Richard Ballard, Adam Habib and Imraan Valodia, "Conclusion: Making Sense of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Voices of Protest," pp. 397-417, in

Richard Ballard, Adam Habib, and Imraan Valodia, editors, *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2006)

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Conclusion

Making Sense of Post-Apartheid South Africa's Voices of Protest

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WHAT, THEN, ARE the principal findings of and lessons emanating from the preceding studies? What is the impact of contemporary social movements on the political and socio-economic scene in South Africa? What is their impact on the country's development trajectory and the future of its democratic political system? These questions, and the answers to them, would be of interest to a diverse set of stakeholders including academics, social movement activists and even public officials. While we recognise and address our findings to all three stakeholders, we do not structure the presentation of findings and the analysis thereof in a form that treats these stakeholders as distinct constituencies. After all, these roles often overlap, and the thematic issues are of interest to readers across the academic and non-academic divide.

It is also important to note that a study of this scale generates innumerable findings, not all of which can be captured in an overall thematic conclusion such as this. This chapter thus focuses on highlighting and reflecting upon six principal overlapping issues emanating from a number of the movements under study that speak to themes aggregated to the national or international level. There are numerous other findings directed at the level of the individual movement or thematic area, which can only be comprehended with a close reading of the empirically rich chapter case studies on which this conclusion is founded. In any case, six principal issues are the focus of attention in this chapter. Three of these reflect on the character, tactics and leadership of social movements in post-apartheid South Africa. Two consider how the South African

cases speak to contemporary social movement theory elsewhere in the world. And the final one is a reflection on the implications of the existence of these movements and their operations for development and democratic consolidation in South Africa.

Social Movements in South Africa

It may be useful to begin these concluding reflections on social movements in South Africa with the obvious and perhaps banal remark that these institutions are essentially the products of the post-apartheid moment. This is not to suggest that they emerge from a vacuum. Obviously their strategies, activities and orientations draw on the experiences, repertoires and other rich heritage of struggle in South Africa. Nevertheless, the post-apartheid moment imparts to them a particular character. Whether it is the economic crisis of post-apartheid South Africa, as is manifested in its unemployment and poverty rates, or the cost-recovery initiatives of the local state, made mandatory by the policy choices of post-1994 state elites, or the democratic and essentially liberalised political environment of this period, all crucially influenced the genesis of these movements, their evolution and their strategies and tactics. But this is where their similarity ends. And this is important to note. For often in the emotive atmosphere within which political debate occurs, these movements are implicitly projected by both state elites and public officials, and social movement activists themselves, as a coherent homogenous entity. Some political leaders and public officials have intimated that these movements undermine democracy because of their engagement in extra-institutional action. Some social movement activists and intellectuals, on the other hand, portray these movements in romanticised terms, describing them as arenas of free democratic debate and participation epitomised in a 'principled internationalism, a socialist vision, and an independent mass-based mobilisation and struggle as an ideological and organisational alternative to the capitalist ANC' (McKinley 2004: 20).

The case studies reflected in the preceding chapters challenge the assumption of homogeneity underlying both these views, for not only do they speak to a somewhat hypothetical ideal rather than to the current reality of social movements, but they also generalise the respective ideal as characteristic of all within the social movement universe. As a way of reminding ourselves of the heterogeneity and overlapping models of grassroots activism, it is useful to undertake a typology of what it is that social movements in South Africa are

opposing. First, much activism in South Africa is directed against government policy on distributional issues, particularly with regards to the inability of many poor South Africans to access basic services. Privatisation and cost recovery are perceived as the key elements debilitating delivery. Movements that reflect such campaigns include among others the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC), the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), the former Concerned Citizens Forum (CCF), the now divided Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC) and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). Second, some movements oppose the state, banks and private landlords through opposition to evictions and attempts to secure land tenure. Movements that have taken up such struggles are the Landless People's Movement (LPM), Concerned Citizens Forum (CCF), and the AEC.

Third, there is a base of familiar unions in post-apartheid South Africa that target government policy on employment conditions as well as the labour practices of businesses. Most of these unions are housed within the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which, although in alliance with the current government, has nevertheless continued to engage in adversarial mass action. The limitation of these formal sector unions so far, however, has been their inability to deal with the changing nature of work and the growing layer of informal workers. This challenge has been taken up by a new set of nascent campaigns like the Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU), which target the local state on accommodating workers and traders rather than targeting 'bosses' on conditions of service. Notwithstanding SEWU's demise in 2004, its agenda continues to impact on mainstream unions.

Fourth, there is a significant component of activism that is directed against corporations and the government on issues of pollution and the environment. One such action, sustained over a long period of time has been the community action in South Durban. In addition, the Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) represents a group of organisations that has been instrumental in shifting popular environmental consciousness from green conservation to brown issues that emphasise social justice in the human environment. Fifth, some organisations have sought to counter various forms of social prejudice against refugees, sexual minorities and women, especially through reforms of government's policy infrastructure. Finally, there are movements, notably Jubilee South Africa (JSA), that oppose multilateral organisations and foreign corporations in relation to unpayable or odious debt, or in terms of claiming compensation from businesses that operated in South Africa during apartheid.

They have also lobbied the current South African government to take a stronger social justice approach, particularly in relation to reparations for victims identified through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Character

These six categories are not exhaustive but begin to show the range of political projects assumed by various movements. Some of these overlap or are allied projects. What is distinctive about the movements in this period is that unlike their anti-apartheid counterparts, they do not collectively share a common counter-hegemonic political project with a focus on state capture. Instead, the political projects of contemporary social movements can be taken in one of two directions: rights-based opposition and counter-hegemonic opposition. There is a tension between the two idealised positions of wanting fundamental transformation on the one hand and deepened claims to citizenship within existing structures on the other. In the latter position, rights-based opposition attempts to hold the government to constitutionally enshrined rights within the current liberal order. The primary problem is understood to be one of either a deficient government policy or its compromised implementation. As Young argues, '[c]alls for inclusion arise from experiences of exclusion . . . Some of the most powerful and successful social movements of this century have mobilized around demands for oppressed and marginalized people to be included as full and equal citizens in their polities' (2000: 7).

Alternatively, there are activists that articulate their project as a counter-hegemonic one. The scale of focus is broadened from a particular policy to the state's economic path. Many of these movements suggest that they draw from class-based ideologies with notable self-descriptions such as: anti-neoliberal, anti-capital, anti-GEAR, anti-globalisation, anti-market, socialist and Trotskyist. Such ideologies are frequently expressed in the Social Movements Indaba, which was originally convened in response to the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, and continues to meet on a regular basis. The Indaba includes movements such as the APF, AEC, LPM, CCF and others. While these are all ostensibly issue-based campaigns, they can become vehicles for articulating broader challenges against the state's economic path and have, at times, supported the need for a socialist alternative. One delegate at the Social Movements Indaba meeting of March 2004 referred to their collective as the 'socialist movements'.

There is a sense within the Social Movements Indaba that its movements constitute the 'real' social movements of the country in contrast to more collaborationist and reformist organisations. Ngwane differentiates between 'good' and 'bad' social movements, and says flatly that 'social movements . . . have to fight the state, destroy it and replace it with a workers' state' (2003: 32). This is not simply a view of a small group of activists. Indeed, it is a view advanced within the academy itself. Bond, for instance, distinguishes between organisations

> that emerge in the implementation of formal social policies (such as welfare agencies or implementation-oriented NGOs) or the reproduction of daily life (mutual aid groupings) – and *movements*. The latter are both protest-oriented and utopian, in the sense of attempting to construct the community of a future society in the decay of the old (2004: 9–10; original emphasis).

Drawing on Tironi, Bond sets the desire for participation against the objective of breaking the social system, or its rupture (Bond 2004: 11). In this sense, social movements are imagined, in Hetherington's characterisation, as the 'hinge' on which society can be diverted in a new direction (1998: 10). Collaboration with the state is seen as pointless as it represents bourgeois interests, as was demonstrated in the case studies of the APF and the AEC. The test of an authentic movement, from this perspective, is whether it holds a vision for a socialist alternative or at least opposes the state's neo-liberal growth path. Successes in relation to particular issues such as the provision of HIV treatment are not unambiguously good for such activists, unless they are attached to this broader counter-hegemonic project. Indeed, success is sometimes perceived as harmful. As indicated in Chapter 2, leaders of the TAC are derided for their simultaneous criticism of the government's failure to deliver HIV treatment, and proclaiming to be loyal card-carrying members of the ANC. The decision to work with the government on the delivery of anti-retrovirals – now that it has decided to supply them – is seen not as a success, but rather as having compromised their ability to vociferously oppose the state in the future.

These critics are, however, ignoring the large percentage of the members of their own organisations that continue to support the ANC. This flags a contradiction between ideological hope and empirical reality. Ideological hope thrusts responsibility for a utopian future upon local-level struggles by the poor.

While it might be possible to say that community struggles are – by default – anti-neoliberal, it does not follow that they set out with this ideology in mind. Mark Heywood of the TAC suggested at a conference in Durban in 2004 that revolutionary social movements as defined by the left were a figment of their imagination. While his sentiments created a stir, they did bring to the fore, as Haffajee (2004) has noted, the necessity to distinguish between ideal types and reality on the ground. As Harvey recognised, there is no necessary link between what he calls 'insurgent movements against accumulation by disposession' and a socialist political programme. Many such movements would, in fact, resent being 'co-opted by socialist developmentalism' (Harvey 2003: 166).

The choice between participation with a view to improving the state and opposition with a view to rupture is, to some extent, academic. Struggles in post-apartheid South Africa respond, in the first instance, to particular manifestations of exclusion, poverty and marginality. They are very often local and immediate; they are pragmatic and quite logical responses to everyday hardships (Barchiesi 2004; Desai 2003; McKinley and Naidoo 2004). Activists operate to achieve direct relief for marginalised groupings on particular issues. Such activists do not focus primarily on opposing the state's economic path, although they may do so by default. This is not to say that they necessarily agree with the current national programme, but rather that they choose to focus their attention on particular gains on specific issues. In such situations, engagement with the state may indeed be on the cards. The country has, after all, installed a democratically elected government and given it an overwhelming mandate to pursue its programmes for overcoming the injustices of apartheid. Regardless of the effectiveness of these programmes, rhetorical interest in resolving poverty in South Africa allows considerable room for activists to manoeuvre. They recognise that the current situation allows many opportunities to nudge, coerce or force the state and other institutions to address various aspects of marginality. In particular, movements make extensive and flexible use of the discourse of rights to add legitimacy to their activities (Greenstein 2003). Even the more militant movements that engage in technically illegal activities, such as reconnections and land occupations, use the language of rights to invest their activities with a sense that they are endorsed by a higher code of 'good'.

Does engagement necessarily reduce activists to nothing more than collaborators with bourgeois interests? Is it necessarily the case that progressive

politics is impossible in the absence of a long-term objective to 'overthrow the capitalist system' (Ngwane cited in Bond 2004: 29)? Some question whether the objective of the seizure of state power should be the benchmark of radical action; the qualifying indicator of being truly progressive. For Mngxitama (2004), '[r]evolutionary theory as we know it has become suspect, together with the old answers it prescribed'. Greenstein (2003) deploys some of the writings of post-Marxists such as Laclau and Mouffe to reflect anew on movements that do not position themselves as revolutionary. His question: is it possible to achieve counter-hegemonic goals outside of the traditional trajectory specified by socialism? His answer: such movements can claim to be progressive in as much as they challenge existing power relations, although such challenges are not cast as a political revolutionary project. They therefore seek to challenge state power without merely 'replacing one set of relations of domination with another' (Greenstein 2003: 16). Or rather, they do not imagine that the only way to oppose state power is to seek to overthrow it. Cock argues in her study in Chapter 10 that the contemporary forms of mobilisation are best described by William's phrase, 'militant particularisms'. To quote Barchiesi, the politics of the multitude is 'non-teleological' and seeks to 'open up previously unchartered terrains of political possibility and lines of advance' (2004: 6–7).

For many radicals, then, it does not follow that the absence of a socialist programme renders one unprogressive. While local struggles often focus on particular sites or situations, they are not confined to them and can expose and contribute to broader struggles (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 18). Small-scale, locally embedded actions can contest broader relations of dominance and subordination. As Laclau and Mouffe have argued, the political nature of struggles is not confined to parties and the state, but is rather any 'type of action whose objective is the transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination' (1985: 153). The existence of a range of struggles, even if not co-ordinated in a national liberation movement, can result in a 'chain of equivalence' that confronts and transforms relations with dominant powers.

Socialists such as Harvey believe that the innovation of embedded politics is an inadequate replacement for macro-politics.

> The danger . . . is of seeing all such struggles against dispossession as by definition 'progressive' or, even worse, of placing them under some

> homogenizing banner like that of Hardt and Negri's 'multitude' that will magically rise up to inherit the earth. This, I think, is where the real political difficulty lies (Harvey 2003: 168–9).

Similarly, Ngwane argues against 'autonomism' that attempts to break with the hierarchy of the traditional left which is seen as a kind of militancy without politics (cited in Bond 2004; see also Bauman and Vecchi 2004: 35–6).

While acknowledging the validity of their argument, that not all struggles have equal counter-hegemonic potential, one need not reduce the definition of counter-hegemonic to state capture. After all, there is a long debate within the left about the relationship between reform and revolution (see Habib and Kotze 2003). Moreover, in the South African context, while neither side might always acknowledge it, both sides actually require each other, a lesson abundantly evident in the preceding chapters. The counter-hegemonic movements' engagements tend to create crises, which more rights-based campaigns can capitalise on to influence policy and government practice. Zuern's study in Chapter 9 demonstrates that the SECC's decision to illegally reconnect the electricity of disconnected households created a legitimacy crisis that forced government to get Eskom to write off electricity debts in Soweto. While many are critical of the credit going to the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO), one could argue that the potential created by the SECC may never have been realised had it not been possible to strike a deal within the concessionary space close to the ruling Alliance occupied by the civic movement. The women's movement demonstrates this lesson in a negative way. Hassim, in Chapter 16, concludes that there has been immense success in inserting gender into government policy and increasing institutional gender representivity. Nevertheless, in the absence of grassroots mobilisation and more radical action, the lives of many poor women remain extremely marginalised.

Tactics

These examples suggest, then, that the issue of tactics is crucial for social movements. These are, of course, not only shaped by a movement's ideology, but also by the character and evolution of its campaign, its own access to resources, including leadership, and by the opportunities and constraints generated by the post-1994 political environment. The new political, economic and social order is underwritten by a constitution that enshrines first- and second-

generation rights; clauses that have been used by a number of social movements to either defend themselves or advance their campaigns. Social movements' engagements with the state fall on a continuum between in-system collaborative interactions on the one extreme, and out-of-system adversarial relations on the other. Relatively few movements can be clearly placed in a single camp. The Homeless People's Alliance (HPA) is one of the exceptions, as Khan and Pieterse explain in Chapter 8, preferring to pursue a 'politics of patience' with a high degree of 'bureaucratic intimacy'. Another is the APF, which by contrast, prefers to avoid engagement (see Chapter 4). Even in this case, however, there are internal discussions around the merits of non-engagement and adversarialism. There is a lack of consensus within many movements over the best strategic approach. Oldfield and Stokke's study in Chapter 6 shows that the community organisations that make up the AEC diverge significantly from one another, with some choosing to engage, while others fear co-optation and therefore wish to avoid collaboration. Most deploy a variety of strategies in order to achieve their goals. This deployment of a diverse set of strategies is best exhibited by the TAC which has sided with the government against pharmaceutical companies, negotiated with the government to provide treatment through the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), taken the government to court when it proved intransigent, and even pursued a defiance campaign. These tactics represent moments in a constantly evolving relationship between the movement and the government.

A variety of movements have chosen to make extensive use of the wide range of democratic spaces afforded by South Africa's post-apartheid political system. As Dirsuweit's study in Chapter 15 shows, the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project claims as a core success the fact that legislation that affected sexual minorities has been changed in the last ten years. The AEC is using courts, not because it necessarily wants to operate within formal institutions or has any particular faith in them, but because it can frustrate the local government and finance institutions in their attempts to evict. Most of all, it can use courts to buy a little time for families who would otherwise be on the streets.

The state has undeniably opened up since 1994. There is much more democratic engagement with various societal forums. Increasingly, instruments and spaces have become available for the state to engage with civil society, and indeed, for civil society actors to challenge the state. NEDLAC, media, courts, constitution, formalised attempts to have public input into most policies, and

even rhetorical support for mass demonstrations, provide a significant repertoire of 'in-system' mechanisms for influencing policy and challenging the government. Given this existence of institutionalised avenues of action, movements recognise that the most belligerent tactics may not be the most expedient way of achieving immediate material goals and it is often useful to apply 'friendly' pressure, which gains the co-operation of the state, rather than the kind of action that puts the state in a position of bending only under duress.

However, other movements do not consider immediate material gains to be their primary target, and seek to confront the state at a more systemic level. These movements have been engaging the state on more adversarial terms. In November 2003 the LPM announced a 'no land no vote' campaign in response to the state's attempts to register voters. The campaign capitalised on the fact that voters could only register by giving a residential address and this was impossible while they were under threat of eviction. This campaign was later endorsed by most other social movements that attended the Social Movements Indaba meeting in March 2004. Other extra-institutional tactics included illegal strategies of land invasions, water and electricity reconnections, and public protests not granted official permission.

It needs to be stressed that no simple distinction can be drawn between movements that practise in-system tactics and those that undertake extra-institutional action. We might expect that, in their effort to avoid collaboration, movements that frame their operations in explicitly counter-hegemonic terms would adopt a mix of strategies, but in-system strategies would often be used as a supplement to more extra-institutional action. Conversely, movements with an explicitly rights-based agenda would be at the in-system pole of the continuum, practising a mix of strategies with extra-institutional action often used to supplement in-system strategies (cf. Guha 2000: 4). In practice, however, it is very difficult to discern such a dichotomy. Indeed, all the movements studied tended to practise an ill-defined mix of in-system and extra-institutional strategies. The use of conventional avenues of engaging the state did not necessarily amount to collaboration, and the TAC, CCF and AEC studies all provide examples of extreme antagonism playing itself out through courts or other formal institutions. Where there would perhaps be a clear dividing line is on the issue of policy formulation. It is certainly the case that there is a set of organisations that would be prepared to engage the government on policy, while another would not consider this a worthwhile exercise. Even here, however, the dividing

lines can be blurred. The LPM, for instance, has for some time been calling for a land summit in order to engage the state over a solution on the land question.

State response is, of course, itself a determinant of tactics taken up by movements. Where organisations have operated illegally, it has not been their original intention. Rather, state reaction and circumstances tended to facilitate the resort to extra-institutional protest. Desai's study in Chapter 17 demonstrates that PAGAD's (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) initial intentions were for a positive engagement with the state, but the government's treatment of it as a political threat drove it underground. In March 2004 an application for the APF to march on the opening of the constitutional court was declined and their decision to proceed resulted in the arrests of 52 people, some of whom were simply members of the public who happened to be wearing red T-shirts. On election day in April 2004, 62 members of the LPM were arrested for undertaking a picket too close to a polling station. And, there is growing concern among social movement leaders and human rights activists about the stigmatisation of the 'ultra left' and the desire to repress protests (Cronin 2002; Desai 2003; Greenstein 2003: 30–1; Saul 2001, 2002; Vally 2003). Commentators aligned with the ruling party, however, maintain that whereas illegal tactics were justified under apartheid, such behaviour should be redundant under the tenure of a legitimate democratic regime (Sachs 2003: 26).

Leadership

Aside from the influence of ideology, the opportunity structure and the response of the state, how do actual choices of tactics get to be made? Of course, the democratic character of these movements can vary widely, but in almost all cases leadership and a vanguard cadre play a crucial role. This then takes us to the final notable feature of these movements, namely the role of the leadership in their genesis, definition and evolution. This should not be surprising. After all, the international literature has for long pointed out the indispensable role of human capacity and resources in the establishment of social movements (see Chapter 1). And despite the fact that some social movement activists may be reluctant to acknowledge the centrality of leadership and a vanguard cadre, we would be remiss if we did not recognise that none of these movements would be what they are without their leadership and vanguard cadre and the resources these individuals were able to broker from a variety of institutional settings.

This must not be interpreted to mean that the leadership is a small, manipulative, undemocratic clique. Neither does it suggest that these movements are undemocratic. Rather, it is a recognition that deprivation on its own cannot lead to social action. It must be used by a cadre and leadership to mobilise and build sustainable organisation and/or campaigns. The fact that this cadre and leadership is regularly from a middle-class environment, and therefore often not African, is sometimes used in attempts to discredit the movement. As Friedman and Mottiar (Chapter 2) remind us, the Minister of Health attempted to discredit the leadership of the TAC on the basis of race. In this case, the accusations did not succeed in creating divisions within the TAC. A more serious critique, however, comes from within the social movement universe. Andile Mngxitama (2004) has in a recent intervention criticised the dominance of white leftist individuals who he argues skew the political agenda of these movements in a particularly negative direction. Aside from the accuracy or not of these allegations, Mngxitama's remarks suggest that these movements are contested spaces where the wider debates of the South African transition are played out. This is of specific significance given the fact that these movements are committed to achieving greater levels of democracy, and realising an alternative, less exploitative future.

Many of these leadership figures do indeed emerge from middle-class backgrounds, whose locations in different institutional settings enable them to broker resources and legitimacy for these movements. Examples from the case studies abound in this regard. Zackie Achmat is the public face of the TAC and was able to utilise connections with prominent members of the ANC, including Jacob Zuma and Nelson Mandela, to build engagement with the state. His connections with the gay rights movement were also used to generate resources for and legitimise the demands of the TAC. Fatima Meer and Ashwin Desai used their location at the Institute of Black Research to establish and support the CCF. The leadership of the APF was formed largely from a group of disaffected COSATU personnel who were able, for a time, to use the resource base of the union federation to establish the movement. The SECC is supported by Patrick Bond and Trevor Ngwane, who were located at the relevant time at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Alternative Information Development Centre respectively. The role of well-resourced, connected individuals is a matter that is – to some extent – beyond a choice for social movements. These leaders do indeed have a decisive impact on the direction of their movements. But

beyond this, the very existence of these movements may depend on this leadership and cadre involvement. Their involvement opens up possibilities that help the movement to thrive, as well as introducing challenges that have to be negotiated along the way.

Some Reflections for Theory Building

For some years now there has been an international literature developing on social movements, some of which has been identified and reflected upon in the Introduction, with the explicit agenda of uniting disparate theories and bringing them together in a comprehensive explanation of the genesis, operations and impact of social movements. We would of course be remiss if we were not to comment on this literature and how the South African cases speak to the debates and issues relevant to this theory-building project. Two issues emanating from the South African case studies need to be reflected upon by these scholars. First, we need to look at how these case studies speak to the assertion by some scholars, mainly those associated with the new social movement theories (see Chapter 1), that identity-based struggles now supersede distributional politics in post-industrial societies. This view has been most recently echoed by the noted sociologist Michael Buroway who insists that '[i]n the postcommunist era progressive struggles have moved away from distributional politics to focus on identity politics or what Nancy Fraser calls a politics of recognition' (Burawoy 2003: 242).

South Africa is, of course, not a post-industrial society, and so it may seem unfair to respond to this assertion from a context that is so socio-economically different. But we believe the South African cases may highlight issues worth noting if only because this is a society that is an interesting hybrid, reflecting both humanity's post-industrial and developing worlds. In any case, the case studies in the preceding chapters suggest that distributional issues are still central in South Africa. Indeed, a good proportion of the movements emerged as a response to the economic crisis and its manifestations, and they deliberately founded on effecting a redistribution of scarce resources in favour of marginalised communities. This is the explicit intent of movements as diverse as the TAC, the LPM, the AEC, the CCF and the SECC.

But perhaps even more relevant for these theories is how distributional issues colour the politics within explicitly identity-based movements. The case studies of the gay, environmental, women's and refugees' movements in the

preceding chapters make it clear that even while identity is an important driver within these movements, distributional questions are by no means marginalised. In fact, these case studies demonstrate that a huge contestation exists within these movements on distributional issues. So as Dirsuweit points out in Chapter 15, the gay movement is divided over the distributional questions raised by the poverty of a significant proportion of their members, as is the environmental movement that is increasingly being forced to take on 'brown' rather than 'green' issues, thereby addressing the socio-economic concerns of marginalised communities, and bringing to the fore the principle of environmental justice.

These case studies, then, suggest that identity-based social movements in South Africa, typical of those in the industrialised world, are being driven by an intricate mix of identity and distributional pressures. And there is no reason to assume that this is a peculiarly South African phenomenon. Indeed, Dirsuweit's chapter, which reflects on the writings of Young (1990) and Fraser (1997), suggests that a similar mix of pressures defines movements in the industrialised world. After all, there is increasing evidence that inequality and poverty is rising across the globe, including in the industrialised countries. This, together with the fact that a large part of the world where social movements are active are developing contexts, suggests that distributional issues need to be an explicit component of the theory-building agenda of social movement scholars.

The second issue that the South African case studies speak to is the increasingly widely held belief among both scholars and activists that the fulcrum of mobilisation and anti-hegemonic political activity is shifting from the realm of production to that of consumption. Again, Buroway's recent intervention makes this assertion explicit. Drawing on Polanyi (1957), he suggests that counter-hegemonic potential lies not only in the realm of production, as classically understood, but in the domain of consumption and the market:

> Everyone suffers from the market in as much as unrestrained it leads to the destruction of the environment, global warming, toxic wastes, the colonization of free time, and so forth . . . Whereas alienated and degraded labour may excite a limited alternative, it does not have the universalism of the market that touches everyone in multiple ways. It is the market, therefore, that offers possible grounds for counterhegemony.

> We see this everywhere but especially in the amalgam of movements against the many guises of globalization (Buroway 2003: 231).

And he is not alone in the academy in holding this view. Harvey (2003), in his recent work *The New Imperialism*, arrives at a similar conclusion on the basis of his analysis of neo-liberalism, which he argues is capital's response to the problems of over-accumulation that emerged in the last three decades of the twentieth century. His analysis holds that the dominant logic of capital accumulation in the contemporary period is what he calls, following Rosa Luxemburg, 'accumulation by dispossession', which forces 'the costs of devaluations of surplus capitals upon the weakest and most vulnerable territories and populations' (Harvey 2003: 184–5). The result is an explosion of struggles outside the arena of production around the privatisation of basic services and the displacement of poor and marginalised peoples. Harvey's conclusion: greater attention needs to be paid to the struggles occasioned by accumulation through dispossession, and links need to be forged between these and proletarian struggles at the point of production.

While there is not much that can be disputed in Harvey's carefully constructed and nuanced conclusion, the more extreme readings of these processes both within the academy and among social movement activists must be questioned. In the case of the latter, a growing perception has been that unions have lost their potential to serve as institutional agents for counter-hegemonic struggle, and the only hope now remains in a range of radical social movements located in the arena of reproduction. Ashwin Desai has explicitly expressed this view on multiple occasions, as has Richard Pithouse who, following Hardt and Negri (2000), asserts, that 'the idea of the multitude has freed many from both the fetish of the proletariat as the only viable agent of challenge to capital and the fetish of the nation as defender against capital. Given the reality that most resistances in contemporary South Africa are at the point of consumption (basic services, housing, healthcare, education, etc.) rather than production, and are largely community rather than union driven, as well as the complete immersion of the South African elite into the transnational elite, these are very welcome releases' (Pithouse 2004: 182).

Implicit in this view is the suggestion of union impotence in the face of a resurgent community activism to represent the interest of marginalised communities. But the South African case studies suggest that this is too easy a

read of contemporary developments. After all, even in the pre-1994 era, community struggles composed a significant portion, if not a majority, of the struggles against the apartheid state from as far back as the 1950s (Mamdani 1996). Even more important is the fact that the union movement today is a very vibrant component of the social movement universe, notwithstanding its alliance with the ruling party. COSATU may not phrase its agenda and activities in counter-hegemonic terms, but, as Habib and Valodia in Chapter 11 demonstrate, this has not completely disarmed the federation. After all, its recent strikes and its struggles against GEAR, AIDS and Zimbabwe suggest that it is still a political force that needs to be reckoned with. Some social movements, like the TAC, have of course recognised this and explicitly entered an alliance with this social movement located in the realm of production. Moreover, it also needs to be noted that in pure membership terms, COSATU dwarfs almost all other social movements combined.

The problem, of course, is the impression created by the union federation's alliance with the ANC. This alliance has at times placed the federation on the defensive, forcing it to conduct some struggles within the institutional parameters of the Tripartite Alliance. But the combativity of the movement resurfaces every so often, and this together with the social movement orientation of COSATU, suggests that unions are still very much relevant and alive to the struggle to represent marginalised communities. Again this suggests, if only because our socio-economic context is so similar to much of the developing world, that the realm of production cannot be ignored as an arena of mobilisation and organisation of counter-hegemonic struggle, and that as a result unions must be retained as one of the institutional agencies capable of conducting and leading these struggles. The South African case studies therefore imply that that arena of production is as relevant as that of consumption in understanding various responses to the manifestations of globalisation.

Social Movements, Development and Democracy in South Africa

What, then, is the impact of these movements on the development trajectory and the consolidation of democracy in South Africa? As has been indicated earlier, some have argued that these movements undermine the democratic project by explicitly challenging, through extra-institutional action, a legitimate democratically elected government. The essential problem with these interpretations is that they conflate and confuse the stated aims of social

movements with their immediate systemic effect. Whatever the ultimate distant goals of these movements, their impact needs to be assessed in relation to their immediate systemic effects. And the most obvious tangible effect of social movements on the political landscape of this country is that they represent the interests of the poor and marginalised, and apply pressure on the government to pay greater attention to the welfare of these groups. Social movements are thus an avenue for marginalised people and those concerned about their interests to impact on material distribution, and social exclusion, and to claim a certain degree of influence and power over the state itself. In a context where the formal political system has failed to produce a significant political party to the left of the ANC to more directly champion the cause of the poor, social movements contribute to the restoration of political plurality in the political system.

This then raises the more significant contribution of contemporary social movements in South Africa. The fundamental purpose of a democracy is to make state elites accountable to the citizenry. This is the only way to effect not only public participation, but also to guarantee a development trajectory in the interests of all the citizenry, including its most marginalised and dispossessed. Such accountability is founded on the emergence of substantive uncertainty in the political system. Political uncertainty is, of course, the essence of democracy. It takes one of two distinct forms; institutional and substantive. Institutional uncertainty – the uncertainty about the *rules* of the game – implies the vulnerability of the democratic system to anti-democratic forces. Substantive uncertainty – the uncertainty of the *outcomes* of the game – is about the perceptions of ruling political elites in a democratic system on whether they will be returned to office (Schedler 2001: 19). The former – institutional uncertainty – is bad for democracy as it raises the prospect of the return to authoritarianism in the 'Third Wave' of democracies. The latter – substantive uncertainty – is good for democracy for it keeps politicians on their toes and makes them responsive to their citizenry.

There has been much investigation into and reflection on institutional uncertainty (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; O'Donnell 1993; Huntington 1991), but there is surprisingly little work on substantive uncertainty. This should not be surprising given that researchers and activists concerned with democratisation have been preoccupied with the business of transcending authoritarian regimes and institutionalising democratic ones. Nevertheless, the

lack of attention to substantive uncertainty has significant political costs. Indeed, the weakness of many contemporary democracies lies precisely in this arena. Despite the presence of institutional mechanisms that are intended to promote substantive uncertainty – legislative elections, separation of powers, civil liberties, opposition political parties, an independent press – this goal still eludes much of what Huntington (1991) has called the 'Third Wave' of democracies. One reason for this is the shift in power from the legislature to the executive of governments across the globe in the last two decades. Another emanates from the inclination of democratisers and democratisation scholars to not rock the boat in societies undergoing democratic transitions. Fearful of the very real danger of a reversion to authoritarianism, these actors have focused on procedural aspects of democratisation and made significant political and institutional concessions to the state and economic elites of the authoritarian order. Finally, it can be explained by the honeymoon phenomenon where citizens are reluctant to vote against liberation parties who were responsible for co-ordinating the popular rebellions that brought down authoritarian regimes (Fanon 1967: 137; Mamdani 1996: 21; Mbembe 2001: 104).

As a result of some of these developments, and peculiar contextual factors, such as the racialised or ethnic character of South Africa's principal opposition parties – the Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the now defunct New National Party (NNP) – the ANC has not been seriously threatened at the polls. This lack of substantive uncertainty has eroded the citizenry's leverage *vis-à-vis* state elites. The ANC, as the dominant party in the liberation movement, came to office with an overwhelming electoral mandate but despite this its policy concessions over the last decade have been largely to foreign investors and domestic capital (both black and white). This is because it has been able to take the citizenry's vote for granted. Policy concessions in favour of capital are most graphically reflected in the abandonment of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. The net effect has been a transition that has deracialised the apex of the class structure and has economically favoured the upper echelons and strata of South African society (Whiteford and Van Seventer 2000).

The antidote to this state of affairs is the reintroduction of substantive uncertainty into the political system. Of course there could be much debate on the precise institutional mechanisms that could facilitate substantive uncertainty.

Some may maintain that it need only involve electoral reform and the emergence of social movements (Mattes and Southall 2004; Ballard, Habib and Valodia 2006), while others would suggest that in addition to this, it would require the break-up of the Tripartite Alliance and the abandonment of corporatist institutions (Habib and Taylor 2001; Desai and Habib 1997). All of this could facilitate uncertainty, and this is necessary for loosening up the existing configuration of power in South African society. What is important to note in this debate, however, is that none of the other elements except the presence of social movements exists at present, or is likely to emerge in the foreseeable future. Thus, for now at least, social movements are our only hope for introducing substantive uncertainty, and thereby facilitating the accountability of state elites to our citizenry.

It is instructive to note that the South African government's recent shift to a more state interventionist and expansive economic policy with a more welfarist orientation, coincided with the emergence and heightened activity of social movements in South Africa. While it would be difficult to establish direct causality between the shift in state policy and the emergence of social movements, very few observers of the South African scene would deny that social movements have contributed to the emergence of a political climate that encourages state elites to become more responsive to the country's most marginalised citizenry. This shift in state policy is not without problems and has as yet not gone far enough (Habib 2004). It could also be argued that such shifts are the enlightened twin of the strategy of repression. For Harvey, drawing on Gramsci, '[t]he power of the hegemon . . . is fashioned out of and expressed through an ever-shifting balance between coercion and consensus' (Harvey 2003: 37–8). Realising that it has opened the door for others to gain support through more explicitly worded anti-poverty manifestos, the ANC government shifted to re-capture this ground in the build-up to the 2004 election. Recognition of this enables us to conclude that the effective operations of social movements is a necessary, if not a sufficient, political condition for prompting a sustainable shift in state policy in the interests of South Africa's poor and marginalised. A more human-centred development trajectory and the consolidation of democracy thus require in part the systemic presence and effective functioning of contemporary social movements in South Africa.

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