

their friends. The book is overwhelmingly about Northern theory. Santos knows of the existence of thinkers from the South, but he doesn't engage with any of them in depth, and few get more than a passing mention. He doesn't explore the difficulties in the knowledge project he endorses—difficulties that *are* explored in vigorous debates on indigenous knowledge, Islamic science, HIV/AIDS, education systems, academic dependence, and extraversion around the periphery.

Santos knows of the existence of feminism, but practically all the people he talks about are men, and his themes are those of the men's Left, hardly mentioning gender relations, sexuality, or embodiment except in his comatized lists of excluded groups. The text plays an all-too-familiar masculinized knowledge game, replete with prestigious authorities, abstracted technical language, grand systems, and confrontations.

This language and style are a political problem. From an author who's proposing an "insurgent subaltern cosmopolitanism" as an urgent task, it's disconcerting to get a book that's unreadable by almost everyone who might build that cosmopolitanism. This criticism isn't to argue against abstract theory—I commit some too—but sociologists do have a responsibility to democratize knowledge in their own work. This book has interesting ideas, passion, political relevance; it is also obscure, abstracted, and uneven. Perhaps it was written too fast; let's hope the second volume is slower.

*Social Movements in the World-System: The Politics of Crisis and Transformation.* By Jackie Smith and Dawn Wiest. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2012. Pp. xvi+234. \$39.95 (paper).

John Boli  
Emory University

The title of this short volume (about 180 pages of text) is somewhat misleading. The topic of *Social Movements in the World-System* is not so much social movements as transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs), about which Jackie Smith and Dawn Wiest have painstakingly compiled a detailed database covering, biennially, the period from 1953 to 2003. The information source for these international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) is the usual suspect, the *Yearbook of International Organizations*; the organizations selected are all those that, in the authors' judgment, "are explicitly involved in work to change the dominant political and social order" (p. 46). What this means, essentially, is opposition to global capitalism (the book is drenched in the pool of assumptions of world-systems theory). Opposition therefore centers on three principal

concerns: inequality (with respect to labor, women, indigenous groups, the “global South,” and so on), environmental degradation, and militarism. The thousand-plus TSMOs included in the database are grouped in six main categories: human rights, labor unions, peace, the environment, women’s rights, and development. These are complemented by a “multi-issue” category and a residual set of TSMOs (about 20%) concerned with other issues.

The book has six chapters: a first chapter that briefly reviews familiar theories and arguments in the social movement literature, four substantive chapters about the TSMO population, and a concluding chapter about the prospects and possibilities for TSMOs to successfully refashion global capitalism. The substantive chapters address the expansion of the TSMO population (growing about eightfold over the 50-year period, somewhat more than the overall INGO population), the rise of regional and south-based TSMOs, the stimulus to TSMO expansion given by global U.N.-sponsored conferences (from the 1968 Teheran conference on human rights to the 1995 Beijing Fourth Conference on Women), and characteristics of the TSMOs as such (ties to IGOs and INGOs, specialization, professionalization). Overall, the chapters illuminate important features of this burgeoning INGO population, including analyses that compare the organizations in three periods: 1953–75, 1976–88, and post-1988. The authors show, for example, that human rights, environment, and multi-issue TSMOs constitute increasing shares of the population, while the shares of labor unions and “other issue” bodies have declined. Newer organizations, which are more likely to be based in the south than older bodies (but nonetheless constitute only 25% of TSMOs in the most recent period) are less specialized and have fewer ties to IGOs and INGOs. The authors speculate about the processes underlying such trends, though they do not engage in systematic analysis to try to account for them.

Overall, the book is informative and at times insightful about these social movement organizations, but it is not well integrated. The chapters shift from one topic to another without developing a clear narrative about what the authors are trying to accomplish in studying TSMOs. Another problem is a regrettable lacuna in the data reporting: the absence of what is by now rather standard information about INGO sectors, such as longitudinal charts showing the founding and failure dates of TSMOs. It would be especially revealing to see such charts for each of the major TSMO categories, which would make it much easier to assess, for example, the impetus provided by global conferences to TSMO formation (e.g., an increase in human rights organizations in the five-year interval around the 1993 conference in Vienna). Even better, of course, would be event-history analysis to evaluate such effects rigorously, but statistical depth is not a feature of this effort.

More troubling than these and other missed opportunities to present the data in more meaningful ways and explore them in greater statistical depth is the facile application of world-systems ideas throughout the book. A recurring example is the view of ideology as the hegemonic promotion of false consciousness, following Wallerstein's famous description of culture as the "ideological battleground" of the world system. Human rights ideology, as promulgated by global capitalism, is a veil to obscure capitalism's sexism, racism, and brutality; human rights TSMOs turn this ideology back against capitalism to promote equality and oppose oppression. The latter assertion is certainly the case, but the former is both simplistic and anachronistic. Historically, the ideologies that ruling groups have used most effectively to justify hierarchy and exploitation are those that root inequality "in the nature of things," often with divine sanction, not ideologies that proclaim universal rights and claims-making authority. The danger of such empowering ideologies is precisely that nonelites will take them seriously, which raises a crucial question: Why would ruling groups undermine themselves in this way, when they have proven so adept in the past at legitimating inequality more primordially?

At a deeper level, the clear but never explicitly stated view of the authors is that, in essence, capitalism is responsible for all of the world's problems. Think this through: is capitalism the sole, or even the primary, source of the massive inequality that characterizes the contemporary world? Has not severe inequality been an almost ubiquitous feature of organized societies since the days of the earliest empires? And is it not due, above all, to the will to power and prestige and the resulting concentration of power in organized structures, be they military, economic, political, or religious in nature? Capitalism is the mode of production of our world, but it is better understood as the means by which the will to power and power concentration is currently expressed, not its cause.

The flip side of this issue is that, in the world-systems world view, only the problems that are linked to capitalism are worth worrying about. Rationalization is not a problem; the warnings of Weber, Huxley, Ellul, and many others are ignored. Mass production and its attendant specialization are not problems, even though they ensure high levels of alienation regardless of political economy form. Individualism, psychologism, dogmatism, scientism—the list goes on. Surely, we need to work against inequality and exploitation, but we need to recognize that they have many causes and some of those causes are more fundamental than the type of economic system that happens to rule in our time.