons) for free to other people so that Greeks stop using money as much as they can to change the whole economy, and many many more actions). There are also other groups of protestors that agree or disagree with much of the stuff above and choose to participate in the demonstrations in a non-violent way, just to show that there are many people protesting. (Greek activist 2)

They have not ruled out a future as a movement and believe that there is a certain amount of learning taking place. As for the long term future of such a potential movement, this is what they have to say:

The movement in my opinion is mostly a platform that provides the opportunity for politicization and radicalization. It has contributed a belief in large parts of the society that the main responsibility for the crisis belongs to the monetary system and the banks and not to the people. I cannot say if it will continue as the «indignant movement» since its social and political identity was precarious as well as its political affiliations. But I'm sure that there's a future for some movement for two reasons: the social consequences of the austerity package that marginalizes various social groups and a resistant discourse that is gaining roots in the Greek society. The autumn of 2011 will be hot. (Greek activist 1)

As for learning, the comments of the Greek activists are revealing:

Learning comes in a better way when you experience things. So joining these activities is an experience that will help you learn faster. That doesn't mean that you learn nothing if you don't protest... You could, but I must say that TV journalists and politicians could persuade with lies...

...If by «nonformal learning activities» you mean free skills lessons (eg English / Art / Guitar lessons), or Defense practices (for protests), or Economic/Political discussions about the Greek or the Global System etc, then Yes, there are some of those right now in Greece. There was always stuff like that happening but now, more and more people are participating in them. (Greek activist 2)

Yes I think that people have the chance to teach each other things they know about the debt crisis, but also

transfer experience at different levels, like street politics, information about the functioning of the state and so on. This is definitely an educational activity for the younger generation that only enters politics and needs to form a political practice. What is known theory turns now to concrete examples through the narratives of the older and embodied experiences. Therefore it gets contextualized, connected to the continuum of the political experience in the country and leads to the subjective consciousness of the groups involved. (Greek activist 1)

Both see the protests as focused on something larger which is capitalism itself and its concomitant contemporary ideology, neoliberalism. «On the one hand, there's this huge debt that Greeks are unable to pay, and not even theirs to pay. Personally, I'd say this movement is more about political changes in general. It's about saying No to Capitalism, to money itself etc, to the core of all these problems that are not only "Greek" problems but global consciousness problems... I mean, would this huge amount of Greek Debt exist if Capitalism wasn't there? This system itself, lets you use money as a product, it created money out of nowhere, money that does not exist but you have to buy/pay to make it exist on papers... So, I think it's doomed to fall and what you see in Greece (and Portugal etc) today, is what you'll see tomorrow in France, Germany or anywhere else in the world». (Greek activist 2)

Elsewhere in Europe, other protests have been taking place. Apart for the student uprisings in Italy and England in connection with university cuts, several protests occurred earlier in the central part of the continent in what was once the heart of the Austrian Empire (Vienna and Budapest). As two activists connected with the Green Party in Vienna commented, the idea of whether this had the making of a social movement is something to be explored. In an email they had this to say about the «unibrennt» (university burns) protests:

Sit ins/ squattings were concentrated in Austrian and German Universities, but there have been some in Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, France, the UK... as well. Social movement? It very much depends on the definition of social movement you want to apply. To us two factors should be present: First of all a plurality of themes/demands that have broader implications for society. And second the involvement of several/ different

social groups. In Austria we tend to give protests the name «social movement» quite quickly... because Austria lacks a long tradition of social movements. Considering our definition, there are certain characteristics of movements to be found in the protest of 2009. By Austrian standards, many people participated. It spread quickly from town to town and even crossing national borders [*protesting students in Budapest stopped a train carrying ministers to a meeting in Austria*]. There were not just students involved, also university teachers, kindergarten teachers, homeless people and people showing solidarity. But the majority were students. Attempts to work together with unions failed... so the social basis remained quite homogeneous. The topics addressed by the movement were not reduced to issues of higher education politics. This would indicate a social movement... The short period of existence of «uni brennt» is hard to evaluate. In Austria, most of the movements which had existed did have an explosive start, followed by a sudden breakdown. The last movement which could mobilize over some time was the beginning of the green movement, which led to the foundation of the Green Party in the 80s. The squatting in Austria lasted for a couple of months and was followed by attempts at transnational networking as well as a big conference in March 2009 that again mobilized people. Since then the mobilization declined but still several groups (some of them founded as a result of *uni brennt*) are politically engaged and active. (Austrian activists 1 & 2, female and male respectively)

The focus on the neoliberal reforms affecting the university is a common theme in Europe at the moment and there is some movement in Greece also since there are protests against the neoliberalisation of the universities there. The wider issues referred to in Austria are connected with Neoliberalism. The two people we exchanged email with explain the learning outcome thus:

[I] want to emphasise the learning about alliances and different logic of organizations. My involvement in the protest movement allowed me to experience social contradictions much more directly than ever before and in the discussions with the others I was able to make the contradictions more clear and name them. Especially questions of gender (in) equality and the reality of being a woman within the current society. [activist 2] is making an important point when he states that «We will have higher educational degrees than our parents, but we will never attain their standard of living». To many of us the involvement in the movement made this much clearer as it became obvious that «it's not just me but many of my generation» who have these problems. Individual failure was transformed into a new class consciousness. Not for everybody, but some of us which might be important for further struggles and our moves in the coming years. I also learned about the power of a group or the involvement in a group. The positive emotions one has by being engaged and share some political thoughts, conduct joined rituals (like songs), and challenge the existing order together. The squatting offered open space that suddenly made things possible and thinkable. The future suddenly opened up and much more was thinkable. This gives you such a good feeling.... Also a lot of informal learning took place during the engagement in the struggles. Parts of it remained unconscious to the learners, others they were well aware of. For example the writing of press notes, speeches, leaflets. Or the acting in working groups, the organization in the streets, discussions on strategic moves and alliances... even though some of these

informal learning aspects were well planned/aimed for the activists, they were not the center of the activities but a positive side effect (Activist 1)

[I learned] That it's crucial that movements manage to transform the time structure of «events» (in which they mostly start to exist) and become more compatible to everyday life / or create practices to reorganize/transform everyday life. This way they can gain continuity without necessarily being absorbed by institutions. This triangle everyday life/movement/organization and institution must be kept dynamic.

At the same time I learned about the field we were fighting in (educational field, university), and the counterparts we were fighting against (university government, ministry of education, EU ministers/ commission,) I learned a lot about building alliances. Logics of power of different organization types (e.g. trade unions in collective bargaining, Parties in the parliamentary system, movements, left sectarianism,)

There was some kind of collective learning/ consciousness development... there have been a lot of activities: Founding of a student self organized university, a counter-meeting of activists from all over Europe when EU-ministers met in Vienna... Reading circles, students published several texts and books on topics of the movement and on the movement itself. (Activist 2)

Once again, issues related to capitalism and neoliberalism are at the heart of the protest movements discussed in Europe thus far and these often necessitate what are normally referred to as an «adjectival education» concerning related areas such as citizenship, development, political economy and so forth (see Vincent Caruana, in Borg & Mayo 2007). And it would not be amiss to state that in many ways, these were protests against the effects of hegemonic globalization which include the restructuring of education and universities and availability or otherwise of jobs. It would be worth repeating the point Activist 1 attributed to Activist 2: «We will have higher educational degrees than our parents, but we will never attain their standard of living». The concern is with the current stage of capitalism and its jobs crisis – there are few jobs, once regarded as middle class (i.e. what was regarded as a middle class standard of living), available on a global scale.

### *Against capitalism and neoliberalism; dangers of western generalisations*

The reaction to neoliberal globalisation varies even among those movements fighting for greater social justice. And the Gramscian question regarding whether this is just a spontaneous action without conscious direction (*direzione consapevole*) remains a pertinent one. We need here to refer back to the important point made at the outset of the paper and which has been emphasized by Kapoor (2009) and others with regard to the dangers of overgeneralising when writing about movements and using western categories to define all kinds of movements. When discussing Subaltern Social Movements (SSMs) in places in the South, such models do not necessarily hold. He argues:

Often ecological NSMs (*new social movements*) and GSMs (*global social movements*) contradict SSM politics, as the former speak from the relative security of their remote urban locations (consuming resources «here» while aiming to «protect nature over there», while disregarding the contradictory plight of subalterns «in nature over there»).

In this context, SSMs differ since they speak and operate from the margins of the state, market and even civil society (the term here used in the contemporary manner and not the Gramscian sense). Their action is prompted, or rather necessitated, by the precariousness and immediate suffering caused by their dispossession and the destruction of their own habitat by the encroaching forces of capitalist globalisation, which is a reflection of something fundamental and older. As Fanon (1963, in Kapoor 2009) indicated, the opulence of the west has been built on the backs of (including exterminated backs) of a number of subaltern enslaved (in many ways) people, too numerous to mention. Kapoor cites one of the largest peasant, indigenous and landless people's networks in this regard, the *Via Campesina*: «We believe that the new agrarian reform must include a cosmic vision of the territories of communities of peasants, the landless, indigenous peoples, rural workers, fisherfolk, nomadic pastoralists, tribal afro-descendants, ethnic minorities, and displaced peoples, who base their work on the production of food and who maintain a relationship of respect and harmony with Mother Earth and the oceans». (*Via Campesina* 2006, cited in Kapoor 2009, 71).

### *Southern movements: commonalities and differences*

This has wider implications for our understanding of social movements who are variegated according to contexts. Movements in the South are as variegated as those in the North and so one must be wary of essentialism when describing characteristics. The distinction between OSMs (old social movements, including labour movements) and NSMs (new social movements such as the environmental, gay/lesbian movements) is very much one which has its roots in a western vision of things which would not necessarily apply to say SSMs in India and elsewhere who need to be spared such categorisation for a number of reasons. The list of SSMs cannot be exhaustive and would include the MST, the Ejercito Zapatistas, the Chipko and Adivasi movements in India, the Ogoni movement in Nigeria, the Greenbelt women's movement in Kenya, the San people of the Kalahari in South Africa (Kapoor 2009, 77), Maori, aborigines and First Nations movements and, we would add, movements of dispossessed Palestinians. Their main features include their loss of the means to reproduce their material existence, in rural ecological resource economies, through globalizing colonial dispossession. Their struggle also has a «specific mythico-religious» dimension since the people involved have spiritual and historic ties to a «physical and existential location» (Kapoor 2009, 79), and includes, among other things (see Kapoor 2009), the affirmation of citizenship as a basic human right and as the means to assert the sovereign right of minorities in the context of «pluri-national states as a precondition for protecting and sustaining peasant spaces». (Kapoor 2009, 81) They might strategically act in a variety of ways either as partners with political parties or different kinds of other movements or in concert with other SSMs. They might prove to be rather essentialist to realise their aims which

are inextricably intertwined with their quest for survival as human beings on planet earth. (Kapoor 2009)

This warning is extremely important when discussing and defining social movements and their learning patterns. This very much applies to the uprisings connected with the «Arab spring» where the concern in these Southern contexts is different from that of the dispossessed in say India, studied by Kapoor, including the already mentioned Adivasis, the dispossessed indigenous of India officially (state records) amounting to no fewer than 85 million<sup>3</sup>.

### *Reactionary movements*

The reaction to neoliberalism and hegemonic globalization can be different and involve different movements not of the kind heralded and possibly romanticized in the literature. Movements and organizations involved in such action, as part of an anti-neoliberal globalisation process, are not always progressive and are not always the sort that would be identified with Porto Alegre and the World Social Forum, possibly the protest movements in Europe and elsewhere. Globalisation of the hegemonic kind marginalizes all sorts of people and discourses, and the persons involved resort to different kinds of politics and actions. There are those organisations or movements, of a much different political orientation, who resort to religious fundamentalism (not to be equated with religion) or militant forms of religious beliefs such as Militant Islam or fundamentalist Catholicism and Protestantism («Bible-belt» type). The July 2011 tragedy of a mass killing in Norway, by a self-declared fundamentalist Christian and neo-Nazi sympathizer, is indicative of the extent to which such activists are prepared to go. *Al Qaeda* is one such movement which promotes and uses learning for terrorist activities, including learning and consciousness-raising through the Internet which also serves its purpose for the movement to recruit would-be terrorists. Religious fundamentalism has been of particular concern for the Association of Women in Development (Molina & Mier 2011) an organization which represents women's rights internationally. In a collection of 18 case studies of resistance, they highlight, for instance, what women's organizations in countries such as Mexico, Lithuania, Serbia and Bolivia did to resist and challenge oppressive religious forces. In Chiapas, Mexico, the organisation COLEM rose to the challenge of defending a woman who was falsely accused of adultery and who was subsequently expelled from her community, robbed of her house and livelihood, and then almost lost her children. COLEM used media, legal action and the discourse of human rights and a secular state to protest the injustice of fundamentalist religion. In making clear that they knew the law and their rights they were able to fight bigotry, fundamentalism, and the power of ignorance.

Others react to the loss of security, through the opening and liberalization of borders and the massive demographic shifts that globalisation entails, by retrenching into an ultra-nationalist and fascist politics resulting in racist and xenophobic movements against immigration, such as have occurred in many European nations including France and Holland. Vandana Shiva is particularly instructive in this regard:

Democracy emptied of economic freedom and ecological freedom becomes a potent breeding-ground for fundamentalism and terrorism. Over the past two decades, I have witnessed conflicts over development and over natural resources mutate into communal conflicts, culminating in extremism and terrorism. (Shiva 2003, 122)

### *Freire's appeal*

Critical pedagogues engaged in adult education notably Paulo Freire and those who derive inspiration from him, can easily appeal to the radical social justice side of social movements. Their focus is on education for social justice, and especially on the informal and non-formal learning that occurs in them (see Foley 1999). Freire certainly was a source of reference in workshops concerning the Vienna protests carried out by the Green Party's academy in Vienna in December 2010 for which activists who took part in the «unibrennt» actions were present; one of the two authors was a guest resource person for the workshop. Of course there are those who would reject Freire's approach owing to the directive nature of the teaching involved (Freire does not mince his words in this regard) which is often understood (misunderstood in our view) as a «top down» education and cultural invasion (see Prakash & Esteva 1998).

Critical pedagogues, including many feminists, stress the collective dimension of knowledge, the kind of knowledge sharing resulting from and contributing to the type of social solidarity and bonding that the more progressive social movements strive to promote. The perceived «less hierarchical» nature of the more progressive social movements lends itself to the kind of authentic dialogue that Freire and other critical pedagogues sought, with all the provisos and reservations just expressed. In many ways the second wave feminists of the 1970s and 1980s (Code 2000) saw a collective reflection and action process (praxis) as an integral part of their (now old) social movement. It was precisely within their group action that new ideas could be formed and alliances built. New social movements such as the western-based environmental movement also work through collectives that organize and strategize for change. Carole Roy's (2002, 2009) innovative work on the Raging Grannies highlights this type of collective action. The Grannies are a group of aged (predominantly middle class) women who dress as sweet old women and who sing subversive songs together in public places to promote environment and peace and to protest nuclear armament, war and environmental degradation. The shock of seeing them, along with the gaiety of their costumes and their musical parodies of popular songs, often disarm those they are protesting and makes them all the more effective (Hartocollis 2006).

While expertise can often be availed of within movements, the *authority* (Freire, in Freire & Macedo 1995, 378) that is bestowed on ethically committed experts should, according to a Freirean approach, not be allowed to degenerate into *authoritarianism* (see, for instance, Freire, in Shor & Freire 1987, 91; Freire in Horton & Freire 1990, 181; Freire 1994, 79). Yet, this is a difficult situation to contain. As organizations and movements increase in size, collective action tends to become more institutionalised and it is difficult to maintain a collective decision making

format. There is often a push and pull that causes both resentment and frustration, especially for those who were there at the beginning (Adams 2008).

### *State, Party and Movements*

Fully aware of the tensions that can result, Freire himself gave great prominence to progressive social movements in his work. He constantly exhorted educators to work not in isolation but in the context of social movements or an alliance of movements. Drawing on his own experience as Education Secretary in São Paulo, where he sought to bring state and movements closer, without one co-opting the other (movements were wary of this danger, as explained by O'Cadiz et al. 1998), he explored the potential relationship between party and movements. In a dialogue with academics from UNAM, he is on record as having said that the Workers' Party, of which he was a founding member, must learn from social movements without trying to take them over. If the Party does so, it will grow:

Today, if the Workers' Party approaches the popular movements from which it was born, without trying to take them over, the party will grow; if it turns away from the popular movements, in my opinion, the party will wear down. Besides, those movements need to make their struggle politically viable. (Freire, in Escobar et al. 1994, 40).

This insight is quite interesting given the criticism often levelled at social movement theorists, namely that they tend to ignore the role of the party, probably, as stated earlier, because of their disenchantment with parties. For instance, authors such as John Holst (2002, 112) have argued that social movement activists writing on the relevance of Antonio Gramsci's ideas for adult education tend to ignore the central role which Gramsci attributed to the Party (the Modern Prince) in the process of social transformation. Once again, however, contexts differ and while the notion of a party open to movements and/or their ideas makes sense in places such as Italy and Brazil (in the PT's formative years), this notion is difficult to sustain in places such as China and even the USA.

The kind of relationship which Freire calls for with regard to party and movements, and by implication, adult education work carried out in the context of this relationship<sup>4</sup>, might be considered problematic in light of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's strong reservations concerning social democratic parties, referred to earlier on in this paper. Yet, within many movements such as the women's movement there is at least some recognition that the movement keeps the organization going, and vice-versa (Ferree & Martin 1995).

### *Popular education: a movement?*



The extended reference to Brazil brings to mind an important education movement which is to be found not only in this large country but throughout Latin America and which has a long history (though taking different forms) elsewhere (Steele 2010). We are here referring to the Popular Education (Kane 2001) movement that is a strong popular social movement in Latin America. We would dare say that the popular education movement is nowadays an international movement, very strong in North America for instance where theatre groups like Headlines Theatre have been working with the community for several decades. Although currently associated with Latin America, popular education movements did exist in continents such as Europe, which can be dated back to the religious heresies of the Middle Ages but became well formed movements following the enlightenment, as Steele (2010) showed in a recent article. Popular education, involving nonformal education, finds its natural home in clandestine settings, in revolutionary contexts such as in Nicaragua after 1979 (Arnove 1986), in Christian Base Communities (CEBs) and, especially as far as first world countries are concerned, in some progressive social movements and organisations. The MST engages in popular education and is inspired by Freire (Kane 2001). Walters and Manicom (1996) have drawn attention to many such popular education movements in their now dated but useful edited collection *Gender in Popular Education*. They examine, for example, the role of participatory action research with factory workers in the Philippines and an empowerment educational process with impoverished women in Bombay. The themes that run through their case studies are resistance, learning and mutual support.

Critical pedagogues inspired by Freire and others of similar critical bent adopt a pedagogical approach that focuses on exploring the contradictions concealed by the dominant ideology. This is precisely the task which social justice oriented social movements claim or are said (by those who invoke them) to carry out, when raising awareness about the issues of oppression with which they are particularly concerned.

This type of pedagogy is meant to recognise the political nature of all educational activity, where the concern is with doing away with undemocratic social relations and replacing them with radically democratic ones. This is claimed to be the concern of most progressive and social justice oriented social movements. It is a pedagogy that challenges the bases of «legitimised» social relations. This approach and type of thinking should, in theory, apply to radically progressive and social justice oriented social movements.

### *Social movements as learning sites?*

It has been claimed that social movements are themselves learning sites (Foley 1999; Hall & Clover 2005, 2006; Welton 1993), and the comments from the Greek and Austrian activists explained to what extent they are learning sites in their specific contexts, in this case movements or potential movements situated in the West. There is a learning dimension to their work and that of the organisations they embrace. One learns through mobilisation, awareness raising activities, organising a campaign, teach-ins, marches, sit-ins or sit-outs, poster sessions, etc. One also learns through participation in a strike – the meaning of solidarity, issues concerning industrial

relations, negotiation strategies and so forth. Foley points particularly to the need for learning and unlearning. In his words: «the unlearning of dominant, oppressive ideology and discourses and the learning of oppositional, liberatory ones are central to processes of emancipatory action» (Foley 1999, 4). He is clear that he is using a very broad conception of learning and education, ranging from the formal, to the nonformal, informal to the incidental (these areas are not to be regarded as mutually exclusive but are separated here for heuristic purposes), all of which have a role dependent on the circumstances and the issues at hand (also Coombs, 1973). Foley's case studies of learning in social action, which form the centrepiece of his book, indicate that a great deal of important community development happens in realms of the nonformal and informal learning and education.

### *Adult education – itself a movement?*

Adult education is itself often conceived of as a movement (see also Holford 1995; Martin 1999). This often takes a specific form: e.g., the peace education movement or the popular education movement cited earlier. In the latter case, however, participation extends beyond adults to involve also children, including those having little or no access to schooling, another indication that models differ according to context, in this case the Latin American contexts of campesinos and other workers or unemployed. As mentioned above, however, one must not present simply a rosy picture of social movements.

### *The ever-present danger of Cooptation*

One should be wary of the dangers of co-optation. Social movements, in the West, can be the target of co-optation strategies when lured into the corporate state sector. Governments, for their part, can pre-empt the emergence of a social movement in a specific area by creating a commission to fill in the void. These commissions would be perceived as being more controllable. Governments seek to ensure stability and normalisation of social relations. They would rather deal with bodies whose action is largely predictable. In Canada in 2010 the federal conservative government which had been a long-time supporter of KAIROS, a large social action coalition, suddenly cut its funding presumably because it was pro-Palestine, a position the government did not support. Large, supranational organizations such as the EU can also seek to control the agendas of social movements through their funding structures. This however often turns into a «cat and mouse» game with organizations belonging to social movements seeking to re-direct EU funds to their progressive ends; often a Gramscian «war of position» is waged in this context.

This very much applies to the European adult education field where adult education agencies are increasingly becoming dependent on EU funding including the «employability» oriented ESF funding. Belonging to a social movement is crucial for an organization of this kind not to lose sight of its original goals and not to suffer burn-out resulting from the inexorable quest for funds and the excessive paper work and overwhelming administrative tasks involved. Having said this, «burn out» is a reality which movement activists frequently face and is a situation which cannot be easily overcome.

*A postmodern «divide and rule»? The quests for greater coherence and reflexivity*

Social movements have often been criticized for the fragmentation they bring about on the Left especially with their focus on single issue politics such as LGQTB or race issues. Nawal El-Saadawi warns against their being part of a postmodern «divide and rule» situation, with a unifying globalisation from above (presumably what Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls «hegemonic globalisation» explained earlier) being challenged by a disruptive fragmentation from below:

The movement towards a global culture is therefore not contradicted by this postmodern tendency towards cultural fragmentation and identity struggles. They are two faces of the same coin. To unify power, economic power at the top it is necessary to fragment power at the bottom. To maintain the global economy of the few, of the multinationals, unification must exist at the top, amongst the few, the very few. (El-Saadawi 1997, 121-122)

The greatest challenge for adult education is to educate for solidarity without destroying the individual character of movements. After all, the concept of «movement of movements», with respect to the WSF, is said to be characterised by «its heterogeneous constituency» (OSAL & CLACSO 2003, 264). Here the question of educating within and for alliances becomes important and, once again, the finest example here would probably be that provided by the «movement of movements» connected with the World Social Forum.

Key sources of inspiration in certain contexts, such as Freire, spoke about educating for greater coherence, the sort of coherence that can lead to «greater unity in diversity». This quest for coherence is crucial to developing the necessary forms of solidarity between people who are different and between the progressive and social justice oriented movements that represent their interests. The emphasis on the quest for coherence as an ongoing process reflects a recognition that forms of domestication, detrimental to others, can emerge from an ostensibly emancipatory practice (Mayo 1993). The contradictions arising from our multiple and layered subjectivities render this a constant possibility. And indeed they cannot be overcome easily. In our view, this remains a noble goal for which to aim but that, we must recognise, is difficult to realise in full as new contradictions emerge.

There is also the need for a greater self-reflexivity in our movements where we look at our own actions and practices, asking if they are consistent with those of the movement. Community development specialist Robert Chambers (2008), for instance, has drawn attention to the practice of development tourism whereby development projects become overrun by experts who come to observe them, staying for a short time and getting a very limited look at the community situation. While this is generally well intended it can lead to shortsightedness of purpose and vision, not to mention the overuse of funds for major travel. Academics in social movements, similarly, can be justly accused of spending a great deal on international travel to attend conferences and meetings *about* social causes and of using copious amounts of fossil fuels to promote the environment.

The much desired emphasis on *praxis*, on the recognition of our «unfinishedness» as human beings and as pedagogues and on the constant need to engage in annunciation and denunciation, leads us to consider and advocate an ongoing struggle of reflecting on oneself, on the social collectivity involved and on the pedagogical practice. This is done with a view to transformative action — action intended to enable one to confront one’s contradictions to become *less*«unfinished»/incomplete, *less* incoherent, as Freire would put it. It is this tension between the transformation of the world and the transformation of the self that forms a fault line for those adult educators interested in transformative learning. Jack Mezirow (Mezirow & Taylor 2009), the progenitor of the theory that has come to form the centrepiece of much adult education literature, started with the individual transformation of the self as the primary goal of education. Indeed his first study focused on women returning to college after a period at home raising children. He built his theory over a period of several decades from 1978 onwards and added, as time went on, a recognition that social transformation was also important. His theory and its many adherents such as Cranton (Cranton & Wright 2008) and Taylor (2008), tend to focus on individual change first. Yet, there are many within the sphere of transformative learning, including O’Sullivan (1999), who stress the primacy of social change. Despite attempts to reconcile the divide, writers tend to fall on one side or another. This trend is also reflected in social movement learning where there may be some tension between one’s adherence to individual goals and the good of all.

In a problem-posing approach to education, human beings are conceived of as persons engaged in a «process of becoming». The more complete we become the less contradictory we are in relation to ourselves and others. This is an important step in the direction of engaging in solidarity with others. Yet, there is a danger when the focus of change remains too much on ourselves. Social movements have an important role to play in generating the necessary awareness and educational programs for this purpose – in helping connecting the personal grievance to a public one, often indicating that the former is symptomatic of the latter. They would enable their adherents to become less incomplete and contradictory and therefore more coherent. And this coherence can help bring people, and movements, together.

*Critical Pedagogy and Social Movements*

Finally, there are important lessons from critical pedagogy that one can heed with respect to providing a liberating education in the context of progressive social movements. People being educated within movements need to have a sense of purpose. Where do we stand and for what? They also require a critical attitude and should be educated to avoid cynicism in the belief that another world is possible – «Um outro mundo é possível», to adopt the Porto Alegre 2002 slogan. When voting rates decrease exponentially we see this cynicism writ large, yet we also see government systems that have not kept pace with social trends. One wonders why nation states are so slow to take up Internet balloting which has the potential to make voting go viral.

Any critique would, in our view, derive from the existence of an alternative vision of things, a healthy utopia, if you will. It should be the product of an educated sense of hope (see Giroux 2001, 125). Furthermore, this process of education underlines the collective dimension of knowledge and learning. Those who engage in the task of adult education in connection with social movements and carried out on critical pedagogical lines must emphasise the collective dimension of learning and knowledge creation – reading and transforming the world *together*. This approach to adult education would enable us to give meaning to the French revolutionary ideal of «fraternity» which needs to be recast to capture the equally important notion of sisterhood. It entails «replacing the relationship of competition, fierce dispute, war of all against all – which, in current society, makes the individual... a *homini lupus* (a wolf to other human beings) – with a relationship of cooperation, sharing, mutual help, solidarity» (Löwy & Betto 2003, 334).

These important words by Michael Löwy and the distinguished lay Dominican friar, Frei Betto, were pronounced in connection with the World Social Forum. They were written in the context of a discussion concerning a genuinely socialist alternative to the world that emerged from the «Washington Consensus», an alternative in which life-centred values overtake the market driven (Miles 1996, 1998; Sumner 2005) and therefore predominantly monetary values that are at the heart of the ever increasing attempts to turn all aspects of life into commodities. Commodities constitute that fetish to which Karl Marx alerted us more than a century and a half ago. It would seem that a radical adult education, within social movements can contribute to the ushering in of this «New Civilisation», that other world that is possible. As adult educators, however, we need to keep a check on our own enthusiasms as our students are increasingly drawn from the human resource fields which are business and capital driven. In order to attract new members we may need to put ourselves in their shoes. This takes on a wider significance when recalling that different people and movements of people have different concerns and traditions that are conditioned by the context in which they operate. Most of the foregoing would not necessarily resonate with those movements fighting for a greater slice of the material cake in terms of individual life chances and advancement. And as Kapoor wrote, a point made earlier in this paper to which we come back, there are struggles concerning the reproduction of the material and spiritual conditions of everyday life. With intellectuals such as Stanley Fish (2008) admonishing academics to *Save the World on Your Own Time*, we have struggles right on our own doorstep and there are also struggles afar which take on different hues and necessitate different responses since they defy neat and often western-devised analytic categorisations.

## *Conclusion*

The foregoing discussion indicates some of the complexities concerning social movements and the learning processes involved as part or as a byproduct of their work. A few concluding remarks, through which we attempt to make sense of the above overview, would not be out of place at this stage.

When discussing the subject, we would do well to distinguish between collective protests (Tunisia in 2011), campaigns (anti-smoking), social movement organizations (Greenpeace), and social movements (environment), though we acknowledge that there are similarities among them: they often share citizen participation, grassroots organizing and political intent. The commonality of actors and participants in each is no mere accident: citizens are making it clear that the status quo will not do. Yet, social movements are likely to have more intentionality, long-term commitment, and an ideological basis that is constantly being worked out with members. As Della Porta and Diani (1999) point out in their description of social movements, they are often positioned outside organizations, operate through networks, and engage in protest.

Though adult educators might like to see their field as a social movement, as indicated earlier on, we agree here with Holford (1995) that the field at present is not one, with some exceptions. HRD and professional development interests, along with the primacy of a self-development focus, in much of our field, suggests that social movements are increasingly becoming a minority interest. Historically, it is clear that the field veered left and that we could proudly claim ourselves as part of a progressive social movement; yet, in large measure those days are past (see Jane Thompson, in Borg & Mayo 2007). Holford says that by the 1970s this movement phase had largely passed, although this is a contentious assertion in our view. It is also true that not all movements are left and that some social movements veer to the far right, as we indicated earlier on with respect to terrorist and racist movements.

Learning in social movements has a number of aspects and dimensions, as Foley (1999) has reminded us. If we were to break it down, we would see that there is learning prior to participation in the movement, as when participants learn before engaging, as in viewing films, listening to lectures, and surfing the Internet. Learning is also part of the package when one is in the movement and learning through participation in teamwork, protesting, organizing and educating others, as in the cases of Greece and Vienna, as we saw through the voices of activists who participated in the action there. And, of course, there is a strong learning dimension when social movement actors reflect on their participation, and learn from it, in some cases, that their efforts were misguided. Holford (1995) provides a helpful typology in understanding this learning especially when he points to organizational knowledge that is generated by the movement. He cautions that self-assessment of the learning in a social movement has its limits and that others outside the movement can also be helpful in studying critically the learning of the movement, which is why one of us was invited to Vienna with a colleague to help conduct a workshop for the academy of the Green party concerning the 2009 protest movement there.

Observers of the movement activity also learn from the efforts of others, by watching, viewing and dialoguing with participants. When one considers the general societal and cultural learning from the women's movement, for instance, it is clear that it has affected beliefs about pay, parenting, and gender identity. The content of the learning, for those inside and outside the movement, varies but likely involves lessons on strategy, deeper understanding of the structural power issues at play, and self-understanding of levels of commitment and belief, as well as aspects of interpersonal communication and group process (or lack thereof). In healthy organizations, this learning is integrated into future plans and activities so that past mistakes become learning moments. The Vienna case (the workshop) and the historical case of Highlander come to mind.

Yet, there is the possibility that learning itself does not occur when there is a lack of intentionality and effort to analyze and critique the activity. Barriers to learning include lack of openness to critique, inadequate opportunity to critically reflect, and a stress on busyness over learning. The perennial issue of burnout also plagues social movements, not all that surprising when one considers the issues at stake and the level of commitment and resources involved. Given the structures of capitalism and the seeming fortress of global organizations, industries and business, the slow progress of the movement may also deter learning. When one cannot see any future in the movement, it is difficult to engage in future activities and to be hopeful. As discussed earlier in this paper, the group or organizational challenges involved in sustaining a social movement also cause burnout. Underpay and personal tensions can take their toll on the most committed of persons and collectives.

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## Note

1 One of us was exposed to interventions by a representative of the Simone de Beauvoir organisation at a Council of Europe seminar on adult education and the long-term unemployed at the Euroforum Felipe II San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain in April 1989.

2 The quotes from now onward are reproduced verbatim as written in the e-mailed texts, save for slight modifications in terms of spelling, wrong prepositions and verb tense. This applies to the protestors from Egypt, Greece and Austria.

3 We are indebted to Dip Kapoor of the University of Alberta for this point.

4 Freire sought to involve social movements and organisations in the MOVA-SP adult education program that his Secretariat launched in the late 80s.

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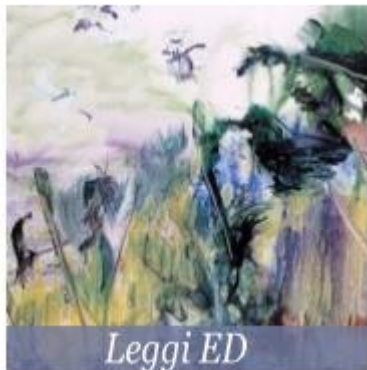


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