Review of Research and Commentary on Social Movements Generally[1]

In this paper I review the social movement literature focusing on some selected reports which are particularly relevant to the Health for All movement.

My review is directed to identifying strategic uncertainties in terms of movement building and the corresponding priority research questions.

Definitions

Social movements are defined in many ways in the literature. Following Porta and Diani (2006) the defining characteristics of social movements are:

1. a group of individuals and organisations who
2. share a set of concerns, beliefs, values, practices and commitments which are in various ways at odds with the dominant zeitgeist, and share a sense of mutual solidarity in this respect; and
3. are linked through informal networks for communication and cooperation and who collaborate in
4. collective action around contentious issues, deploying
5. a shared repertoire of forms of action.

The academic study of social movements is commonly reported through four broad and overlapping perspectives which Porta and Diani describe as:

1. 'Collective behaviour,'
2. 'Resource mobilisation',
3. 'Political opportunity',
4. 'New social movements'.

'Collective behaviour' refers to a body of research and commentary within sociology which is concerned with a range of different kinds of collectivities including social movements.

'Resource mobilisation' refers to a body of research and commentary which focuses on the kinds of resources (human, financial, organisational, cultural, etc) which social movements draw upon; the processes for accessing or developing such resources and the constraints on collective action arising in the processes of resource mobilisation.

'Political opportunity' refers to a tradition of research and commentary which seeks to relate the social movement to its political context including the institutions of governance. The configurations of political institutions and forces around the issues of concern to a particular social movement are necessary for understanding the strategic logic of the movement. They also help to explain the waxing and waning of social movement activity

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which may reflect a growing rejection of established norms but can also reflect periods of institutional stability or an 'unfreezing' of institutional forms (the window of opportunity).

The 'new social movement' school seeks to locate the concerns, growth and action of social movements to the underlying social forces and political dynamics of social stability and social change. Writings in this tradition are building on an older Marxist analysis which saw the contradiction between capital and labour as key to understanding stability and change. However, the capital versus labour analysis is seen as too limited with a need for a social and political analysis which gives more weight to other contradictions, including across ethnicity and gender, as independent dynamics also contributing to stability and change. It is also the case that with globalisation, class analysis based on the opposition of classes within the nation state is not sufficient and needs to be complemented by a definition of class relations at the global level (Robinson 2004).

Other useful themes in the research literature include 'forms of action', 'diffusion', 'culture' (discussed below) and the life cycles of social movements. Some of the life cycle patterns described (see, for example, Snow, Soule et al. 2004) include *emergence* (of a social movement from isolated protests, through new alliances to a robust movement); *expanding in scale* from local to national to global; *convergence* of separate concerns into broader bases; *institutionalisation* (where the movement activists are all absorbed into the bureaucratic structures developed in response to the movement); and *fragmentation* and loss of energy. This is not an obligatory sequence.

Shared grievance, identity, solidarity

It is commonly assumed in the scholarly commentary on social movements that 'shared grievances' and an emerging solidarity around such 'grievances' are fundamental to the cohesion of social movements.

Some commentators conceive solidarity largely in terms of shared identity and the building of solidarity in terms of the construction of that 'collective identity' (see, for example, Hunt and Benford 2004). This is too restrictive. The glue which binds the nuclear disarmament movement or the environment movement is a shared concern rather than a shared identity. The experience of the women's movement is that a focus on identity can exclude people; hence the emergence of 'a politics of difference' (Gunew and Yeatman 1993) rather than narrower 'politics of identity'.

Brecher, Costello and Smith (2002) comment that:

> *Seeing that other people share similar experiences, perceptions, and feelings opens a new set of possibilities. Perhaps collectively we can act in ways that have impacts isolated individuals could never dream of having alone. And if we feel this way, perhaps others do, too. This group formation process constructs new solidarities. Once a consciousness of the need for solidarity develops, it becomes impossible to say whether participants' motives are altruistic or selfish, because the interest of the individual and the collective interest are no longer in conflict; they are perceived as one.*

One of the most dramatic examples of many different constituencies coming together was the 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999 (Smith 2002). This was a mobilisation which brought together unions, environmental organisations, consumer organisations, social justice groups, peace activists and fair trade advocates in a rowdy opposition to neoliberal economic globalisation, symbolised by the WTO but responding also to NAFTA and the aborted MAI. While much of the opposition expressed in Seattle was domestic to the US, Smith demonstrates that the Seattle protests were based on 'transnational mobilising structures' which had emerged over the preceding 50 years. Smith describes the work of transnational social movement organisations in supporting dialogue, negotiating policy positions which addressed the concerns of North and South, facilitating information flows, cultivating movement identities and building globally oriented solidary identities.

Fadee and Schindler (2014) have argued that the spectacular early growth of the Occupy Movement, including transnational extensions, reflected the focus on the shared vulnerability experienced by many different groups and constituencies and the role of the 1% in reproducing that vulnerability. They argue that the sense of shared vulnerability enabled collaboration and solidarity to develop across different constituencies ('convergence'). It may be that the difficulties faced in building on the Occupy Movement reflected the difficulty in deepening the shared understanding across the movement regarding the underlying structures which reproduced such vulnerability.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) warn against relying too much on 'shared grievances' in explaining the development of social movements. They point out that many social movements benefit from the solidarity of 'outsiders' who do not personally share the grievances central to the claims of the movement. More darkly they point to the many ways in which the concerns of particular groups can be manipulated by media, politicians and corporations.

Nepstad (2002) has explored the international reaction to the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the role that that played in building transnational solidarity with the struggle of the Salvadoran democracy movement. Clearly solidarity is more than 'shared grievance'.

In her analysis of anti-WTO protest actions (see below) Smith (2002) has suggested that participating in protest dramatizes the conflict and reinforces us-versus-them identities. Saul Alinsky (1971) has reported how, in his own practice as a community organiser, he would deliberately build on the grievances of the community he was working with to sharpen their awareness of the complicity of the authorities and strengthen their own sense of solidarity.

Paolo Freire (1971) took a different approach; emphasising the need to express in words the grievances and to find the words needed to explore possible analyses and strategies. Zanchetta and colleagues (Zanchetta, Kolawola-Salami et al. 2014) have described a Freirian critical awareness and reflection program involving community health agents in Brazil. The workshops utilized evocative objects to link and develop participants' experiential and conceptual knowledges. The participants exchanged connections and experiences and created hypothetical action plans to be implemented in collaboration with community members.

Earl (2004) has commented on the cultural dimensions of movement building which include building solidarity and building the culture and the practices which support working across difference.

Forms of action and sources of power

Smith provides a useful summary (adapted below) of the 'protest repertoires' responding to globalisation and evident in the anti-WTO protests. Smith also provides a useful discussion of these various forms of action, what they involved and how they might have contributed to the protest objectives and to movement building.

Education and mobilization
- Cultivating organizations and "affinity groups"
- Public demonstrations at global site
- Teach-ins and speaker forums
- Coordinated "N30" protests around the globe
- Polity-bridging: local MAl-Free Zones
- Nonviolence training/medic training

Framing and Symbolic Mobilisation
- Press centre and conferences for mainstream media
- Global witnessing / Transcontinental caravan
- Satirical newspaper wraps
- Dramaturgy
  - Street theatre and puppets
  - Greenpeace's condom drop
  - Banner hangs
  - Boston WTeaO Party
  - Bove's Roquefort resistance

Disruption
- Blockade of international conference site
- Civil disobedience
- Legal observers
- Vandalism against corporate sites

Organization/ mobilization actions
- Transnational organisation
- Producing NGO newspaper at global conferences

Borrowing official templates
- Global People's Assembly
- Participation in government delegations to multilateral forum
- People's Tribunal versus corporate crimes

Electronic Activism
- Information exchange: Internet, list serve
- Independent Media Center
- Rapid response action networks
- Virtual sit in
- Mirror websites
- E-mail and fax jams

Brecher and colleagues (2002) highlight 'delegitimation' as a strategy and as a source of the political power of social movements:

> *The movement against globalization-from-above can be understood as the withdrawal of consent from such globalization.*

Brecher et al go on to sketch their concept of movement formation:

> *At certain points, people see existing power institutions as blocking goals that could be attained by cooperation that transcends existing institutions. So people develop new networks that outrun them. Such movements create subversive "invisible connections" across state boundaries and the established channels between them. These interstitial networks translate human goals into organizational means.*
>
> *If such networks link groups with disparate traditions and experiences, they require the construction of what are variously referred to as shared worldviews, paradigms, visions, frames, or ideologies.*
>
> *…*
>
> *The emerging belief system becomes a guide for efforts to transform the world. It defines common values and norms, providing the basis for a common program. When a network draws together people and practices from many formerly marginal social spaces and makes it possible for them to act together, it establishes an independent source of power. Ultimately, new power networks may become strong enough to reorganize the dominant institutional configuration.*

Framing

Several commentators have used the concept of 'framing' to highlight the significance of challenging the hegemonic naturalisation of the way things are (for a summary of this theme see Snow 2004). Joachim (2003) has analysed the success of the women's movement globally in re-framing violence against women and reproductive rights away from being exclusively private to being issues of public policy.

> *I find that in the beginning of the agenda-setting process, the influence of NGOs is rather limited, their frames are highly contested, and structural obstacles outweigh organizational resources. However, over time the influence of NGOs increases. As they establish their own mobilizing structures, they become capable of altering the political opportunity structure in their favour, and their frames gain in acceptance and legitimacy.*

Connor and Phelan (2013) draw on the concept of the 'antenarrative' to explore the power that can be generated through telling different stories about problems, engagements and solutions. Connor and Phelan explore different narratives regarding sweatshops contracted by Nike: the established narrative of corporate spin and an alternative narrative which highlights the agency of thousands of workers and activists and depicts more clearly the political dynamics through which they impacted on Nike's practices.

Counter hegemonic knowledge production

In this context, the role of counter-hegemonic knowledge production and policy advocacy can be an important part of social movement strategy. Carroll (2015) describes 'transnational alternative policy groups (TAPGs)' as networks and centres within and around which 'counter-hegemonic knowledge is produced and mobilized among subaltern communities and critical social movements'. Carroll argues that alternative knowledge makes an indispensable contribution to counter-hegemony.

Carroll interviewed 91 practitioners in 16 TAPGs from both global North and South engaged in 'alternative knowledge production and mobilization (alt KPM)' and identified eight 'modes of cognitive praxis' as summarised below, taken from Carroll's Table 2:

Challenging hegemonic knowledge	Contesting and disrupting the common sense of hegemony through critical research, scholarship, and other means
Mobilizing alt knowledge through engaging with dominant institutions	Pursuing outsider strategies that engage the integral state strategically from an oppositional stance, and/or insider strategies of dialogue and negotiation with select elements of the integral state
Empowering the grassroots through participation and capacity building	Helping to foster activist capabilities and communities and, within those communities, organic intellectuals who produce their own knowledge as a basis for transformative collective agency
Building solidarities through dialogical KPM	Through cross-sectoral, cross-cultural, and other dialogues, bridging gaps, breaking silos, and undoing hierarchies that divide and limit effectivity of movements as forces for transformation
Integrating theory and practice	Dialectically unifying the practical, experiential knowledge of activists trying to change the world with theoretical knowledge on how that world is structured and how it might be transformed
Creating spaces for reflection and invention	Producing and sustaining physical, social, and virtual spaces where new ideas can breathe and begin to live
Systematizing and disseminating alternative knowledge	Making alt knowledge robust, rich in comparative nuance, applicable across contexts, and thus useful in practice; disseminating the product to various publics and constituencies
Prefiguring alternative futures from present practices	Identifying real potentialities for living otherwise, analysing how they can be strengthened, mobilizing knowledge of these openings within counter-publics and general publics

Table 2. Eight 'modes of cognitive praxis' adapted from Carroll's (2015) Table 2

Culture

Johnston and Klandermans (2013) have curated a useful collection of reports on the cultural analysis of social movements. It is apparent that the cultural perspective provides useful insights into a range of aspects of social movement practice.

The act of re-framing a social problem is a core strategy for social movements including through the (cultural) act of knowledge production and dissemination. Culture, institutions, practices and power relations are mutually constitutive, so changing the way we speak and

practice can drive change in both institutional structures and social relations, even while being constrained by these. This applies to challenging established norms and also to the creation of our own organisational culture. However, the cultural work of challenging established norms, rituals and symbols is always constrained by our own embeddedness in the culture we are trying to change. Even while challenging we are also reflecting and enacting established norms. Accordingly the development of the movement itself, including decision making, meeting the needs of the participants and working with other constituencies, is also a function of its culture and should be a focus of its own internal cultural work (Earl 2004). The role of consciousness-raising within the second wave women's movement epitomises such cultural work.

Williams (2004) suggests that cultural environment of a movement can be thought about in terms of boundedness and resonance. Boundedness refers to what can be said, within the movement and in its public voice. Boundedness refers to both intelligibility and legitimacy. Transgressing such boundaries can impact on movement building and public perceptions. Resonance is the fit between the way the movement is framing its claims and the audiences' previous beliefs, world views and life experiences.

Organisational forms

Brecher and colleagues acknowledge that the organisation of political parties (or engagement with existing parties) is one potential strategy but point out that this strategy:

> faces further difficulties in the era of globalization. Reform and revolution depend on solving problems by means of state power, however acquired. But globalization has outflanked governments at local and national levels, leaving them largely at the mercy of global markets, corporations, and institutions. Dozens of parties in every part of the world have come to power with pledges to overcome the negative effects of globalization, only to submit in a matter of months to the doctrines of neoliberalism and the "discipline of the market." Nor is there a global state to be taken over.

On the other hand as Thompson and Tapscott (2010) emphasise nation-state governments remain important centres of power within the wider field of networked governance (Rhodes 1997, Burris, Drahos et al. 2005). Thompson and Tapscott (2010) have assembled a collection of case studies of social movement activism from the global South and point out much of the work of these activists has necessarily focused on national and provincial governments and the associated political parties. This does not necessarily imply neglect of the structures of global governance; nation state institutions may be intermediate targets in seeking to influence global governance.

Staggenborg (1989) explored, in a case study of two different women's organisations, the benefits and costs of a loose flat structure as compared with a more hierarchical organised structure. She concluded that an informal, decentralised structure encouraged strategic and tactical innovation, but undermined organizational maintenance, while a more formalized and centralized structure facilitated organizational maintenance, but led to a narrowing of strategies and tactics.

Resources

In a relatively early paper McCarthy and Zald (1977) emphasise the different kinds of resources which social movements need to survive and succeed, including financial resources, personnel, and relationships (media, authorities, other interest groups) and the quality of interactions among movement organizations.

More recently Edwards and McCarthy (2004) have summarised 'resource mobilisation theory' in relation to social movements. They identify several different types of resources (moral, cultural, social-organisational, human and material) and different modes of gaining access to resources: aggregation, self-production, co-option, appropriation and patronage.

Warkentin (2001) provides a useful survey of the role of the internet in supporting wider reach, including transnationalisation, of social movements. He shows how the internet has shaped organisational development and how it has been used (internal communication, dissemination of resources, political advocacy). Warkentin's study is restricted to Northern NGOs; a comparable study in the global South would be useful.

Contingency

The contingencies of time, place, person and context powerfully influence dynamics and strategy. They constitute critical features of the conditions in which mobilisation occurs and mitigate against universalising generalisations.

Many scholars have pointed to the efflorescence of protest movements in the late 1960s as epitomising the waxing of the movement zeitgeist and likewise the decline of such activity during the austerity of the 1980s (see, for example, Koopmans 2004). Clearly this waxing and waning reflect various factors in the wider environment. The late 1960s bloom came at the end of the long boom which followed WWII. The 1980s saw the rise of neoliberalism, austerity and the repeated message that 'there is no alternative' (TINA).

The political context varies (Kriesi 2004). In the field of policy studies Kingdon (1984) has argued that windows of opportunity open when three streams (problem, policy and politics) come together. Social movements need to be sharp in identifying and taking advantage of windows of opportunity (they can create windows of opportunity also).

Leadership matters also. Morris and Staggenborg (2004) have argued that 'leaders help to create or undermine political and socioeconomic realities that influence the trajectories and outcomes of social movements'.

> *Leaders interpret relevant structural contexts and identify their weaknesses, strengths, and contradictions and make decisions about how they are to be exploited for movement purposes. In our view social movement theory should avoid the tendency to view political opportunities as part of a structure that is always external to social movements. For example, black leaders had prepared the foundations and developed the connections to exploit the international arena long before the Cold War materialized. Because the groundwork had been established, the leaders of the civil rights movement were positioned to take advantage of Cold War politics.*

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Human initiatives and choices guide social movements. Social movement agency is rooted in these initiatives and choices. Social movement leaders are the actors whose hands and brains rest disproportionately on the throttles of social movements.

Morris and Staggenborg pose a number of questions about leadership in social movements, including:

How are leaders developed within movement organizations?

How do leaders and leadership teams create effective strategies and frames?

What types of organizational structures are conducive to democratic leadership and the agency of participants?

How are connections among leaders within and across movements created and maintained? How do these connections affect strategies and coalitions?

How do movement leaders become elite challengers and how do their connections to leaders in government and other sectors affect movement goals, strategies, and outcomes?

Complexity and unpredictability are corollaries of contingency. This has implications for readiness, being ready to seize the chance, and for patience, sustaining the movement during unfavourable times in the knowledge that 'the times, they are a'changing'.

Understanding global social movements in the context of the structures and dynamics of global governance

O'Brien and his colleagues (2000) have put together a useful collection focused on the international financial institutions (IFIs) and their relations with a range of social movements under the rubric of 'complex multilateralism'. They seek to show how social movement strategies (environment, labour and women's movements) have impacted on institutional structures and policies, recognising the concomitant pressures exerted on the IFIs by the corporate sector.

Barlow and Clarke (2001) also recognise the new structures of global governance, including the international financial institutions and the 'disciplines of the market'. They point out that there are limits to resistance and delegitimation and that at a particular point it becomes necessary to advance specific policy claims within and from outside the existing structures of global governance. In this context influencing the nation state and the political parties which are active in nation state politics may be critical. Willets (2010) provides an overview of the role of NGOs in global governance.

Zamponi and Vogiatzoglou (2015) provide an insightful commentary on the impact of globalisation on labour unions in the context of economic contraction and neoliberal austerity. Where national unions face internationally mobile capital the bargaining power of the unions is greatly reduced and their capacity to resist austerity is likewise diminished. Zamponi and Vogiatzoglou review alternative organising strategies, sometimes described as 'social unionism', being developed in Italy and Greece. They first, examine efforts to organise precarious workers in professions and productive sectors that previously had weak or no union presence. Second, they investigate projects addressing changes in the physical

space where production takes place and their consequences for collective organisation. Third they review strategies of workers' mutualism (i.e. social solidarity structures ran by the workers themselves) and finally, they look at projects that are posing broader questions regarding models of production and development.

Diffusion and convergence

Social movements learn from each other. Whittier (2004) discusses the diffusion of disciplines, methods, tactical and cultural repertoire, rituals, symbols. Second wave feminism was informed by the experience of the New Left. Non-violence in the environment movement has been informed by Ghandi.

Whittier discusses the role of veteran activists who maintain their activism through many decades, pass through different social movement organisations and who mediate some of the influence between movements. Long term activists can move between movements and serve as a conduit of influence. Diffusion can also take place within each generation of activists. Activists from different social movements meet each other and informal networks form; overlapping memberships may give rise to more organised networks.

Diffusion of disciplines and tactics is not the same as diffusion or convergence with respect to political and economic analysis. Smith (2004) discusses the transnational dimensions of social movement organisation: engagement with global institutions, attending conferences, mobilising resources, and advocacy. She argues that social movement strategy at the global level needs to be contextualised within a world system perspective and a network governance perspective but she does not discuss whether different social movements do in fact share this kind of political analysis.

Part of the appeal of social movement activism is the vision of a convergence of different (progressive) social movements working together to tame neoliberal capitalism and to move towards a more equal, sustainable and convivial world. It would seem that some kind of shared analysis in relation to global dynamics might be a necessary condition for such a convergence. It may be that different movements tend to get preoccupied with the specifics of their sectoral territories and that the global dynamics (the structures of global governance, the political economy of neoliberal capitalism) which in fact constrain many shared aspirations are not seen as central.

More research is needed into the diffusion of this kind of global analysis and its contribution to convergence.

Pitfalls

The success of social movements is not guaranteed. Brecher and colleagues list a range of pitfalls which may weaken social movements or lead to failure. These include: schism, repression, fading out, leadership domination, isolation, co-optation, leadership sell-out, and sectarian disruption.

In the context of elaborating a 'resource dependency' theory of social movement development McCarthy and Zald (1977) highlight the contradictions which can emerge between social movement organisations and their funding sources and between what they term 'beneficial constituents' and 'conscience constituents'.

So what more do we need to know?

Several priority research objectives emerge from this review.

- Can we articulate principles and strategies of general applicability regarding sustainability and capacity building in popular organisations and across movements?
- What are the drivers and dynamics of solidarity: grievances, identity, values? What are the barriers to a strengthening of solidarity?
- Can we identify patterns of collaborative knowledge building which bridges across levels (the local and the global) and across sectors; building a more widely shared analysis
  - o which builds on and is relevant to the local struggles but also reflects a global level analysis of global governance and political economy?
  - o which builds on and is relevant to different movements in different sectors but which also reflects a shared global level analysis of global governance and political economy?
- How to theorise and practise 'convergence' across difference; across issues, movements, constituencies? What are the barriers to convergence? What are the strategies for overcoming such barriers?
- How to translate theory, precedent and experience into action in the uniqueness of the here and now? How to build action research, unleash creativity and innovation in responding to contingency, serendipity?

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