

Book reviews: *Interface* volume 2(2)

Reviews editor: Aileen O'Carroll

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Reviewed by **Tomás Mac Sheoin**

Advice for local groups looking for international support

Local groups or movements looking for an alliance with or support from an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) are more likely to succeed if they: have an articulate, college-educated and well-travelled leader, who speaks English or another world language (charisma helps as well); create international awareness of their cause through the media, lobbying, tours, etc.; choose carefully which INGO to approach (i.e. do market research); document their struggle through the production of pictorial and video evidence, media and eyewitness reports (thus reducing INGO transaction costs); present a united front by hiding or squelching internal dissent; use non-violent tactics, or, if they use violence, present this as necessary self-defence; simplify their struggle (INGOs prefer black and white to shades of gray); highlight the international aspects of their struggle at the expense of local aspects, even if the latter are central to the struggle; frame their struggle to resonate with what's currently fashionable among INGOs, if necessary shifting the focus from their main local enemy to a less central international enemy; organise in a gender-sensitive and ethnic-tolerant way; and finally if their organisation, methods and aims overlap with those of the target INGO.

This possibly cynical summary of what local or national groups need to do to be successful in international campaigning and obtaining international support has been distilled from the book under review. Bob's book is primarily an academic treatise analysing interactions between insurgent groups and INGOs but can also be used as a 'cookbook' for local movements. It provides a refreshing breath of fresh air through its critical examination of this subject.

Growth of transnational activism

The last two decades have seen a huge growth in international and transnational political mobilisation by non-state actors which has been praised by both academic and activist analysts. On the academic side, the growth of this activism, whether termed global civil society (GCS), transnational social movements (TSMs), international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) or transnational advocacy networks, has prompted the appearance of a large social sciences literature, much of it enthusiastically celebrating the arrival of this 'new' actor on the global stage.

Just as some social scientists once welcomed the arrival of the new social movements – green, gay, etc. - as the new revolutionary subject in place of the working class, so now GCS, 'globalization from below' or 'counterhegemonic globalization' have become the repository of hopes for social, political and economic change.

While there's been an explosion of writing in recent times on transnational activism, what is unusual in Bob's work is that it is useful to campaigning groups. This is an academic book that could be unhesitatingly recommended to a local activist searching for transnational allies, as he analyses why certain local movements are taken up by large INGOs. While his presentation of the international competition for support from INGOs as a market may offend some sensibilities, it provides an excellent method of analysis: only a fool could deny the inequalities in power and resources that underlie relations between INGOs and their local allies. Bob analyses these relationships in terms of power exchange and competition.

Bob's work is based on a few straightforward insights. There are a multitude of local groups engaged in struggles around the world who are searching for transnational support and only a limited number of INGOs and solidarity groups providing this support. In this situation where the power balance between local groups and INGOs is skewed towards the international, power inequalities are inevitable. To put it bluntly, INGOs can pick and choose which local groups to support. Even with the best will in the world, INGOs are limited (due to resources) in the number of campaigns they can run and groups they can support. They will choose to support whichever local group(s) best fit their current requirements or priorities. Thus, if a local group wants INGO support, it helps to frame its struggle in the terms and priorities of its chosen INGO target.

NGOs usually have the upper hand in these exchanges. Their concerns, tactics and organizational requirements create a loose but real structure to which needy local insurgents must conform to maximize their chances of gaining support. The asymmetry also fuels competition between challengers. Just as in the world economy, where local contractors must meet the demands of multinational corporations, local insurgents, vying against one another for scarce international assistance, must satisfy NGO expectations. (p.21)

Another praiseworthy aspect of Bob's work is that it looks at these transnational relationships not only from the point of view of the western INGOs, but also from the point of view of the local movements, thus granting the movements the grace of agency, and correcting the top down approach of much international literature on transnational activism: 'Contrary to most recent scholarship, I highlight the action, innovation, and skill of movements themselves...This book places local groups at centre stage, focusing on the risky and difficult strategies they deploy to galvanize

external help in the face of domestic despotism and international indifference.'
(p.4)

Case studies

The core of his book consists of two case studies -of the Ogoni movement MOSOP in the Niger Delta in Nigeria and of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. Looking in detail at the attempts by the Zapatistas and Ogoni to obtain transnational allies, Bob notes how the groups successfully altered their tactical, ethical and organizational features to match the requirements of their INGO supporters (p180). He also provides a contrasting account of similar local movements from the same area at the same time which failed to obtain international support.

The Ogoni case study is richer than the Zapatista one as it's based not only on the literature but also on interviews with INGOs and MOSOP officials. This results in an excellent case study of the interactions of MOSOP with INGOs. This began with a first attempt to interest NGOs through an international campaign from 1990 to 1992, an attempt that failed as the frame MOSOP presented at the time did not fit with the missions of the INGOs it approached. Support grew from January to June 1993, when MOSOP shifted to an environmental frame attacking the oil transnational Shell's operations in the Niger Delta. MOSOP's growing campaign in the Delta led to state repression which resulted in the dispute fitting the human rights frame of a further raft of INGOs. As state repression deepened, INGO involvement increased from July 1993 to December 1995. After this however, from 1995 to 2002, support declined as state repression killed the movement in Nigeria, Shell softened its position and disputes among MOSOP cadre sapped energy and alienated transnational support.

The current struggle inside the Niger Delta, involving a rise in armed militant groups whose tactics include sabotage, kidnapping and killing of oil TNC personnel, has little international support. Bob's conclusion sounds a warning note about the interactions between movements and transnational supporters:

this outcome hints at both the costs and limits of NGO activism. Notwithstanding the many benefits it bestowed, NGO intervention came at the price of MOSOP's downplaying its core minority agenda. The association between repression and international activism also suggests the need for caution both by local movements and NGOs. The pursuit of foreign backing may drive a movement to actions and rhetoric that, although necessary to attract overseas allies, have provocative effects at home. Once gained, NGO assistance may promote unrealistic expectations both about an insurgency's prospects and its patrons' power to achieve them (pp.115-116).

The Zapatista case is less successful, partly because Bob restricts his concerns to INGOs. For the Zapatistas, what is most interesting is not the response of the

INGOs but the much broader response among social movements. Here an analysis of the International Encounters organised by the Zapatista would have been useful, as would interviews with the likes of Harry Cleaver (who was instrumental in spreading Zapatista texts over the internet). This wider analysis would have brought out the similarities between the old 'Third World' international solidarity networks and those which grew around the Zapatista cause - one example would be how the revolutionary tourism to Chiapas echoed the cane-cutting brigades to Cuba - which might distract from an emphasis on the novelty of networks. Yet these networks were both traditional and novel, and admitting the former helps highlight the latter.

Criticisms

Bob's work has been criticised for its criticism of INGOs by those who are uncomfortable with his use of market analysis and terms such as patron and client to describe relations between movements and INGOs. Others balk at the comparison of INGOs with transnational corporations (TNCs), yet the comparison is valid, as anyone with experience of dealing with, for example, Greenpeace International with its centralised decision-making, can attest. Moreover Bob persistently reiterates that INGO decision-making takes place in an ethical context and INGO cadre care about and are motivated by their causes: however, he argues that a failure to critically analyse INGO strategies 'leaves analysts with no reliable means of explaining behaviour' (p.7) INGOs are not the same as social movements: as Bob notes:

NGOs at their roots are organizations –with all the anxieties about maintenance, survival, and growth that beset every organisation. In the formation of transnational relationships, these realities create frictions. No matter how cohesive their networks, local movements and transnational NGOs have distinct objectives, constituencies, and approaches, operate in disparate political settings, and are motivated by divergent needs. (p.14)

A more germane criticism is that Bob's evidential base is limited in the quantity, type and target of campaigns it analyses. On the first of these his work is essentially limited to two campaigns (supplemented by short references to a host of others); on the second, both campaigns are for regional autonomy, thus aiming to change national rather than international policy (p8); while on the third, the main targets are national governments, one TNC and – peripherally - one international trade agreement. A broader evidential base would give a better foundation for Bob's generalisations.

Does transnational campaigning work?

Bob also examines what for many (and in particular for activists) is the central question: exactly how useful are transnational allies? Are campaigns with transnational assistance more successful than campaigns without it? How much energy should local movements devote to transnational work? International audiences can be fickle, the issue attention cycle waxes and wanes, a struggle once fashionable can become stale: thus the INGOs can move on to the next movement and struggle, while the local group is left still waging their struggle. In both cases he analyses, no final victory can be claimed, though this grows at least partly from the nature of the campaigns he highlights: in the Ogoni case, 'although Nigerian policy towards the Delta has changed and the Ogoni campaign probably played some role in these shifts, the fundamental problem faced by the Ogoni and the other minorities – their political marginality in Nigeria - remains unsolved and little-known abroad.' (p.115) In the Zapatista case, the continued existence of the Zapatistas and their campaigns can be considered a partial victory, while international solidarity was instrumental in restraining Mexican state repression.

Perhaps these questions are better answered by less wide-ranging struggles or campaigns than those Bob details – those on environmental issues, for example. The record is mixed. In cases where major protagonists in these struggles are foreign (TNCs or international financial institutions (IFIs)) transnational campaigns can sometimes be successful in forcing the withdrawal of the foreign party. However, unless the struggle is also waged and won locally and nationally, this is not always a conclusive victory. In the case of the Narmada dam, for instance, the IFI was forced to withdraw, but the project went ahead with support from the local state and local capital. In another case, that of Bhopal, campaigners have had to fight foreign, national and local opponents: here transnational allies were of great use, but essential to the campaign was continuing local organising in Bhopal and India (see www.bhopal.net). While no definite answer can be formulated, local movements need to carefully evaluate the amount of effort they put into transnational campaigning.

Despite its limitations, Bob's work is a welcome addition to the literature on transnational activism. It provides useful analytical tools which can be used by both local movement and INGOs to evaluate their work. It is particularly welcome for the realism with which it treats the connections between local social movements and INGOs. Its main achievement is in providing the evidence and analysis that backs up its concluding statement:

"Global civil society" is an arena of sharp competition where myriad weak groups fight for recognition and aid. It is a sphere in which hard-nosed calculation of costs and benefits constantly competes with sympathy and emotion. And it is a place where the real needs of local people are one factor, not necessarily the most important, in sparking international activism (p.195)

About the reviewer

Tomás Mac Sheoin is an independent scholar who writes on the chemical industry and popular movements. He has written *Asphyxiating Asia* (Goa: Other India Press: 2003) about the chemical industry in India.

John Charlton, 2009, Don't you hear the H-Bomb's thunder? Youth and politics on Tyneside in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties. Pontypool: North East Labour History / Merlin Press. (202pp, £14.95)

Reviewed by **Laurence Cox**, *National University of Ireland Maynooth*

Don't you hear the H-Bomb's thunder? is a lively, clearly-written account of one of the regional experiences that made up the first British New Left: direct action campaigns against nuclear weapons, the first stirrings of counter-cultural revolt, and the rise of left politics outside the framework defined by the Labour and Communist parties. A participant himself, socialist historian John Charlton carried out extensive interviews with others from the period and woven their narratives into a coherent and always interesting study of *wie es eigentlich gewesen*.

If their mostly working-class parents' worlds had been massively shaped by poverty, world wars and family trauma, in an English Northeast defined above all around heavy industry, their children - young adults around the year 1960 - grew up in a world marked by definite material improvements on the ground, but overshadowed by Cold War, institutionalised racism in South Africa and the USA, and a deeply conservative culture. Charlton's chapters organise these experiences: moments of coming to political awareness, the defining moment of the struggle against nuclear weapons, the encounter with youth music and culture, the formation of a Labour youth group which - as elsewhere - rapidly escaped the party's control, and the radicalisation towards Trotskyist politics.

Some classic studies have been carried out in this mode, such as Fraser's (1988) oral history of 1968 in multiple countries, or Hamon and Rotman's (1987) account of the French New Left from opposition to the Algerian war through to the movements of the 1970s. As the first New Left ceases to cast such a powerful shadow on the British intellectual left (or as that formation disaggregates in different directions), studies of phenomena such as *New Left Review* are coming into their own.

What "early New Left" figures such as EP Thompson or Raymond Williams would no doubt have stressed is that such formative moments are not only metropolitan, and cannot be fully understood through accounts of leading intellectuals, key organisations, or indeed celebrities. "The regions" are often (not always) recipients of events elsewhere (so too indeed are whole countries, as the struggles of the period against nuclear war, apartheid, segregation or the Vietnam War suggest). But they are *actively* so; their response, or lack of it, is often determining for the overall development of a movement.

One disappointment for me was that this book did not bring this point out more; it shows very effectively how participants' political careers were shaped by history and social context, but rather less how they, and the larger movements they were part of, went on to affect that context - or rather, given the methodological constraints of an oral history, how participants understood the long-term effects of their politics then and subsequently. In one sense, perhaps, Charlton does offer a sober assessment of the quantitative significance of this group, which was strong enough to be part of unseating the dominance of the old, Labour / Communist left and to put new issues and forms of organising on the agenda, but far smaller numerically than participation levels later in the decade, which then shaped subsequent developments more powerfully. "Early risers", perhaps, have the joy of "bliss it was in that dawn to be alive", but are unlikely to be able to determine what happens next.

In Charlton's account, class, gender and ethnicity are all shown as structuring people's experience and lives, most powerfully in the chapter on what their parents' lives had been like. He shows how important it is to *situate* movements vis-à-vis a region's economic situation and its political structures (which, as Vester et al. 1993 show, explain much of the different character of post-1960s movement milieux). As he observes, most of his characters show substantial continuity vis-à-vis their parents; there are differences and fallings-out, but relatively little of the rebellion often held by conservatives to underly youthful radicalism. Similarly, as he can now observe fifty years on, most surviving participants have worked in areas linked to human needs and have maintained a general orientation towards progressive politics, whatever their specific choices and levels of activity.

The socio-politically aware oral history traditions of the European left (Thompson and Burchardt 1982, Portelli 1999) have much to offer us. They can give a sense of how we as individual human beings "do" movement participation - which is no doubt often more easily accessible to us in retrospect and collectively than to individuals at the time, particularly when those individuals are trying to grasp their situation, making far-reaching choices under pressure, growing into adulthood, and on occasion making history.

They show how personal pathways through campaigns, organisations and subcultures work - pathways which in turn construct those collective situations in

practice, but which a top-down analysis often misses. They also show the crucial role of cultural milieux and friendship groups: these pathways may be personal, but they are shared ones, even as milieux and groups are broken and new ones made under the pressure of choice and struggle. As we live our own struggles, humanising them - without reducing them to individual biography - is important both to creating "movements with a human face" and to offering alternatives worth living to other people.

The rich texture and practical focus of Charlton's book make it a pleasure to read. As a source of insights, stories and facts, it will continue to affect many readers long after they put the book down. As we labour under the threat of new kinds of massive, system-induced destruction - in some ways eminently comparable to those of nuclear war was in the years leading up to the Cuban Missile Crisis - it can, perhaps, also be helpful to remember that we have faced this situation before, fought against it, and - arguably - won.

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About the reviewer

Coming to political activism in the second anti-nuclear weapons movement of the 1980s, Laurence Cox's 1999 doctoral research looked at the counter-cultural milieux underlying social movement activism. He has been involved in two oral history projects in working-class Dublin and is an editor of *Interface*. He can be contacted at laurence.cox AT nuim.ie

Reger, Jo, J. Daniel Myers, and L. Rachel Einwohner, eds. 2008. *Identity Work in Social Movements*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (312 pp, \$25 pbk)

Reviewed by **Maite Tapia**, *Cornell University*

The construction, maintenance, and renegotiation of collective identities are crucial to the success of social movements. This collection explores the complex ways in which "identity work", or "all the activities involved in creating and sustaining identity" (4), occurs. The chapters revolve around two fundamental themes. The first is the theoretical framework of Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier (1992), which outlines three critical components of identity work: setting "boundaries", or the difference between movement participants and others; developing "consciousness", or interpretative frameworks fundamental in defining shared interests; and "negotiation", or the actions of members of a social movement. The second theme is the notions of "sameness" and "difference", or how activists construct a collective identity by focusing on their similarities with each other and their differences from the opposition. Instead of treating these concepts as distinct choices, however, the authors show how they often occur simultaneously.

The book is organized into two parts followed by an afterword. The chapters in part one illustrate the identity strategies, whereas those in part two examine the challenges involved in identity construction. In describing a contested anti-gay ballot proposal in Cincinnati, Ohio, Kimberly B. Dugan starts off by explaining how the Christian Right on the one hand, and the gay, lesbian, and bisexual movement on the other, construct and deploy their collective identities as a strategy to win over the public, emphasizing how both movements simultaneously cast themselves as similar to and different from the mainstream. Next, Elizabeth Kaminski and Verta Taylor illustrate how music and songs are used by drag queen performers in Key West to create their identity. Again, the boundaries between "us" and "them" become blurred: certain songs enhance feelings of solidarity with both the gays and heterosexuals in the audience, while other songs critique the traditional gender roles, emphasizing clear boundaries between the drags and the audience. Another mechanism for constructing, or rather reconstructing, collective identity is revealed in the following chapter, in which Todd Schroer shows how the white racist movement uses the Internet in an attempt to alter the negative image society has of its members. This effort to destigmatize their identity has largely failed, however, as these websites are viewed by very few people.

Next, the focus shifts to the influence of the broader environment in constructing collective identity. Jo Reger compares the shaping of feminist activism at two college campuses. Different boundaries were constructed when the campus was located in a community hostile to feminism versus one that was more open. Part one ends with two chapters in a non-US setting. Rachel L. Einwohner's analysis of

"passing" as a form of identity work describes the strategies of Jewish resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied Warsaw. In order to get over to the "Aryan side" to get weapons and supplies, the Jewish activists had to hide their true identities and pass as non-Jews. Finally, Kevin Neuhouser takes us to a Brazilian favela, Caranguejo, illustrating the conflicting gender identities of women activists deployed during collective actions. Confronting the police, these women would act like both men and women, whereas to maintain the support of husbands and boyfriends they would downplay the feminist part and frame these actions as paternal, rather than maternal.

Part two illustrates the hard work involved in constructing identities. Linking social psychology to social movement literature, Daniel J. Myers describes the development and sustainability of "ally activism". He shows how allies such as heterosexual members of a gay movement need to overcome distinct identity processes. Unlike direct beneficiaries, allies often need to go the extra mile and prove sincere commitment to the movement in order to be perceived as credible members. Along the same lines, Susan Munkres' chapter examines how a US-based solidarity movement allies with Salvadoran peasants. The American activists "deeply" identify with the people from the village in El Salvador, developing emotional bonds and a collective identity of "sistering". Munkres explains as well, however, the limitations of this "deep identification" of privileged outsiders with the Salvadorans.

How do movements deal with diversity challenges while constructing a collective identity? This is the main theme running across the last three chapters. Silke Roth focuses on the organizational structure of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), showing how the CLUW provides space for caucuses and committees dealing with different race, gender, or minority issues. In addition, she illustrates how the leadership of CLUW has been instrumental in promoting roles for officers of different backgrounds. Jane Ward's analysis, on the other hand, shows the failed attempts of two gay and lesbian organizations in building "intersectional" collective identity or "multi-identity work". She argues that models of corporate diversity management and diversity driven by funding structures led to the solidification rather than the disappearance of the existing inequality within the movement. Finally, in explaining the emergence of the white women's liberation movement in the 1960s, Benita Roth shows how female activists of the New Left shifted their resources and reconstructed their collective identity from leftist towards feminist. This reconstruction allowed the feminists to move their boundaries from similarities with leftist men to differences. The afterword is given to Mary Bernstein, in which she develops in further detail her political identity framework, focusing on the three analytical dimensions of identity – identity for empowerment, identity deployment, and identity as a goal – considered critical in the study of social movements.

Identity work, all authors argue, is a complex process fundamental to the success of

social movements. The merits of this book lie, first, in the authors' thorough analysis of detailed cases explaining the strategies and challenges in constructing a collective identity; these case studies are moreover skillfully combined with innovative theoretical contributions. Second, the authors don't only focus on 'best practices', but describe failed cases as well. This is important, as more can often be learned from the failures than from the success stories. Third, the editors, Reger, Myers, and Einwohner, have done an excellent job of tying the chapters together. The notions of "sameness" and "difference," as well as Taylor and Whittier's key elements in identity work – boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation – are recurrent themes throughout the chapters, resulting in a cohesive volume. At the same time, however, I believe this strength can also become a weakness. The reader might feel there is too much repetition, since almost every chapter draws on and expands on the same theoretical framework. Interlinking social movement identity theories with other literature, such as social psychology (Myers' chapter), is therefore a welcome change. In addition, the majority of the chapters cover identity work revolving around feminist or gay and lesbian organizations. Again, there is a danger of redundancy. As a reader I was therefore especially intrigued by the analysis of Jewish resistance fighters "passing" as non-Jewish (Einwohner's chapter), as it represented identity work from a completely different angle.

In conclusion, apart from these minor quibbles, I believe *Identity Work in Social Movements* deeply engages the reader regarding the importance and the challenges of constructing a collective identity in social movements. This book, composed of fascinating cases combined with strong theoretical underpinnings, is highly recommended for both activists and social movement scholars.

About the reviewer

Maite Tapia is currently a PhD Candidate at the Industrial and Labor Relations School, Cornell University. Her main interests revolve around trade unions, community-based organizations and worker centers in the US and Europe. Currently she is focusing on member commitment, organizational structure, and mobilization. Her work also analyzes the diffusion and adaptation of core organizing elements from the US to the UK and Germany and how these processes are moderated by institutional, socio-economic contexts.

Before coming to the US, she graduated in Law (cum laude) at the University of Ghent (Belgium), pursued a Master in European and International Law, and a Master in International and European Relations at the University of Parma (Italy). After her studies she worked at the Institute of Labor in Bologna (Italy), focusing on European labor relations. Email: mt348 AT cornell.edu

Clemencia Rodriguez, Dorothy Kidd, and Laura Stein, eds. (2010). *Making our media. Global initiatives toward a democratic public sphere. Volume one: Creating new communication spaces.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. (348pp, \$34.50 hbk)

Laura Stein, Dorothy Kidd, and Clemencia Rodriguez (2009). *Making our media. Global initiatives toward a democratic public sphere. Volume two: National and global movements for democratic communication.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. (280pp, \$29.50 pbk)

Reviewed by **Stefania Milan**, *European University Institute / McGill University*

Making our media tells the multifaceted story of the many struggles for democratic media and communication flows mushrooming in different parts of the world. It covers both the creation of new communication spaces, functioning with rules other than the states' and the markets' (Volume 1), and the emergence of mobilisations for democratic communication (Volume 2). This ambitious project was born under the auspices of OURMedia/ Nuestros Medios, an international network of researchers, practitioners and activists passionate about grassroots media. Created in 2001 by alternative media scholars Clemencia Rodriguez, John Downing and Nick Couldry, the network functions as a meeting point for anyone interested in how self-organized grassroots media can promote social change. Not only do its members seek to enhance theoretical reflection on alternative media, they are often engaged in creating such media, and learn from their own practice. The boundaries between academic and activist are hard to discern, as the network is deliberately a mesh of different backgrounds and interests. The book therefore seeks to capture, and is successful in mirroring, the energy condensed in such a diverse network. It gathers contributions by those scholars that Kidd and Rodriguez call "the second generation" of alternative media researchers, who for the most part joined the field inspired by the burgeoning production of literature on alternative media in the first half of the 2000s (among others, Rodriguez 2001, Downing 2001, Atton 2002, Couldry and Curran 2003.)

Volume 1, 'Creating new communication spaces', focuses on self-organised radio, video, and web projects. The thirteen contributions are divided in four sections, each introduced by a commentary that sets out the main questions at stake, and seeks to make sense of the case studies presented in the chapters. Section I, introduced by Nick Couldry, deals with the challenge of defining the object of study: is the field of alternative media defined by a radical political, social, or cultural agenda? If not, what substance is left to the term 'alternative'? Through the analysis of Mapuche

media in Chile (Juan Salazar), web-based grassroots journalism projects (Chris Anderson), and the South-African Bush Radio (Tanja Bosch), the authors offer, if not a univocal definition, food for thought. Salazar claims that the Mapuche media which mushroomed in Chile after the fall of the Pinochet dictatorship are *alterative*, as they attempt to re-define the same notion of national and cultural participation. In Anderson's contribution we see two cases of 'non-political' alternative media at work, namely a local citizen-sourced newspaper and Wikinews. Drawing from her extensive involvement with Bush Radio, Bosch suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'rhizomatic' structures may be a useful approach to understand how community media construct 'community' from a combination of heterogeneous elements such as varied media forms and diverse audiences.

Section II deals with communication for social change projects. Introduced by Dorothy Kidd, it takes a critical stance towards the meaning and practice of what goes under the name of 'participatory communication'. Vinod Pavarala and Kanchan Malik assess the impact four Indian projects where community radio has been used to promote women's empowerment: the impact was greater on women involved in radio production, whereas those merely listening were not much affected. Rodriguez presents an interesting example on how communicators can participate in the evaluation of their own projects, thanks to ad-hoc "memory workshops". Chido Matewa explores the experience of a Zimbabwean NGO in designing, and ameliorating over time, a participatory video project addressing the exclusion of rural women from mainstream development programming.

Section III, presented by Ellie Rennie, critically addresses the dynamics *internal* to alternative media: issues of organization, internal democracy, power management, self-governance, volunteer recruitment, and funding. Two cases are presented: community radio in Australia (Meadows *et al.*), and Indymedia (Skinner *et al.*, and Brooten and Hadl). Finally, section IV, introduced by John Downing, illustrates three distinct variations in the relationship between media and the state: indigenous community radio supported by the state, like in Mexico (Antoni Castells Talens), citizen's voices within public service in Wales (Jenny Kidd), and community media in a strong state, namely the Chilean dictatorship (Rosalind Bresnahan).

Volume 2, "National and global movements for democratic communication", edited by Stein, Kidd, and Rodriguez, illustrates how civil society groups organise to promote a more democratic communication sphere. A just communication and media sphere is believed to be conducive to a just society and to the maintenance of vital democracies. Although citizens have yet to embrace communication policy activism, social movements are increasingly mobilising on communication reform issues. Their agenda includes issues of access and speech rights, political economy of the media, and regulation across diverse technologies, from "old" broadcasting media to the internet. At the origins of this policy activism are the expansion of neoliberal regulatory frameworks, calls for reform of global media flows like the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO, which emerged within UNESCO in

the 1970s), and the diffusion of the internet, which facilitated interconnections amongst groups and across national boundaries. The volume is divided into three sections.

Section I, presented by Rodriguez, centres on national democratic initiatives, focusing on Latin America. Dodaro *et al.* illustrate how counterpublics were formed in Argentina around the emergence of independent film-making addressing the resistance during the dictatorship, and how national power relations were substantially altered due to the diffusion of this militant cinema. Rosa Alfaro presents the experience of a Peruvian media reform group, which has been mobilising since 2000 to transform national media into ethical institutions. Finally, José Porrás reflects on the value of the internet for democratic processes, analysing the case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Section II, introduced by Stein, reflects on mobilisations beyond national borders. Three contributions (Bart Cammaerts, Gabriele Hadl and Arne Hintz, Joanna Arevalo and Dalida Benfield) address how civil society groups organised transnationally in the framework of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005). Cammaerts illustrates the procedural difficulties encountered by civil society groups participating in transnational policy arenas: while opening up for participation, transnational organisations tend to contain real participation. Hald and Hintz call for a clear definition of what civil society is (i.e., with the exclusion of state and business actors), and highlight the urgency of developing a common policy discourse. Arevalo and Benfield provide a first-hand account of the participation to the WSIS Tunis phase of the U.S.-based Media Justice Delegation, a coalition of grassroots groups led by women of colour. The authors blame internal organizational barriers, such as the lack of coordination and dialogue amongst the participating groups, for the lack of influence on the process. León *et al.* document the work of *Minga Informativa*, a Latin American social movement information network. Initially created with the aim of facilitating communication amongst groups, over the years its activists have developed a discourse on media and ICT policy reform.

Section III, introduced by Patrick Burkart, gathers four contributions which elaborate on democratic rights applied to communication and media. Both the contributions by Christine Schweidler and Sasha Costanza-Chock, and by Kwang-Suk Lee document the resistance to rigid intellectual property rights regimes. Schweidler and Costanza-Chock explore the variety of ways in which civil society opposes copyright regimes: from ignoring rules to the development of countervailing technologies and participation in policy-making. Lee illustrates grassroots opposition to changes in South Korea's intellectual property right regime. Carolyn Cunningham, as well as Claudia Padovani and Elena Pavan, explore the notion of the right to communicate. Cunningham presents an historical analysis of the development of the right to communicate concept, whereas Padovani and Pavan compare the idealistic notion of communication rights to the actual formulations enshrined in national and

international legislation. Both contributions are optimistic about the emergence of a global movement on communication rights within civil society. According to Padovani and Pavan, what was observed at WSIS can be considered as an 'epiphany' of such global movement.

This collection of essays represents the evolution of a line of thought inaugurated in the early 2000s by the already cited works of Downing etc. Almost ten years later, the book seeks to update and re-assess the concepts and the processes at work in the field of alternative communication. In other words, it contributes to *deepen* the field (Kidd and Rodriguez, introduction, p. 8), which has long suffered from academic marginalization. The book is a 'must read' for anyone interested in grassroots communication, and for those curious to know how social movements organize to change the current media system. Volume II, in particular, represents, alongside with Hackett and Carroll's *'Remaking the media'* (2006), one of the few existing accounts of communication as an object of contention. It is therefore particularly relevant for social movement scholars who, as Mueller put it, do "not [yet] consider 'communications-information' to be a single policy domain capable of mobilizing the public" (Mueller *et al.* 2004: 11).

In my view, the book has five main strengths. Its first asset is to be found in the diverse backgrounds of the contributors, among which are advocates, academics, activists and practitioners. The investigation, albeit methodologically rigorous, is explicitly "pragmatic": never an end in itself, but oriented to learn from past experiences to do better in the future, conscious that "academic research should be *at the service of praxis*" (Kidd and Rodriguez introduction, p.11).

Second, the extensive understanding of *participation* that permeates the book (a mix of collective design, self-governance, and constant interchange as the foundations of any empowerment process) is particularly welcomed in the times of Web 2.0, with its mirage of participation: in this book participation through media and ICTs is first and foremost a collective process, and never a private individual enterprise. Empowerment and social change are also collective, and change affects communities, and not just individuals.

Third, the cross-regional scope of the book successfully manages to promote a dialogue which is, to some extent, a novelty in the field, where linguistic and geographic barriers have too often prevented English-speaking academics from learning from, say, the Latin American experiences. Surely too many geographic areas are still unexplored, Africa and South-East Asia above all – which perhaps reflects the geographic imbalances of the OURMedia/ Nuestros Medios network. This book has the merit to make accessible to an English-speaking audience a number of Latin American experiences that would otherwise be invisible.

Forth, the editors successfully manage to bring order to an edited collection of considerable size, which risks otherwise being merely an assemblage of disconnected papers. The volumes are structured around sections, each complemented by an

introductory essay which sets the key issues, allowing the book to be more than just a collection of isolated case studies. The result is a choral book that gives the reader the impression of being invited to become part of a collective conversation.

Fifth, the lively mix of diverse theories and approaches (feminist, Freirian, Marxist...), and different disciplines (from policy studies to social movement research), documents an expanding field which, despite its relatively young age, is able to dialogue with other academic traditions and discourses. Furthermore, the book actively engages in the attempt to define the field. Although it does not provide any definite answer, it contributes to raise some critical questions useful for further research.

Among the very few weak points of this project is its scale, which resulted in an exceptionally lengthy publication process (the call for papers was circulated in 2005): the book presents projects and experiences that are already 'history' at the time of publication. In addition, it reflects one of the problems of the field: the case study approach documents particular contexts, but leaves little room to theory building.

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About the reviewer

Stefania Milan is curious about social movements, emancipatory communication practices, empowerment mechanisms, and the interplay between technologies and society. She is looking for ways to bridge research with policy and action, and enjoys experimenting with digital, participatory and action-oriented research. Trained as a journalist, Stefania has been working and volunteering at many alternative/grassroots outlets and NGOs in Italy, Brazil, United Kingdom, Portugal, and at the international level, both online and offline, and on airwaves. In October 2009, she was awarded a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute, Florence, Italy. Her dissertation explores the "emancipatory communication practices" (community radio stations and radical internet infrastructures) which enable contemporary social movements to communicate in their own terms. Stefania is currently working on a co-authored textbook for the U.S.

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