

SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

Around the world, social movements have become legitimate, yet contested, actors in local, national and global politics and civil society, yet we still know relatively little about their longer histories and the trajectories of their development. Our series reacts to what can be described as a recent boom in the history of social movements. We can observe a development from the crisis of labour history in the 1980s to the boom in research on social movements in the 2000s. The rise of historical interests in the development of civil society and the role of strong civil societies, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in stabilising democratically constituted polities, has strengthened interest in social movements as a constituent element of civil societies.

In different parts of the world, social movements continue to have a strong influence on contemporary politics. In Latin America, trade unions, labour parties and various left-of-centre civil society organisations have succeeded in supporting left-of-centre governments. In Europe, peace movements, ecological movements and alliances intent on campaigning against poverty and racial discrimination as well as discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation have been able to set important political agendas for decades. In other parts of the world, including Africa, India and South East Asia, social movements have played a significant role in various forms of community building and community politics. The contemporary political relevance of social movements has undoubtedly contributed to a growing historical interest in the topic.

Contemporary historians are not only beginning to historicise these relatively recent political developments; they are also trying to relate them

to a longer history of social movements, including traditional labour organisations, such as working-class parties and trade unions. In the *longue durée*, we recognise that social movements are, by no means, a recent phenomenon and are not even an exclusively modern phenomenon, although we realise that the onset of modernity emanating from Europe and North America across the wider world from the eighteenth century onwards marks an important departure point for the development of civil societies and social movements.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the dominance of national history over all other forms of history writing led to a thorough nationalisation of the historical sciences. Hence social movements have been examined traditionally within the framework of the nation state. Only during the last two decades have historians begun to question the validity of such methodological nationalism and to explore the development of social movements in a comparative, connective and transnational perspective taking into account processes of transfer, reception and adaptation. Whilst our book series does not preclude work that is still being carried out within national frameworks (for, clearly, there is a place for such studies, given the historical importance of the nation state in history), it hopes to encourage comparative and transnational histories on social movements.

At the same time as historians have begun to research the history of those movements, a range of social theorists, from Jürgen Habermas to Pierre Bourdieu, and from Slavoj Žižek to Alain Badiou, as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe to Miguel Abensour, to name but a few, have attempted to provide philosophical-cum-theoretical frameworks in which to place and contextualise the development of social movements. History has arguably been the most empirical of all the social and human sciences, but it will be necessary for historians to explore further to what extent these social theories can be helpful in guiding and framing the empirical work of the historian in making sense of the historical development of social movements. Hence, the current series is also hoping to make a contribution to the ongoing dialogue between social theory and the history of social movements.

This series seeks to promote innovative historical research on the history of social movements in the modern period since around 1750. We bring together conceptually-informed studies that analyse labour movements, new social movements and other forms of protest from early modernity to the present. With this series, we seek to revive, within the context of historiographical developments since the 1970s, a conversation between

historians, on the one hand, and sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists on the other.

Unlike most of the concepts and theories developed by social scientists, we do not see social movements as directly linked, *a priori*, to processes of social and cultural change and therefore do not adhere to a view that distinguishes between old (labour) and new (middle-class) social movements. Instead, we want to establish the concept 'social movement' as a heuristic device that allows historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to investigate social and political protests in novel settings. Our aim is to historicise notions of social and political activism in order to highlight different notions of political and social protest on both left and right.

Hence, we conceive of 'social movements' in the broadest possible sense: encompassing social formations that lie between formal organisations and mere protest events. But we also include processes of social and cultural change more generally in our understanding of social movements; this goes back to nineteenth-century understandings of 'social movement' as processes of social and cultural change more generally. We also offer a home for studies that systematically explore the political, social, economic and cultural conditions in which social movements can emerge. We are especially interested in transnational and global perspectives on the history of social movements, and in studies that engage critically and creatively with political, social and sociological theories in order to make historically grounded arguments about social movements. In short, this series seeks to offer innovative historical work on social movements, while also helping to historicise the concept of 'social movement'. It also hopes to revitalise the conversation between historians and historical sociologists in analysing what Charles Tilly has called the 'dynamics of contention'.

By focusing in on a well-known episode of contention in Spain and taking social activism seriously, *Social Movements and Spain's Transition* makes an important contribution not only to the debate on Spain's transition to democracy; it also offers conceptual insights on similar phenomena elsewhere. In this short primer, Tamar Groves, Nigel Townson, Inbal Ofer and Antonio Herrera critically discuss the question of the passivity of the Spanish population during the Spanish transition to democracy from the late 1960s into the early 1980s. They position their work between those who argue that it was precisely the lack of grassroots civil activism that allowed for a relatively smooth and negotiated transition at the level of the central Spanish state, and bottom-up approaches which claim that it was

the growth of civic activism already under the Franco dictatorship that enabled this transition. They focus on four case studies (some of them neglected in most current scholarship) and examine their impact on the transition to democracy: Catholic civic activism, neighbourhood associations, teachers' movements, and civic activism in the countryside.

These case studies allow the authors to shed explanatory light on two processes that are often viewed in isolation from each other: 'the pressures exerted by social protest on the process of negotiation between the elites' and the local embeddedness of civic activism that 'created spaces independent from the state where alternative practices and ideas were forged'. These spaces, they argue, 'fomented democratic learning by facilitating citizens' engagement in deliberation, association and collective actions'. Through this conceptual move, the authors are able to bring out a key paradox: the vibrancy of social activism and its local relevance on the one hand and the relative lack of sustained impact of social activism at the national level. More broadly, therefore, they bring out 'the tensions between [movements'] perception of democratic citizenship and the version of it that was finally adopted by the state'. In doing so, Groves, Townson, Ofer and Herrera innovatively connect research on transitions to democracy and social movement scholarship. This is a fruitful connection that we hope will influence scholarship for other cases of democratic transition in a global context as well.

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Social Movements and the Spanish Transition
Building Citizenship in Parishes, Neighbourhoods,
Schools and the Countryside

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