

## RECENSIES

Colin Barker, Laurence Cox, John Krinsky and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (eds), *Marxism and Social Movements. Historical Materialism Book Series* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 473 p. ISBN 978-90-04-21175-9

Years like 2011 are a blessing for students of social movements. In that year, mass protests swept through various Arab countries, ending up in revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia. In Spain, the Indignados occupied the country's main squares, while in other European countries and in the US, Occupy protests and strikes targeted the political and economic system for imposing the interests of the wealthy "1 percent" on the rest of the society.

These movements highlight at least three issues that have been marginal to the bulk of the social movement literature in the past two decades or so. First, they express the connection between daily life forms of resistance, social movements and revolutions. Second, the backdrop of neoliberal policies and the economic crisis reaffirms the relevance of political economy to the analysis of social movements and reaffirms the enduring importance of "material" concerns in what New Social Movement theorists call the "post-industrial" era, and their fusion with "post-material" concerns. Third, they demonstrate the linkage between various movements and regions, and their potential to become anti-systemic.

The centrality of these three issues in Marxist theory makes the publication of this edited volume extremely timely for understanding current and past social movements, as well as for critical reflections on (new) social movement theories. From the onset, however, the authors confront a difficult task in showing the relevance of Marxist theory to social movement studies. The reasons are both external and internal to Marxism.

Marxist theory has been relegated to the fringes of the academia and its main tenets have suffered from gross distortion by its adversaries, and by some of its adherents. It has become a cliché, for instance, to dismiss Marxism for being structuralist and economically reductionist, and hence irrelevant to the study of social movements, in which human agency and cultural aspects of social life play a pivotal role. Moreover, the internal development of Marxism is marked by a paradox, which in fact has prompted the editors to publish this collection. While Marxism is a body of theory that developed from and was crafted for social movements, it hasn't theorized social movements as such.

Thus this collection embarks on two tasks. On the one hand it talks back to the critics of Marxism and provides its own critique of dominant social movement theories. On the other hand, the collection uses the rich body of Marxist historical and theoretical writing to identify some crucial guidelines for the analysis of social movements, and applies them in a number of case studies.

In my view, the authors have succeeded in fulfilling both tasks. The contributions to the first part of the book provide a theoretical framework by linking central concepts of Marxism, such as class struggle, to social movements. Criticizing the disappear-

ance of “capitalism” from social movement studies, Jeff Goodwin and Gabriel Hetland convincingly demonstrate its relevance because of, for instance, its impact on the formation of collective identities and solidarities. They illustrate this by taking the LGBT movement as a “paradigmatic example of a new social movement.”

The second part of this volume contains a number of case studies that shed light on the dynamics of social movements. These include studies of the formation of the Chinese labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s, rural protest in the Indian Narmada Valley, recent insurgencies in Chiapas and Oaxaca in Mexico and urban protests in post-Apartheid South Africa.

In the third part, the contributions provide a historical-comparative perspective by discussing such cases as right-wing mobilizations in the 18th and 19th century in France, Spain and the US, the 1857 revolt in India, and the pan-Africanist revolts through the work of the Trinidadian Marxist historian C.L.R. James (1901-89).

The role of culture and language in social movements is a recurring theme that is probably of particular interest to the readers of this journal. This role is mainly discussed in reference to the work of the British Marxist historian E.P. Thompson. Thus Laurence Cox defines social movement as “class in the active sense,” as it is shaped by the experiences (inherited or shared) of a group of people who articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves and in opposition to others. Paul Blackledge refines the Thompsonian notion of “experience” as a mediating process between reality and consciousness. Using the ideas of the philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin and the linguist Valentin Voloshinov, he provides a perspective on the relationship between consciousness and language, which avoids both economic reductionism and the idealism of the “linguistic turn” in historiography.

As the discussion above illustrates, this voluminous collection covers a wide range of themes, regions and periods. In some places this tends to create a somewhat chaotic impression, but it doesn't become dominant. This collection is definitely the best starting point for anyone interested to discover what the rich intellectual tradition of Marxism has to say about social movements, past and present.

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Pit Dehing, *Geld in Amsterdam: Wisselbank en wisselkoersen, 1650-1725* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2012) 488 p. ISBN 978-90-8704-311-7

In een interview over de Nederlandse Gouden Eeuw wijst historicus Simon Schama op de instellingen uit die periode waarover de wereld in 2008 had moeten beschikken om de financiële crisis te vermijden. 'Daaronder valt de Amsterdamse Wisselbank die Schama opmerkelijk noemt: het ging om een bank, opgericht in 1609, die het betalingsverkeer in de buitenlandse handel moest vergemakkelijken en waarvan de deposito's gegarandeerd werden en waardeverlozen waren. Het was een institutie dat vrouwen inboezemde.

1. <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2844/Archief/archief/article/detail/2841615/2011/07/02/17de-eeuws-Holland-zo-moet-het.dhtml>