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Social Movements: Evolution, Definitions, Debates and Resources



Journalists, lawyers and women's rights activists discuss Iran's polygamy laws.

Photographer: Raha Asgarizadeh

This chapter sets out the background for understanding social movements. It discusses the ways that movements emerge and develop and includes a brief map of social movement theory, including arguments relating to contemporary social movements in the global South. It expands upon the definition of social movements provided in chapter one, setting out some of the defining features of movements. It explores some fundamental conceptual concerns for social movements, including building common political agendas, issues of representation and leadership, and inclusion and marginalisation. It also considers the relationships between social movements and organisations and social movements and financial resources – relationships that are filled with tensions, opportunities and questions, particularly as social movements engage with institutional agendas and processes around gender equality, democracy and justice. The chapter is intended to provide a broad context, paving the way for chapter three, which focuses more specifically on the ways that progressive social movements have, and are, engaging with feminism, women's rights and gender justice.¹⁹

¹⁹ We would like to thank Wendy Harcourt for her work planning early versions of this chapter.

How and why do social movements emerge and grow?

Social movements are forms of collective action that emerge in response to situations of inequality, oppression and/or unmet social, political, economic or cultural demands. They comprise 'an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change over time' (Batliwala 2012:3). Social movements, including those integrating or focusing on gender power relations, have existed across history. Notable examples are the movement to end the transatlantic slave trade that had begun in the 16th century, movements of organised industrial workers beginning in the 19th century and movements to gain women's suffrage (the right to vote and run for office), emerging in the late 19th century (Naidoo 2006; Tripp 2006; Ghimire 2005).

The 20th century was framed by movements for national liberation from European colonial rule in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific and against dictatorships in Latin America, in which women played varied but significant roles. Other social movements, including those for feminism, peace and anti-militarism and the environment, those against race and ethnic discrimination and those around sexual orientation and gender identity also began to emerge or expand in the 20th century. This happened against a backdrop of political and economic crises, increasing urbanisation and international travel, the rise of mass media, rapid scientific changes and technological shifts, nuclear proliferation and the expansion of accessible communication technologies.

In understanding social movements it is vital to remember that they are dynamic, historical phenomena and as such 'are shaped by circumstance; they are contingent things, which grow or shrink in response to factors that enable or constrain them' (Dütting and Sogge 2010: 31). This includes contestation within them and significant changes in the external environment with impacts for social movement politics, membership and strategies. Hence, while generalisations can be made, it is also vital to consider movements in their historical context in order to fully understand their politics, choice of strategies, and the meaning and impact of their presence and actions. Put differently, 'social movements must be understood in their own terms: namely, *they are what they say they are*' (Castells 2010: 73).

Time is a critical factor in understanding social movements. Movements may envisage their change and commitment as taking place over a lifetime, or over generations, until the desired changes happen. Movement participation itself can develop over generations, as the children of movement activists and young people born into activist communities often go on to be active themselves in the same movements or in building new movements: 'There is involvement from children on up. For example, in the marches, the children go on people's backs, and grow up in that environment' (Interview with Sariah Acevedo; Ardón 2012). Movements may also be inspired by past social movement history, drawing on strategies, symbols, political visions and stories from the past as inspiration for contemporary activism.

As movements form they go through stages of growth and change, in some cases growing systematically in strength and impact over time and in others fluctuating in response to internal dynamics and external pressures. Movements can also cease to exist, most commonly when a movement's central cause has been addressed. Other reasons for movements to cease include systematic suppression by external forces that dissipate movement actors and make movement actions impossible. This can include targeted harassment and killing of key movement activists, and campaigns to discredit visible movement leaders. Movements may also end due to internal

factors such as failure to adapt political agendas to changing contexts or concerns of movement members, or conflicts over politics and power among movement members, which leads to a lack of consensus or desire to continue movement actions.

The question of *why* movements form in the first place is an area of continued debate in social theory, and also a relevant consideration for movement-building and strengthening initiatives that seek to stimulate social movement action. Not all situations of injustice or inequality give rise to movements (see Batliwala 2002a; Mahmud 2010). Movements are thus 'built' in the sense that they are formed out of the active and deliberate investment of labour, thought and resources over time to develop movement consciousness, grow and retain membership and nourish movement structures, while also having external environments conducive enough to enable them to begin and develop.

Social movement theory has changed over time in response both to shifting theoretical perspectives among academics and to new social movements and new forms of social mobilisation. Theories lay emphasis on different factors including individual and group psychology, structural inequality, historical context and shifting institutional power, language and symbolism. The role of emotions has been considered in seeking to explain why and how people join movements, the development of movement politics and strategies, and visions of change.

Key social movement theories in brief

Theories of class conflict. Stemming from Marxist analysis of society and social change, these theories argue that social movements emerge primarily from the marginalisation of workers in industrial economies and resultant growing class consciousness and mobilisation among the proletariat to change this. Analysis explores how oppressed classes are mobilised, and impacts on transforming economic power and political decision-making towards the control of the majority.

Theories of collective behaviour. Considering the rise of fascism in Europe and urban unrest from the 1930s onwards, these theories frame social movements as spontaneous mass actions that challenge the social order and social norms of behaviour. Movements are largely framed as examples of the breakdown of social control, with movement theory exploring both the psychology of movement participation, particularly in mass public protest, and how movements emerge as responses to shifts in social structures.

Theories of resource mobilisation. Stemming from analysis of emerging social movements of the 1960s in the USA (student, feminist, anti-racist and lesbian and gay social movements), these theories argue that people are motivated to join movements by the potential rewards, incentives and costs of participation. The effectiveness of movements themselves is also assessed on the basis of their ability to generate resources (for example, financial, social networks, knowledge, legitimacy) and in turn use these to affect change.

Theories of political process, developed as a critique to resource mobilisation theories, consider the influence of shifting political contexts and the ways in which these create opportunities and affect the focus of social mobilisation.

Theories of framing, developed from the 1970s and 1980s, engage elements of social psychology and culture of movements, arguing that social movements are born and grow around the construction of new frames for naming and understanding existing struggles and social concerns. In the process of reframing, social movements build a basis for people to connect with a cause while also identifying root causes and thus appropriate strategies to tackle them.

Theories of identity, prominent in European New Social Movement theory developed from the 1960s onwards, explore the idea that social movements emerge from a key concern to critique and construct new discourses of identity and belonging, generate new cultures and enact new forms of social relations including in the personal sphere and in lifestyle choices.

Theories of space and place highlight the relevance and role of geographic and spatial locations in inspiring and guiding social movements. They explore how movements develop around concepts such as the 'local' or 'global', are linked to spatial locations such as the body, physical environment or the economy, choose and form networks across geographies (e.g. South–South, regional and transnational networking) including through the use of communication technologies, and invest these actions across space and place with political meaning.

(Sources: Buechler 2011; Benhabib 1996, Castells 2010; Ghimire, 2005; Leach and Scoones 2007; Harcourt and Escobar 2005)

Movements in the global North and South

Social movement theory based on the study of 'new social movements' that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the global North argues that contemporary social movements are framed by challenges to definitions of identity and belonging and, therefore, advance a politics of recognition. This is contrasted against social movements active before the Second World War, which tended to focus on structural inequalities such as social class, and advocated for a politics of redistribution (Fraser 1995; Castells 2010; Benhabib 1996).

In the global South, however, structural marginalisation has been an unavoidable element of social inequality, given histories of colonisation (Thompson and Tapscott 2010: 3). Many progressive social movements in the global South today are continuations of, or draw heritage from, the socialist and Marxist-inspired politics of national liberation and anti-imperialist struggle. They explicitly embrace a politics of redistribution alongside calls for the recognition of identities and meanings rendered invisible or suppressed by colonisation and its impacts. The result is a politics that acknowledges both structural and symbolic marginalisation and the need to act on both to achieve justice and ultimately 'liberation'. To use a historic activist slogan, progressive social movement struggles in the global South are typically 'not for bread or freedom, but bread *and* freedom'.

2.2

What are the defining features of social movements?

In this section some of the key defining features of social movements are set out. In particular there is a focus on movement members or constituents and the actions and tools that social movements take and use.

A social movement:

1. Pursues a common political agenda or 'common cause'
2. Has a visible constituency or membership base
3. Involves members collectivised in either formal or informal organisations
4. Engages in collective actions and activities in pursuit of the movement's political goals
5. Uses a variety of actions and strategies
6. Engages clear internal or external targets in the change process
7. Retains some continuity over time

(Adapted from Batliwala 2012: 3)

Social movement politics are formed from the premise that the world is socially constructed and that it is both possible and necessary to change it to achieve a movement's vision of a just society and of power relations within it. The justifications for what needs to change (political agenda) and why (political analysis), who should change them (leadership, membership and representation) and how (actions and strategies) are the core questions of movements and both define social movements and differentiate them from each other. The existence of social movements and the visions and actions that they present are inherently political in that they aim to challenge and change systems of power.

Social movements are not inherently progressive. Religious fundamentalisms,²⁰ neo-Nazism and ethnic nationalism have all been rooted in and propagated by social movements and have also included the active participation and targeted mobilisation of women (see Balchin 2011; Bacchetta and Power 2013; Ferber 2004). This report considers the integration of women's rights and gender justice into progressive social movements that share the goals of inclusion, equal rights and equitable redistribution of power. In that vein, progressive movements can be defined as:

'Processes that build the collective power of an organised constituency of excluded, marginalised, oppressed or invisible people, around a change agenda that enables them to access the full body of human rights, challenge the distribution of wealth and control of resources, challenge dominant ideologies, and transform social power relations in their favour' (Batliwala 2010a).

Social movements have complex and varied relationships with organisations also involved in advancing social justice agendas, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, religious organisations, trade unions, political parties, academic centres and businesses. For a deeper and critical discussion of the relationship between social movements and NGOs, see section 2.4.

²⁰ Religious fundamentalisms can be defined as 'the strategic use of religious discourse and institutions to forward views and actions that are absolutist and intolerant, anti-human rights and women's rights and at their root fundamentally patriarchal' (Horn 2012: 8).

Members of movements

Movements are created and given meaning by their members. Without members, there would be no movement, although there is no standard rule regarding the minimum number of people required for an active constituency to be considered a movement rather than a collection of individuals. Social movement theory tends to focus on the question of who joins social movements and why, while social movement practice places more emphasis on defining who the legitimate or desired movement actors are and who should be targeted in outreach and constituency-building.

Movements are ultimately made up of individuals, although they may be affiliated or grouped in more or less cohesive ways to different movement ideas and structures (Batliwala 2012). Women's and feminist movements across the world have been instigated, populated and given direction and inspiration by individual actors including community activists, theorists and academics, artists, individual service providers and public figures. Individuals also play critical roles in carrying feminist and women's movement agendas and politics into other movement spaces and into formal organisational and decision-making processes (see Smyth and Turquet 2012). Recognising the role of individuals in movements is useful when considering strategies for integrating feminist and gender justice perspectives into progressive social movement practice (discussed in detail in chapter five).

Movement actions, strategies and tools

Social movements use a range of tactics as part of their activism. The theories of power generated within movements in turn inform what we can call theories of change – conceptual frameworks underpinning choices around movement membership, strategy and actions. In their practice, movements create activist and organising cultures, typically performing the emancipatory power relations and forms of relationship and expression that they seek to instigate in the broader world. Popular education,²¹ consciousness-raising²² groups, public art such as muralism and community theatre, protest marches, models of consensus-based decision-making, community-based fundraising and the creation of new languages and names are all examples of activist counter-cultures formed in and propagated by progressive social movements challenging gendered injustices.

Strategy can be both a dividing line and a connecting tool within movements. Contemporary progressive social movements continue to diverge on the question of how much effort to invest in engaging the State and changing the terms of its relationships with its citizens, including laws, policies and the provision of basic needs considered as the 'enabling conditions' for rights. Women's movements globally have invested considerably in engaging and transforming state politics and practice (Antrobus 2004). However, women's and feminist movement actors also recognise the limitations of an exclusive focus on transforming state laws and policies. As expressed by a Zimbabwean feminist, 'Our battle is in fact not with the law per se, our struggle is with patriarchy' (in Essof 2005: 40).

Some argue that the principal indicator of change should not be changes in state policy but, rather, 'new possibilities for political action and engagement' (Khanna 2012: 164) that movement activism opens for the people engaged. Building 'power with' (collective strength) and 'power within' (sense of personal agency) (Just Associates 2006) are considered by feminist and other progressive movements as indicators of successful

21 Popular education is a community-based practice of learning and consciousness-raising where people (typically adults) analyse oppression from their own life experience, and use this reflection to develop conceptual and practical methods to challenge it.

22 Consciousness-raising is a group process that helps to explore personal experiences of violation and/or empowerment. See section 5.2.2 for a more detailed definition.

transgression against unequal power structures and norms. Such approaches are able to bring change in dominant power relations at all levels and are not only tools for achieving change in the formal political arena.

Another example of divergent views on activist strategy is the use of armed resistance in progressive struggles. Feminist and women's movements have for the most part opted for the strategy of non-violence, including methods such as consciousness-raising, protest marches, litigation, civil disobedience and the creation of activist media. However, there is also a tradition of feminist and women's activists using armed resistance as a strategy for social transformation, most commonly in the context of armed liberation movements. Examples include the Zapatistas, where indigenous Mexican women in the state of Chiapas took up arms in self-defence and furtherance of their political project (Speed 2006), as well as national liberation and guerrilla movements such as Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress fighting apartheid in South Africa (Cock 2001).

However, there are also examples of situations where different movements have been brought closer together through the development of common strategies. In East Africa, for example, the emerging sex worker and LGBTI movements wanted to build support for their struggles by building a critical mass of supporters. They were both facing similar challenges around police raids, weak organisations and leadership crises. They have built their strength and resilience by engaging in joint influencing and awareness work and participating in coalitions and alliances – for example, to fight against repressive legislation on homosexuality (Nakaweesi-Kimbugwe with Chigudu 2013).

When thinking about the tools used by activists, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have long been used to disseminate movement information, facilitate solidarity across borders and social groups, and build movement membership and independent media platforms. Community radio has been a particularly successful tool for movements, with, in the area of women's rights activism, initiatives such as the Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) acting as beacons in demonstrating the ways that technology can connect and support activists and mobilisation. The growth of the digital 'network society' (Castells 2010), facilitated by the rapid advancement of the internet, personal computers and mobile phone technologies, has revolutionised and opened new opportunities around information flows and new media for social, political and economic connection.

What makes newer ICTs interesting in the context of social movements is the potential opened up to not only use communication tools for mobilising, but also for popular engagement in developing and/or appropriating new communication platforms for activist use. For women in particular, newer ICTs offer the ability to create social networks, receive and share information and participate in collective actions even when physical movement or public visibility is limited by social norms or political repression.²³ However, it is important not to overplay the potential of new technologies as instigators of change. What makes technology subversive or not is the ways in which movements use, appropriate and also produce technologies as part of activist strategy and guided by movement politics, as the comment below illustrates.²⁴

23 The HarassMap initiative in Egypt is an example of how activists have used online mapping technologies to document sexual harassment of women and develop an evidence base for activist intervention (see <http://harassmap.org/en/>). Queer feminist women in Lebanon have also made strategic use of online communications to build community and political consciousness, and form networks with queer Palestinian women living under Israeli occupation (see Moawad and Qiblaw 2011).

24 Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) is an example of technological innovation propelled by an explicit agenda to expand access to patent-free and cost-free software for all, democratise the technology development process by enabling anyone with technological skill to engage with, create and share software, and in many cases also design software that meets the specific needs of progressive activists.

‘While technology is increasingly becoming a critical tool for social mobilisation, it is not an end by itself [...] While a majority of western media and cyber-utopians may call the Arab Spring a Twitter or Facebook revolution, the mere supposition is far from the truth. It takes courage, creativity faith, great risk, a belief in freedom and human dignity that pushes these groups to harness the power of these tools.’ (Philip Thigo, BRIDGE e-discussion, October 2011)

Technologies are framed by power relations. As with all realms of social interaction, access to and use of technologies is gendered. While internet use is growing, 37 per cent of women are internet users compared to 40 per cent of men. The gender difference is more pronounced in the global South, where there are still 16 per cent fewer women than men online (International Telecommunication Union 2013). In addition, technology platforms such as social networking spaces tend to be owned or are easily co-opted by private business and corporations that may not always support activist agendas (Gurumurthy 2012). ICTs also pose new dilemmas around gendered social power and control, creating platforms for re-entrenching gender inequalities and enabling new forms of violence such as cyber-bullying and cyber sexual harassment.²⁵

2.3 Fundamental concepts for understanding social movements

In this section some key concepts that help understand social movements are discussed. These include finding ‘common cause’ or a common vision; representation, leadership and voice; inclusion and intersectionality; and the ‘deep structure’ of movements – all important to consider in the context of integrating gender issues into social movement agendas and cultures.

2.3.1 ‘Common cause’ or common political agenda

All movements have at their heart a ‘politics’, in the sense of a vision of society (or realm of interaction within society) that they seek to create, and sets of principles framing relationships in this world. This always includes theories of power and power relations, although they may not be explicitly named as such. All movements that seek feminist transformation, women’s rights and/or gender equality name existing gender power relations as a principle axis of injustice and include transformed gender power relations as integral to their visions of liberation and freedom.

Common cause

The element of ‘common cause’ around a political agenda is central to movement politics and unites actors in movements who may have varying takes on strategy. In the case of women’s movements the shared political agenda to end gender injustice brings actors together even though they may have different positions on the strategies to end it. Similarly a shared power analysis can play a bridging role in alliances between social movements. For example, the feminist analysis of how

²⁵ Take Back the Tech, a campaign run by the Association for Progressive Communications Women’s Networking and Support Programme, is an innovative initiative responding to this by inviting action by concerned activists across the world to name and address gendered cyber-violence. See <https://www.takebackthetech.net/>.

patriarchal power relations reinforce heterosexuality and the heterosexual family as normative provides one starting point for solidarity between feminist movements and LGBTI movements working to end homophobia. Common adversaries can also provide a basis for solidarity in and between movements, uniting actors around a concern to challenge a particular power structure or movement. One example is the movement against neo-liberalism, which brings together a large range of social movements, including women's and feminist movements, which share a concern to challenge the power of institutions such as the World Trade Organization and multinational corporations but whose other political agendas or strategies may not necessarily overlap.

In developing such common political agendas, social movements are producers of knowledge in their thinking and practice. Some argue that in the process of contesting existing understandings of society and proposing alternative visions, movements in themselves create new forms of 'collective identity... through which new forms of self-knowledge and social knowledge are produced' (Jaschok, Milwertz and Hsiung 2001: 7; also Celiberti 2011). In this way, movements themselves can create in their practice the new ways of seeing, being and doing that they propose for broader society.

2.3.2

Issues of representation – who can lead, who can speak for whom?

Who should lead the change?

Leadership and representation within social movements is both defining of social movement politics and an arena of vibrant debate in social movement practice. Progressive social movements frame leadership in a variety of ways, including preferences for horizontal and 'leaderless' representation and consensus-based decision-making (recognising everyone's potential to lead and represent), and 'vanguardist'²⁶ leadership and decision-making where a select group or organisation are seen as primarily agents in movement-building and advancing movement politics. Each model contains its own dilemmas around how to maximise participation while also ensuring effectiveness and coordination (Buechler 2011; Freeman 1972–3). Pragmatism may also frame the choice of how to manage movement leadership: '[W] here movements are made up of socially diverse participants, the roles and charisma of individual leaders in holding them together, or at least presenting a public face of a united movement, also become more significant' (Leach and Scoones 2007: 21). External factors such as political repression and violence can also shape how movement leadership emerges. An example is the contemporary women's movement in Iran, which is characterised by highly decentralised leadership and continues as a 'movement with a thousand and one thinking heads' (Hoodfar and Sadeghi 2009: 215) in light of a need to adapt and innovate in the face of constant opposition by the State.

Recognising the agency of the most affected

Movements addressing the needs of particular constituencies, including people with disabilities, people living with HIV and young people, all articulate variations on the principle 'nothing about us, without us', emphasising the agency of those most

²⁶ Vanguardism is a political strategy that places a select group of people or an organisation at the forefront of a movement or change process, with the idea that they will ensure that movement politics remains consistent, and will also lead in building consciousness and membership, and guide movement actions.

affected by injustice, and their legitimacy and authority as representatives of their own politics in external spaces.

Feminist and women's movements have historically affirmed the need to acknowledge women's agency in transforming gender power relations, as well as women's leadership and capacity to represent their own agendas within and outside women's movements. With that said, there is also considerable debate within women's movements themselves concerning which women's realities frame women's movement agendas, and whose voice and leadership is privileged and celebrated, notably concerning social class/caste, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation and other axes of difference between women. This points to the social reality that power circulates in all domains, including within social movements focused on creating inclusive, just forms of social relations. Consequently, some argue that a movement enacts the alternative power relations it envisions by challenging existing hierarchies in its practices, and that 'the transformative potential of a movement is only as present as the presence or strength or voice of the most marginalised' (Sahasranaman 2013: 4).

As part of challenging hegemonic²⁷ power relations, social movements constituted by historically marginalised communities may also explicitly affirm a reconfiguration of the power to 'lead', as expressed by Sundaramma, a leader in a women's village collective in South India, saying to majority groups, 'In the beginning, you may walk in front of us. After a while, as we grow stronger, you must walk beside us. But finally, you must learn to walk behind us' (in Batliwala 2007).

Who can speak for whom?

The debate on who legitimately 'speaks for' and defines social movement concerns also arises in the interface between movement actors situated differently in mainstream power relations, notably between actors in the global North and South, and between more and less privileged actors within Southern contexts – all of whom may lay claim to being marginalised. On the question of who constitutes the 'ground', a useful approach is to consider that 'grassroots and non-grassroots should be differentiated in terms of the degree of vulnerability to global policy and economic shifts. In other words, grassroots can be a relative rather than static term, but should always refer to those who are most severely affected in terms of the material condition of their daily lives' (Batliwala 2002b: 396).

Contestation around who is chosen to speak 'on behalf of' movement agendas, as well as the language used to do so, also surfaces as autonomous social movements interact with more institution-based or mainstream activist spaces. Class and educational differences as well as grades of radicalism in movement politics come into play as movements negotiate how their demands are presented and who is supported as messenger:

'... the character of our development paradigm... perceives grassroots voices as raw, requiring translation into a high language that can be understood by those in power... creating hierarchies whether intended or implied. Our development narrative demands that everything must be produced, packaged, and presented in a certain form and [so] subsuming the very voices that we were meant to support' (Philip Thigo, BRIDGE e-discussion, March 2012).

27 Hegemony is the process through which the world view of dominant groups comes to be accepted as 'common sense' or the 'natural' order of things. [...] Hegemony can be expressed through language, culture, patriarchy, political and economic systems, and is designed to maintain the status quo in the interest of those in power (Just Associates 2012: 13).

This tension around who speaks for whom plays out in the question of engaging men as leaders on women's rights and in feminist activism. Although there is growing consensus in policy circles that men as well as women need to be engaged in gender equality efforts, there is still divided opinion in women's movements around how to engage men as agents of change in these processes. The tension typically stems from three issues: first, a political position within feminism and women's activist traditions that women themselves must be recognised as agents of change in the face of their own oppression, and as such must be at the forefront of challenging patriarchy; second, a sense of the ongoing need for space for women and gendered minorities to raise consciousness and build collective power among themselves without having to negotiate space with those historically positioned as their 'oppressors'; third, experiences in movements of engaging men as allies who in turn are uncritical of their own gender-based power and occupy leadership positions, claim voice and/or and use resources originally dedicated to women.

Transformative activism by men to challenge patriarchy encourages active reflection on the part of men speaking up for women's rights and an impetus to engage in ways that do not simply entrench existing expectations of men's leadership, voice and agenda-setting abilities. The following experience from Zambia suggests the depth of transformation and reflection needed:

'When discussing gender equality issues within the social movements, suddenly the male comrades keep quiet. [...] I think that there is some perception that gender issues should be dealt with by women only. I sometimes also feel that the so called gender sensitive [male] comrades, just want to be seen to be politically correct. Otherwise deep down they are just who they have been socialised to be. To un-learn patriarchy would be a complete transformation for many of our comrades' (Emily Sikazwe, BRIDGE e-discussion, September 2012).

2.3.3

Social movements, inclusion and intersectionality

'Hegemony and power is always multidimensional. Strategies of change must address these multi-layered hierarchies. It is not a matter of choosing between gender and class, for instance, but to combine them in order to challenge how our own participation in the social processes sometime reinforces the status quo. Otherwise we will keep missing the point' (Atila Roque, BRIDGE e-discussion, October 2011).

Actors facing multiple marginalisations often find that their particular perspectives and political demands are not recognised fully in the movements of which they are part. Movements may, in both their external activism and their internal dynamics, fail to recognise and address the diversity of their members and those affected by the issue or problem they seek to address. In response, movement actors have developed further intersectional politics which speak to their particular economic, social or political positioning. In the early years of disabled women's activism, for example:

'Given the male domination of the disability movement, disabled women who were politically active often drew upon feminism to aid their analysis of the gendered character of disability oppression. However, this was not a two-way process. Within both theory and research, disabled women noted their exclusion' (Price 2011: 9).

Some movements and related organisations are increasingly attempting to take an intersectional approach (see definition in the box below).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a conceptual framework that makes visible the multiple discriminations that people face, the ways in which systems of oppression (for example, those framing gender, race, class, sexuality, ability) interact with each other, and thus the activist imperative to name and challenge multiple inequalities as part of seeking justice for different constituencies of women. The concept first emerged in African-American feminist, disability and Marxist-feminist writings and has since become a common term in activist thinking and practice around both the nature of injustice and the forms of remedy needed for full justice. (See Crenshaw 1991; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Yuval-Davis 2006; Price 2011.)

Women leaders in the Coordinating Network for Latin American Rural Organisations (the Latin American branch of the global Via Campesina movement) have worked over the last 15 years to promote an intersectional approach to the issues of economic justice, food sovereignty and agricultural reform. They use the slogan ‘Without feminism there is no socialism’ and organise training schools for movement members to work on the strategy of linking gender equality with class equality (Caro 2013).

For social movements, committing to a holistic approach to inequality and recognising identities based on gender, ethnicity, caste, age, class, sexual orientation and (dis)ability is an important strategy, not least to avoid fragmentation and to allow strong alliances to be built, championing arguments and actions that respond to the human rights demands of everyone (Bhattacharjya et al. 2013). There is more detail in section 3.5 on the responses of different types of social movements to gender equality and women’s rights.

2.3.4 The ‘deep structures’ of movements

Many of the factors discussed above – leadership, inclusion, agency and representation – are embedded into the ‘deep structures’ of social movements. Patriarchal gender norms, and other norms that entrench stereotypes and inequality, cannot be uprooted and eradicated without recognising and tackling them at this informal level, as well as through formal structures, policies and processes.

Deep structure

‘Deep structure’ is a term used to describe the hidden layers within societies, organisations and movements where a number of unconscious or even conscious but hidden processes occur. Within the deep structure lie assumptions taken for granted about gender roles and the place of women. These assumptions are below awareness level, and are therefore not talked about or challenged, but they determine how people think and act. Deep structures are the sites where all sorts of informal, invisible norms and rules operate, and from where formal processes are subverted. (Sources: Rao and Kelleher 2005; Srilatha Batiwala, BRIDGE e-discussion, March 2012)

The deep structure of a movement can create profound challenges for the realisation of women's rights and gender justice as an external and internal priority. Deeply ingrained ideas on gender roles can lead to sexist and discriminatory behaviour towards women and minority groups.

2.4 Relationships between social movements and organisations

Relationships between movements and organisations are multifaceted: organisations may support movements and movement-building; movements may create organisations; and organisations may be allied with movements or may provide services to movements (Batliwala 2012). Organisations 'play critical roles in building movements and as organising structures within them' (Batliwala 2012: 14), but ultimately movements represent something larger and broader than organisations. This section considers relationships between movements and organisations, which can be sources of both support and tension.

2.4.1 The interconnectedness of movements and organisations

In the context of the 'contemporary global associational revolution' (Batliwala and Brown 2006), both formal and informal organisations have become critical players in social movement strategy, in their roles as participants in dialogue between the internal agendas of social movements and external objects of social movement engagement, including the media, the State and broader civil society (Batliwala 2012). The move from mobilising through more informal or non-state-registered organisation platforms to formal organisations, including NGOs, can, however, lead to confusion over definitions of what constitutes 'the movement', and the legitimacy of different actors in speaking for or receiving financial, political or solidarity support as representatives of a broader movement constituency.

The formalisation of activism through NGOs

Movements have made creative use of formal organisations to advance practical and strategic movement agendas. For example, women's NGOs have played, and continue to play, a pivotal role in changing normative legal and policy frameworks at the United Nations, given that participation in UN processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women requires accreditation only available to formally registered NGOs (see Antrobus 2004). Formal organisations continue to provide a base to organise movement activities, raise political consciousness and mobilise resources for collective action, as described through the example of the Greenbelt Movement in Kenya in the box on page 31.

The Greenbelt Movement – a movement-allied NGO

The Greenbelt Movement (GBM) is a Kenyan NGO established by activist Wangari Mathaai in 1977. The initial vision was to address rural women's needs around food, fuel and income, while tackling environmental degradation and deforestation. Although formally constituted as a national NGO, and resourced by global philanthropists and governmental donors, the GBM operated with the character of a social movement, mobilising mass action for tree planting through locally run tree planting clubs, supporting community-based political education on women's rights, politics, corruption and the environment, and engaging in pro-democracy activism. In 1989 the GBM led successful protests against the construction of a multi-storey car park in Uhuru Park, one of the only public parks in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

The GBM also showed solidarity with other struggles, notably the Release Political Prisoners movement, formed by mothers of political activists detained during the regime of President Daniel Arap Moi. These protests led to the creation of Speakers Corner in Uhuru Park, which has remained a gathering point for popular protest. The GBM became engaged in state politics, forming part of a coalition encouraging opposition groups to unite against President Moi in the catalytic 1992 national elections. Mathaai and other GBM members faced prison, police violence and political persecution for their activism during the Moi era, while the State attempted to shut down the GBM as an NGO. Mathaai herself entered formal politics later in life, becoming Assistant Minister, Ministry of the Environment (2005–2007). (Sources: Mathaai 2007, 2004)

The success of women's movement activism for state accountability in many parts of the world led to the rapid production of global and national policy frameworks and national gender machineries in the 1990s (Bhattacharjya 2013), alongside a growth in the number of women's and other NGOs engaging as policy advocates, representing civil society in governmental processes and implementing state-funded programming for women. The collapse of the Soviet Union and political transition in Eastern Europe and China from the 1990s also ushered in a shift as women's activism extended out of state-controlled women's platforms and into more independent academic centres and NGOs as well as non-state-registered women's groups (Posadskaya 1994; Hsiung et al. 2001).

These various turns towards 'NGO-isation',²⁸ the creation of 'gender experts' and entry of many women's movement actors into government offices was met with criticism and reflection by community and movement constituents who questioned the legitimacy and accountability of NGOs and gender experts to full social movement demands (see Jad 2008 for the case of Palestine). In other contexts, individual feminists and movement-allied women's rights activists working within more mainstream governmental organisations and NGOs have been important actors in pushing forward women's movements' agendas and policy and legal reforms (see Smyth and Turquet 2012) and providing a link between grassroots actors and policymakers. In the 2000s there is a trend among women's NGOs, supported by some women's funds and progressive donors, to return to community-focused initiatives, movement-building and engaging in movement-created spaces as well as, or instead of, governmental forums (Alvarez 2009).

28 This is a term coined to describe the process by which social movement agendas and activities are taken up by formally constituted NGOs, which in turn become considered representative or leaders in voicing these agendas or implementing activities. Often used as a term of critique, pointing to the ways in which mainstream NGO approaches become valorised, resourced and promoted above more radical organisational approaches and independent activism and movement mobilisation (see Alvarez 2009: 176).

2.4.2

Tensions in the relationship between movements and organisations

Tensions emerge in the inevitable complex power relations between movements and organisations, frequently underpinned by the presence of financial resources as well as questions of accountability and participation. There is concern in some contexts that the discussion of social movements has itself been narrowed down to NGO-based activism alone, a point explored in the following reflection on contemporary gender justice activism in South Africa:

'I would make a distinction between what constitutes a social movement and what constitutes an NGO sector... I am not sure in South Africa that we have so many social movements that have the coherence to warrant the name. We are very much part of the NGO sector, and in some ways part of a more activist NGO constituency... what makes us more activist is that we make demands on the State to fulfil their responsibilities and their obligations' (Interview with Dean Peacock; Nascimento 2012).

There are also ideological tensions in the engagement of progressive social movements with NGOs and other formal organisations and processes. There are many social movements with politics that actively oppose mainstream development models. These include movements that reject neo-liberal and enterprise-focused models of state-led development, questioning the ways in which mainstream development sidelines existing forms of cultural and technological knowledge (Sachs 2010), and critiques of ways in which development organisations engage and collaborate with repressive governments and state institutions. In the context of Egypt, for example, gender equality programmes operated by external donors have been critiqued for operating without questioning political inequalities:

'Quotas in a rigged election, access to high office in the absence of transparency and accountability, local council representation without good governance or voice without freedom do not deliver gender justice. The recommended recipes that are the agendas of development programmes fade when faced with a mass quest for dignity and choice' (Sholkamy 2012: 95).

Movements may support a politics that questions the validity of the nation-state itself (for example, movements with anarchist politics, and some indigenous and ethnic nationalist movements) or state-managed tools of public control such as the military and criminal justice and surveillance systems (for example, women's peace and anti-militarist movements). There is also an active critique of the concept of human rights as an organising tool in some left-wing and Southern political movements due to a rejection of the liberal individualist roots of human rights and their reinforcement through the model of the Western nation-state (for example, Shivji 1989; Sharma 2008). Each of these political positions influences the degree to which the respective social movements would consider engaging with mainstream policy or law processes or collaborating with actors that appeal to mainstream development or human rights discourse in the fight for justice.

Social movements and money

Movements have complicated relationships with financial resources. Movements are not usually centrally resourced, and movement participation is often unpaid, although particular campaigns, strategies or organisations linked to social movements may be resourced or situated in organisations that are.

Movements can be self-resourcing, generating financial as well as other resources such as labour, physical space and donations of food, intellectual resources, media space and materials for gatherings, services and actions such as public protests from within their membership. Movements may also seek out financial resources from external sources, including institutional donors (private, governmental or public funds whose grant-making activity is regulated by state authorities).

Legal and policy frameworks impact on donor support to movements

Although some institutional donors award grants to individuals or to collective initiatives which are not formally registered (including many women's funds), most donors require that the entities they consider funding are formally constituted and registered in accordance with the laws that bind their own grant-making. As a result, movement financing from institutional donors is typically received via the organisations that they are aligned with or have created as their institutional face. The introduction of external financial resources into movement activities inevitably impacts on relationships of power, decision-making and accountability within movements. Sections of movements may be required to be established as legal entities, constituted with particular formats such as governance boards and hierarchical staffing systems which may differ from how decision-making and power is distributed in the movement. Institutional funding can also place limitations on strategies used by organisations within social movements – for example, the use of civil disobedience and other strategies that defy the law, or association with certain constituencies or political viewpoints, which may not be deemed permissible under laws that regulate philanthropy²⁹ (International Centre for Non-Profit Law 2010).

The policies of institutional donor funding can also impact on the ability of movements to voice their full political positions – a notable example being the limitations placed by the US government through the 'Global Gag Rule' and the first round of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) on HIV and AIDS funding for NGOs which prohibited organisations from providing information on or advocating for safe abortion or taking positions regarding the decriminalisation of sex work and rights of sex workers. Both of these provisions went against the politics of reproductive rights and sex worker rights movements and affected the resource base of service and advocacy organisations aligned to both of these movements (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2003; Centre for Health and Gender Equity 2008).

29 For up-to-date analysis of changing laws, see the quarterly review of Global Trends in NGO Law produced by the International Center for Non-Profit Law at <http://www.icnl.org/research/trends/index.html>

Tensions around donor funding

Institutional donors continue to play a leading role in providing financial resources for women's and other progressive social movements. Movement actors considering the role of donors indicate the need for progressive donors to consider more generous and less bureaucratic support for initiatives advancing justice and equality, not least in light of flexible and ample funding available to advance conservative thinking and mobilisation (Rich 2005). Recent research shows that women's organisations working for rights and justice worldwide are significantly under-resourced, and points to a need to increase external donor resourcing of women's and feminist movements, alongside mechanisms to ensure that this funding is adequate, longer-term, and is directed to movement priorities (Clark, Sprenger and VeneKlassen 2006; Pittman et al. 2011). Women's funds – independent public funds established to support initiatives aligned to women's and feminist movement goals – are one strategy to leverage more resources for women's rights and direct these to women's rights initiatives and feminist movement-building (Adeleye-Fayemi 2007).

Relationships between donors and movements are nevertheless fraught with complexity. Timescales present a challenge, as social movements intersect with institutional programming or funding for change. Short-term donor timeframes tend to conflict with longer-term movement agendas and timescales – and, hence, resourcing needs. In addition, project-focused programming and funding alters the timeframe of movement actions, which can change the nature of movement strategy and methodology (Appadurai 2002; Rich 2005; Shivji 2007). Critics of institutional funding also point to the phenomenon of external donor funding quietening the more radical ideas and strategies, and shifting accountability within funded organisations from their community-based constituency to donors (Smith 2007; Mananzala and Spade 2008).

This chapter has given a broad overview of social movements; how they are defined, how they evolve and some of their strategies and activities. Some debates, challenges and tensions faced within movements have also been discussed. The next chapter moves to looking at the ways progressive social movements have engaged, and are engaging, with feminism, women's rights and gender justice.