BOOK REVIEWS

Rachel L. Einwohner, editor

Jackie Smith. Social Movements for Global Democracy. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. $55.00 (cloth), $25.00 (paper).

Elisabeth Jay Friedman
University of San Francisco

In this volume aimed at social scientists, policy makers, and activists with global vision, Jackie Smith, a prolific analyst of transnational protest movements, offers “as much a political project as an intellectual one,” promoting the “pro-democracy forces” at the global level (p. ix). She has some clear advice for “democratic globalizers”: they “must devote greater attention to both strengthening and democratizing the U.N. system” (p. ix) to combat the worldwide impact of neoliberalism. Thus, from her opening words, Smith makes clear her position on three central debates for those concerned with progressive social movements: whether free market-led global integration is a positive or negative development; whether social movements should focus their energies on transforming institutions; and whether transnational activism is relevant for local actors.

Among proponents of and participants in social movements there is doubtlessly the most consensus on the first issue. What Smith characterizes as the “neoliberal network” of the “transnational capitalist class” (TCC) is often seen as the nemesis of those seeking social justice. But there is less agreement over the usefulness of protest that seeks to engage with institutions, or other social actors, at the transnational level. Here Smith is unequivocal. Although she does not negate the importance of alternative spaces for the expression and development of social movements (and includes a chapter on the World Social Forum process), she sees “multilateral” institutions as crucial targets for democrizers.

To make her case, Smith structures the book around two rival transnational networks, one promoting neoliberal, and the other, democratic globalization. One of her key contributions is to recognize the first as a network, made up of political, technical, and cultural elements of the TCC. Chapter 4 reviews the network’s components and main strategies: reorienting the central task of the state from regulation and redistribution to protection of (global) capital; marginalizing the U.N. as a sphere of multilateral interaction in favor of international economic institutions such as the WTO; and using massive influence over cultural production to delegitimize its opponents. This chapter will elicit painful flashbacks to the assault on the U.N. by the U.S. Congress, leading to its reformation as a leaner, more corporate-friendly institution under Kofi Annan, complete with kickbacks for his son’s business. Smith deflects possible labeling as a conspiracy theorist by calling the network’s actions “uncoordinated efforts” (p.246), but makes clear how much control is in the hands of the TCC, control that its members have used to construct a world captive to their interests.

However, the focus of the book is the democratic globalizers. Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which social movements have interacted with the U.N. system, discussing their generations and “nodes.” Smith describes how social movements have passed through a phase of intense action in the U.N. conference processes of the 1990s to seek other venues in the twenty-first century, having become disillusioned with the lack of progress on goals set out in the much heralded final conference documents. Chapter 6 discusses social movement infrastructure, collective action, and transnational connections, again noting key developments in the twenty-first century including the growth of multi-issue organizations and the “lifestyle politics” of younger (often cyber) activists. Chapter 7 examines the agenda setting of Independent Media Centers and Kyoto Now! as illustrations of contemporary attempts to wrest the agenda away from the powerful neoliberal network. That network is prominently reintroduced here, as Smith contrasts its influence with that of the democrizers’ in public, media, electoral, and governmental arenas. Having established the daunting (yet feasible) task of shifting the terms of the debate, Smith moves on to examine how social movements can and do engage in strengthening multilateral institutions. Chapter 8 first focuses on U.S.-based antipoverty advocacy to demonstrate how human rights norms can be “domesticated,” and then follows the Inuit Circumpolar Conference’s attempt to have the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS explore the culpability of the U.S. in destructive climate change. Smith’s strategic use of cases involving U.S.-based activists and the U.S. government brings home the point that local struggles should not be divorced from global preoccupations; not only do monumental problems such as climate change require global cooperation, but global discourses—and networks—can be potent sources of support for local actors. The next chapter returns to the conflict among multilateral institutions, characterizing and explaining why the goals of the U.N. are at such odds with those of economic institutions, and what some are doing to expose and rectify these contradictions. Chapter 10 reviews how the World Social Forum
is an alternative public arena for the cultivation of “skills, analyses, and identities that are essential to a democratic global polity” (p.224).

In focusing on the division between the greedy and the good, Smith can downplay internal conflict. Some of the tensions within the democratic globalizers are sidelined, such as resource distribution, which often underlies debates over whether transnational activism is productive for local struggles. The role of foundations in mitigating or, too often, exacerbating such tensions is not discussed. Although Smith defines her terms for those unfamiliar with the scholarly work invoked in her research, they do proliferate. For example, she separately introduces the key terms “complex multilateralism” (p.41) and “multilateralism” (p.90) without explaining their differences. But in general she mobilizes a host of secondary literature, as well as original field research, to offer a well-supported examination of the threats to, and need for, making multilateral institutions work on behalf of those who would save the world, not sell it. Her advice, summed up in her conclusion, is to “seek friends among enemies . . . seek more friends among bystanders . . . do not alienate your friends . . . and think and act more strategically and systematically about global institutions and democracy” (pp. 241-242). Time to renew your ACUNS membership (Academic Council on the United Nations System), at the very least.


Sidney Tarrow
Cornell University

In this significant new book, Jonathan Graubart claims that its appeal “is that it provides a conceptual framework that expands upon and synthesizes insights from studies on both international law and transnational activism” (pp.21-22). This is a bold and a potentially important claim: bold because Graubart’s data base is limited only to the procedures laid out in the NAFTA agreement that permits citizen petitions to be made against the labor or environmental practices of its three member states; potentially important because—if successful—his would be the first effort to bridge the gap between the study of transnational activism and international law. As Graubart states, “Scholarship on international law has traditionally viewed it as a command-oriented phenomenon,” and has “missed the growing influence of nonstate actors in shaping international legal developments” while “scholarship on transnational activism has been slow to incorporate international legal developments into its analysis” (p.21).

Both of Graubart’s critiques of the literature are largely correct. As someone who sat through a class on international human rights law and never heard a word about politics or social movements, I believe his critique of that field’s thin treatment of “soft law” is correct. On the other side, because NAFTA is a neoliberal-oriented agreement and social movement scholars are skeptical of the possibilities of opposing it through international institutions, many of them have dismissed NAFTA’s side agreements as lacking teeth. Both groups of scholars give short shrift to the mechanisms that Graubart thinks lend strength to NAFTA as a focus for social justice issues: its “soft law citizen petitions.”

How do Graubart’s findings hold up against his bold and important claim? For a start, his methods are equal to the task he has set himself. Graubart used both field research and archival work to study all of the citizen petitions filed by both labor and environmental activists from the start of NAFTA in 1994 to 2002—twenty-one for labor and twenty-eight for the environment. He “assessed activists’ goals in filing the petitions, the level of political effort employed to promote them, the degree of legal support given by each quasi-judicial body, and the target actors’ responses to the process” (p.22). These detailed findings were supplemented with an overview of developments through 2006. If nothing else, this was an extremely labor-intensive exercise. Graubart had to deal with activists and officials in three countries for two different sets of procedures and institutions in the presence of significant political changes (i.e., the PRI was collapsing in Mexico and Clintonite internationalism was giving way to Bushite unilateralism in the U.S.).

The book begins with two somewhat dissertationish chapters: one on the legalization of politics, written mainly to educate social movement scholars about international law (we need it!), and the second to inform international law scholars about social movements. Assessing the first task is beyond my competence, while the second draws on both the political process approach to transnational activism and on the norms-based “constructivist” approach of Keck and Sikkink. The fusion between these two approaches is not seamless in Graubart’s hands (and, in fact, he seems only dimly aware of their differences), but the chapter serves as a good
introduction to how transnational activists use international law.

And how is that? “Put simply,” Graubart writes, “domestically rooted activists employ promising international institutions to boost political causes at home.” In an artful blending of political opportunity structure theory and legal mobilization scholarship (especially that of political scientist Michael McCann), Graubart argues that movements can use quasi-judicial institutions like those provided by the NAFTA agreements in three main ways: first, to frame a long experienced injustice “in new, more compelling and sensible terms”; second, to create a resonance that “attracts favorable publicity and new supporters”; and third, to put target actors on the defensive and put the onus on them to respond favorably to restore their public image” (pp.48-49).

Of course, these stratagems seldom produce outright legal victories. Some states are more vulnerable than others (Mexico during its period of liberalization was particularly so); some activists more capable than others of organizing (the Canadians were first off the mark, even before the ratification of NAFTA); some claims resonate more readily with international audiences and target states than others (for example, torture, though we see that a determined hegemonic state can ignore even evidence of that!); changes in the domestic political setting can undermine even the determined efforts of activists (Mexico’s move to the pro-business Fox administration and the U.S. shift to the antimultilateral Bush administration are the major examples); and some institutions are more likely to produce success than others (in NAFTA, the environmental sector is bolstered by an independent secretariat with consistent support for the petition process, while labor enjoys no such advantages).

But the important point for Graubart is not the number of petition cases that activists won or lost, but the fact that the quasi judicial processes established by NAFTA provide a political opportunity structure that resonates with public opinion, exposes contradictions between a government’s legal claims and its actual behavior, and (though this is the least well fortified claim of the book) creates precedents for future decisions that serve as a foundation for activists to fight another day.

We could cavil, particularly with respect to Graubart’s summary treatment of social movement scholarship. This body of work, he warns, “has not addressed the specific legal qualities of such institutions, especially their power to bestow added legitimacy on a cause” (p.47). Well, maybe, but his coverage of the extensive literature on transnational activism is partial and somewhat dated. This reader would have been more convinced of Graubart’s critique had he examined the political use of the legal process in work on the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, or the European Court of Justice. None of these make an appearance in the book. Second, while Graubart makes much use of framing metaphors (e.g., “frame resonance”), the well-known work of David Snow and his collaborators is never cited. Finally, there is little consideration of the “elephant in the room” in transnational activism: is it producing a fusion of the domestic and international realms (as I asked, but did not answer, elsewhere [Tarrow 2005: ch. 11]), or are we seeing only outcroppings of internationalism in a sea of states?

Some enthusiasts have assumed that all efforts to use international institutions to advance domestic goals are breaking down the divide between the local and the global. Thus, framing domestic claims in global terms has the same analytical status as the formation of true transnational social movements. Graubart is not guilty of such sloppy thinking. But he does leave us in the dark about whether he thinks that mounting soft law petitions in the framework of NAFTA is moving the international system in a Polanyian direction where social justice criteria will have a sporting chance against the relentless tide of neoliberalism.

Nevertheless, within the 152 pages of this densely argued and richly documented book, Graubart has effectively challenged both international lawyers and social movement scholars (not to mention political scientists) to take more seriously the incremental effects of soft law on state legal autonomy in the hard times of international globalization. That is an achievement that social movement scholars who doubt the importance of the political process in the emergence and outcomes of contentious politics will need to contend with.


Alex S. Vitale
Brooklyn College

Luis Fernandez’s Policing Dissent is a first-hand account of the nature and effect of social control practices utilized by police against the
emergent American anti-globalization movement. The author’s goal is to paint a more nuanced portrait of the nature of police disruption of social movements in the wake of the new tactics of the decentralized anti-globalization protestors and the enhanced repressive repertoire of the police after 9/11.

Fernandez utilizes a verstehen methodology that acknowledges a compassionate and deep connection to those being studied. Presumably in this case it is directed only toward the demonstrators and not the police, who are also an object of his study. The book centers on six cases: Seattle, WTO, 1999; Washington, IMF/World Bank, 2002; New York, World Economic Forum 2002; Kananaskis, G8, 2002; Cancun WTO, 2003; and Miami, FTAA, 2003, which were witnessed firsthand from the prospective of the demonstrators. This ethnographic material is then supplemented with a review of official documents and interviews with both demonstrators and police. The interviews with police provide some of the most original empirical material in the book, giving an important insight into the nature and meaning of demonstration policing from those engaging in social control practices. This material stands in contrast to much of the rest of the book as well as the broader literature on this topic, which relies exclusively on the perspective of either the demonstrators or direct observation.

One of the weaknesses of Fernandez’s approach is that it fails to bring a critical perspective on the actions and statements of the demonstrators. The book is a sophisticated exploration of how the antiglobalization movement sees itself and police actions directed against it. This in and of itself is a valuable contribution, but a more critical approach might have offered more insight into how social control practices are mutually produced by both the controller and the controlled.

Much of the literature on the policing of demonstrations focuses on what triggers outbreaks of violence and repressive police action at demonstrations. Fernandez rejects this approach in favor of a social control framework, which attempts to understand how police practices influence protestor behavior in experiential terms. Utilizing a Foucauldian approach, he explores how government employs “biopower” to control, discipline, and redirect protest activity. Rather than emphasizing the nature of police repression, he tries to show how the police use legal, psychological, and physical methods of control against demonstrators. The last three chapters of the book explore each of these in relation to his six case studies.

Fernandez argues that the landscape of protest policing changed significantly following the anti-WTO protests in Seattle and the September 11 terrorist attacks. The first event showed that anti-globalization protestors were organized in new ways that made previous forms of policing less effective, as could be seen in the failures of the Seattle police to prevent the protests that disrupted the opening day of the WTO and normal business in the central part of the city. Instead of being organized around large organizations or traditional coalitions, with high profile leaders and centralized decision making structures, anti-globalization protestors form a “multitude” of semiautonomous actors and small organizations acting in loose concert around shared general themes. This requires that the police be more flexible and proactive in controlling protest activity.

Fernandez argues further that the events of 9/11 reshaped the terrain of protest policing by giving the police a freer hand. A climate of fear and enhanced state power (including the USA Patriot Act) has given the police the ability to use more aggressive methods, such as the surveillance and preemptive disruption of protest activity. This is a somewhat weaker argument, since many of these tactics were in use prior to 2001 at demonstrations not reviewed by Fernandez, such as those at the 2000 Republican National Convention in Philadelphia.

He also challenges the distinction between hard- and soft-hat policing in the form of the negotiated management model adopted following the violent protests of the 1960s and 1970s. Although this model relies less on direct physical violence to control protestors, it is still a powerful form of social control, according to Fernandez. It utilizes legal and bureaucratic methods to dictate the time, location, and style of protest activity, and compels protestors to request the approval and cooperation of the police. While Fernandez offers a strong critique of this form of policing, he fails to appreciate that much of the literature acknowledges this critique and that most departments have rejected this method for large demonstrations since Seattle.

Overall, the book provides useful empirical information about the tools used by the police beginning in Seattle in 1999 and about how the anti-globalization movement conceptualizes the use of these tools. All of this makes the book a worthwhile piece of research for those studying either the policing of demonstrations or the American anti-globalization movement.

**Thomas V. Maher**
Ohio State University

Almeida’s book contributes to the growing number of studies of the process of popular contention in nondemocratic states by focusing on waves of protest in El Salvador between 1925 and 2003. He states that “waves of popular unrest in nondemocratic and democratizing contexts demonstrate that multiple political contexts exist that generate expanded collective action” (p. 215, emphasis in the original). This observation allows him to draw from political process and resource mobilization models to identify three separate, yet connected, political environments that drive large scale waves of popular contention and the organizational structures associated with each. Almeida refers to these environments that induced mobilization as mobilization by liberalization (opportunity-induced), mobilization by intimidation (threat-induced), and mobilization by globalization (opportunity/threat hybrid). Each of the environments is explained in association with a protest wave in El Salvador.

The first protest wave, called mobilization by liberalization, updates classic political opportunity structure. From 1962 until 1972, civic organizations responded to expanding political opportunities, specifically competitive elections and increased institutional access, to form an organizational infrastructure. Multiple social sectors took advantage of these opportunities and worked together, often striking in support of one another. The democratizing environment and the different organizations’ reformist goals ensured that contentious behavior during this period was largely nonviolent and nondisruptive. Almeida argues that this environment is the most vital to contentious behavior in nondemocracies because, unlike democratic environments, movements need a sustained period of liberalization in order to form an organizational infrastructure before mobilizing. In contrast, activists are able to draw from long existing civic and social movement organizations immediately upon mobilizing in democratic environments (p. 17).

The period of mobilization by intimidation started soon after the government committed electoral fraud in 1972, effectively ending the period of liberalization. Almeida identifies three threats—state-attributed economic problems, erosion of rights, and state repression—as the driving forces of mobilization during this protest wave. As the environment became increasingly threatening, the multisectoral organizations that formed during the previous period of liberalization initially went into abeyance until 1977. However, the increased militarization of the regime changed the interests, organizations, and identities of these “holdovers,” radicalizing them and changing their goals from reform to revolution. New organizational structures, referred to as multisectoral broker organizations (MSBOS), emerged in response to the increasingly repressive environment. These new structures created an organizational infrastructure that was vital for ending the lull in oppositional activity in 1977. Unlike the liberalization-inspired wave of protest, the threatening environment prodded challenger organizations to respond with mass disruptions and oppositional violence rather than nonviolent tactics. This conflict escalated into a full-blown civil war in 1981, which ended the protest wave.

After the civil war tapered off in the mid 1980s, El Salvador adopted various neoliberal economic measures. Civic organizations were initially unable to prevent these measures, but a wave of protest emerged after political opportunities increased. This wave of protest was the result of the third environment that generated collective action: mobilization by globalization. During this period, civic organizations relied on increasing opportunities (the return of competitive elections and increased institutional access) to respond to the threat of state-attributed economic problems (in this case, the privatization of health care). Civic organizations used these opportunities to bring organizations from multiple sectors under the same banner. These groups responded to the opportunity-threat hybrid environment by relying on nonviolent and disruptive forms of protest to call for specific economic policy reforms. Their efforts successfully quashed the economic threat of privatized health care by taking advantage of expanding opportunities.

Almeida’s book effectively and clearly negotiates an alphabet soup of political, labor, student, teacher, and church organizations to provide a historical and sociological understanding of protest in El Salvador. Along with its empirical rigor, the author’s grounded theoretical discussion expands the framework of political opportunity in nondemocratic environments by integrating threat and organizational infrastructures into the analysis. These contributions will be helpful as movement scholars work to distinguish between social movements in democratic and nondemocratic environments.

However, Almeida could have pushed elements of his theoretical and empirical analysis...
further by discussing how threat is conceptualized and the role of international pressures. Almeida identifies threatening characteristics, but he spends little time explaining the mechanisms of action or how they are collectively perceived as threatening. At points, the author’s discussion of threat implies that the reason that threats deter mobilization has little to do with the type or intensity of threat and more to do with the lack of organizational infrastructure. Furthermore, the book roots each of the theoretical frameworks in historical data, but these roots may weaken the generalizability of the frameworks. An example of this is the fact that it seems like the second environment, mobilization by intimidation, is path dependent on a previous period of sustained liberalization. The author briefly attempts to delink these two environments in the last chapter, stating that the infusion of resources from elite allies may fill the same role (p.216), but the links between two frameworks still call for future research to separate the two environments.

Finally, the author briefly refers to international allies, pressures, and conflicts throughout the book. Yet, Almeida leaves the reader wondering about the role of the international community, even in the chapter on El Salvador under neoliberalism. The lack of discussion of international forces is especially problematic considering Schock’s (1999) research showing that international pressures play an important role for protest movements in other nondemocratic environments. A thorough analysis of international forces could expand Almeida’s theoretical framework, considering that such forces can open opportunities, exacerbate threats, and aid organizations.

Overall, Almeida’s book deftly negotiates eighty years of Latin American history and provides a solid analysis of protest waves in authoritarian environments. Social movement scholars will be building on the author’s analysis of how movements organize and respond to threat and opportunity in nondemocratic environments for years to come.


Suzanne Staggenborg
University of Pittsburgh

In *Finding the Movement* Anne Enke argues that we cannot truly understand the second wave of the women’s movement by looking for feminism only in obvious places, such as self-professed feminist organizations. To locate the emerging movement of the 1960s and 1970s, she looks at local activities in the urban areas of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Chicago, and Detroit, presenting stories of activism within spatial contexts. Sexuality is central to these stories, as Enke argues that “a history of women’s engagement with public space is necessarily also a history of sexuality” (p.8). However, the book goes beyond the politicized lesbian feminist identity to a much broader conception of how activists of different races and classes forged identities in public spaces despite charges of deviance.

Based on extensive documentary research and interviews with movement participants in the three locales, Enke examines women’s activism in three types of public spaces: commercial, civic, and institutional spaces. The commercial spaces include nighttime marketplaces such as bars as well as alternative marketplaces such as feminist cafes and bookstores. Lesbian struggles for contested bar space were central to the emergence of feminism. Enke argues, insofar as they created spaces that were free from harassment and encouraged supportive alternative communities for women, Bar culture was racially segregated, however, and African American women in cities such as Detroit created a social world of “dollar parties” held in more private venues, which supported an alternative community and helped black lesbians to assert themselves in gay black bars. These alternative community spaces created the foundation for a more politicized women’s bar culture in which activists began to explicitly embrace feminism. Outside of gay and lesbian bars, women also created community in other commercial spaces, particularly women’s bookstores, which provided spaces for feminist gatherings. While developing lesbian feminism in commercial spaces, however, organizers also contributed to racial segregation and gender stratification within the movement insofar as particular locations were accessible only to white women and only certain forms of gender expression and appearance were acceptable in bars and other places.

Enke’s account of the origins of feminist activism in civic spaces is one of the most interesting parts of the book. She brings to life the Motown Soul Sisters, a Detroit softball team that challenged racism, sexism, and homophobia in the 1960s and early 1970s. Sponsored by Motown Records, the Soul Sisters were a “black team” that also included several white and Chicana women as well as lesbians. They took to the diamonds of Detroit public parks and also toured
the country playing an aggressive game of softball that challenged gender norms and associated the team with sexual deviance. While facing racism, sexism, and gay baiting, they served as “models of assertive black female athleticism” (p.125) and won a diverse base of fans. Although softball is not typically seen as a political activity, Enke shows how the Soul Sisters laid claim to male-dominated civic spaces and challenged racial segregation and gender norms by “simultaneously occupying public space in new ways and carving resistant spaces out of deviant reputations” (p.138). Other softball teams followed the Soul Sisters’ example, and activists with explicitly lesbian and feminist identities organized around the use of civic athletic spaces, challenging race, class, and gender exclusion in the public parks. Building on a long-time use of softball teams as visible arenas for lesbians, feminists organized “out lesbian” softball teams and created new politicized communities around civic spaces.

Battered women’s shelters, feminist health centers, feminist credit unions, coffeehouses, and women’s clubs were among the service-oriented feminist projects that created new spaces for feminist activism. With such projects, feminism became institutionalized as activists established public spaces and regularly interacted with local institutions such as police, hospitals, and social service agencies. Like the commercial and civic projects, these alternative institutional spaces involved choices of neighborhood and negotiations with established institutions such as churches for space. Spatial dynamics limited access by race, class, and sexuality and created hierarchies within the women’s movement. Enke analyzes, for example, the way in which use of interior space in a socially progressive church for a women’s coffeehouse provided physical security and class legitimacy for lesbians, but resulted in the exclusion of masculine looking lesbian-identified persons (p.226).

The emphasis on spatial dynamics, local organizing, and the broad range of activities implicated in the rise of the second wave of the women’s movement makes Finding the Movement a valuable and highly original addition to the historiography of the U.S. women’s movement. Enke demonstrates the importance of everyday spaces and opportunities in the emergence of the movement, and she details the spatial processes by which activists make claims on existing public spaces and institutions and build new ones, sometimes creating exclusions based on race, class, gender expression, and sexuality. The book provides valuable detail on local movement dynamics, showing how feminism arises in a variety of social spaces and documenting the critical role of lesbians and sexuality in the origins of the movement. This work complements other historical work on the women’s movement, such as Susan Hartmann’s study of activists within liberal establishments (The Other Feminists, Yale University Press, 1998), which points to other, very different sites where the origins of the movement can be found. Historians are finding “feminist footholds everywhere,” as Hartmann puts it; in order to understand the scope of the movement, we need to see how movement ideas and structures develop in a variety of settings, including those that are not explicitly feminist.

As a historian, Enke does not employ concepts from social movement theory, but her work is relevant to theoretical work on the geography of social movements and to efforts to understand how movements arise within cultural and institutional contexts. For instance, social movement scholars might draw on both Enke’s account and Elizabeth Armstrong’s examination of how a gay identity movement formed and changed the “organizational fields” of San Francisco (Forging Gay Identities, University of Chicago Press, 2002) to theorize about the processes by which movements carve out spaces in different organizational contexts, including commercial ones. Social movement theorists have begun to conceptualize movements broadly as challenges to authorities and norms in a variety of settings, as ideologically structured action, and as social movement communities consisting of a range of loosely connected actors. Enke’s study provides us with some of the empirical material needed to further develop our ideas about how movements emerge and develop in local spaces.


Steven C. McKay
University of California, Santa Cruz

Since shortly after the first export processing zones mushroomed across Southeast Asia in the early 1970s, researchers have been exposing the exploitation and gendered labor control produced in these global factories. So why another book on “exploited female workers?” Panghsapa states, “one must continue to write about them precisely because their situation has not changed” (p.9). More importantly, she focuses on the lives and struggles of Thai women textile workers to dispel
the persistent image of their passivity and document how such employment led at least some women along “the path to militancy.”

To these ends, Pangsapa offers a nuanced, and yes, “textured” comparative ethnography of how industrial wage work and broader economic crises condition women’s lives and consciousness. One of the strengths of the book is its focus on older women workers—many of whom are mothers and family breadwinners who have worked in the industry for up to thirty years—which shatters the image often replicated in such studies that export factory work is done exclusively by young, single women. But beyond a descriptive defense of women’s agency, Pangsapa seeks to explain patterns of worker politicization and collective action and why different workers, despite similar backgrounds and circumstances, may choose to accommodate or actively resist the grueling demands of factory employment. The author interviewed textile workers and union activists in and around Bangkok in the years following the 1997 Asian financial crisis. From her data, Pangsapa constructs two ideal types of worker behavior: “militant” and “nonmilitant.” She argues that for all workers, the daily grind of wage work “becomes a permanent fixture in women’s lives,” deeply influencing their perceptions and social relations (p.14). But it is the specific mix of direct and indirect workplace coercion, coupled with workers’ changing material constraints and degree of social connections beyond the factory, that best explains why some acquiesce while others collectively challenge their exploitation. Here, I find the book less illuminating, since it tends to reproduce, rather than interrogate, the simple analytical binary of “exploited” versus “empowered” workers.

Pangsapa begins with a detailed analysis of “nonmilitant” women—those with extended factory careers working extremely long hours (often twelve hours a day, seven days a week), yet who eschew collective protest. The author argues that workers’ nonmilitancy should not be misinterpreted as passivity or false consciousness, but rather as the active accommodation to work that provides valued economic security for workers and their families. Yet beyond material dependence, workers accept and even embrace their employment due to the strong social and emotional bonds forged with other women, the stability and refuge of routine factory life, and the status and sense of empowerment that breadwinning provides. Finally, the key employer’s paternalistic management style (and available overtime) allowed for relatively decent pay and working conditions, engendering a collective sense of worker identity with the company.

The author then turns to the narratives of “militant” women workers with relatively similar backgrounds to tease out what led these particular workers to collective action. How these women, mainly key union leaders from a single factory, become labor activists hinges on several factors, including draconian control and terrible working conditions, along with management’s fundamental disrespect and union busting. But such conditions are not uncommon across the industry. The key differences in this case are strong ties with long-term coworkers, connections to unions in neighboring factories, and involvement with a local workers’ center that provides the resources, space, and community for workers to develop not only their union, but also their own “activist” identities. Pangsapa uses her considerable access to collect telling and detailed activist biographies that are often missing in the literature on women factory workers.

A final strength of the book is its pre- and post-crisis analysis, showing how economic shifts taking place far beyond the workplace greatly influence working conditions as well as workers’ lives and collective bargaining power. Here we see how the 1997 economic crisis and the factory owner’s opportunistic downsizing and reorganization of work and pay effectively disciplined militant unionized workers into either compliance or unemployment. And while some previously “nonmilitant” workers did act collectively through concerted slow downs, ultimately, employers’ stronger leverage and the nonactions of the national government ushered in new forms of work intensification, thereby reducing worker solidarity, weakening unions, and increasing alienation.

The book, then, provides vivid narratives of Thai women’s lives and struggles and succeeds in unmasking the passive caricature of female factory workers. For this alone it should be read. However, the book also has a few limitations, methodological and analytical. First, by sampling “militants” and “nonmilitants” from separate companies and localities, the author is unable to systematically analyze the variations in agency among “nonmilitants” that did not protest, or why workers in the unionized company did not necessarily become labor activists. Second, while Pangsapa applies existing frameworks to examine worker consent and agency, I was left wanting more theoretical depth. For example, her construction of the “militant” versus “non-militant” ideal types tends to narrow and flatten the richness of her data, obscuring what could have been a more complex theoretical analysis of agency and subjectivity. Pangasapa also laments that women workers are “disposable,” yet does
not fully analyze how textile work and textile workers become cheapened and gendered in the first place. In this sense, Pangsapa misses the opportunity to fully scrutinize and dismantle what Melissa Wright has called the ongoing and global “myth of the disposable third world woman.”

Nevertheless, *Textures of Struggle* provides a rich portrait of Thai workers and their activism. Because the political economic conditions—both local and transnational—these workers face loom over an ever-growing swath of the globe, their voices and stories of struggle deserve to be heard.


Gianpaolo Baiocchi
Brown University

Does political contention weaken civic life? Mische’s *Partisan Publics* challenges common-sense views that partisanship is opposed to civic engagement. Not only is partisanship unavoidable in democracy, but it can “in some circumstances, be a creative, motivating, and institutionally generative source of civic involvement and reform” (p.23). Based on the case of youth activism in Brazil during the years of transition to democracy, the book examines styles of leadership, modes of communication, and the network embeddedness of activists in those exciting years in which “partisan” and “civic” modes of engagement overlapped and fed off of each other.

This book joins a growing body of social scientific literature that dialogues with what can be described in shorthand fashion as democratic theory. It joins authors like Robert Fishman, Francesca Polletta, Andrew Perrin, Nina Eliasoph, and Leonardo Avtrizer, among others, who have begun to carve out an exciting space within North American sociology for discussions about truly existing civil societies. Like them, Mische looks to normative democratic theory for cues about the important questions (such as the nature of publics) as well as for a foil to expose assumptions and raise subsequent questions. Together, these are accounts of civil society informed by sociological realism that engage in a theoretical reconstruction, one that typically occupies a space somewhere between normative theory and sociological accounts. Mische’s book is a wonderful exemplar of this new genre.

At the heart of the book is the productive tension between partisan and public motivations and styles of discourse which, rather than as portrayed in liberal democratic theory as always being opposed, here find themselves to be mutually constitutive in unexpected ways. The first part of the book is dedicated to “institutional intersections.” After a chapter on cohorts of activists from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, which identifies distinct periods based on changing institutional contexts, the book examines historical processes that account for these changes. It discusses, for instance, the return of student activism in the late 1970s, the new role of the progressive church, and emergent styles of “partisan bridging” as actors tried to imagine what multiple forms of engagement would look like. There is also a chapter on the role of coalitions and styles of bridging in the impeachment mobilization in the early 1990s. The second part of the book tells the story from the point of view of communicative processes that emerged in these changing contexts. After convincingly arguing that communicative styles have roots in relational contexts, the chapters explore different communicative styles in various settings: a national students organization, a catholic pastoral, and different universities. Finally, the book examines instances of innovation and of breakdown, again enabled and constrained by relational contexts.

*Partisan Publics* is a remarkable book. It will make a mark in sociology, political science, and Latin American studies. It is smartly written, subtle, and packs an important theoretical punch. Much like the activists that the author describes, this book bridges theoretical perspectives (“‘systemics, pragmatics, and performances,’” p.32), methodologies (network analysis, ethnography, life history), and ultimately, publics as it makes a number of impressive contributions to the various literatures. It effortlessly mixes formal network techniques with ethnographic detail; it also straddles social movement theory, the sociology of culture and organizations, network analysis, and civil society theories. Lastly, it brings an important case to bear on these theories, though suggesting that much of what we know of Brazil’s so-called negotiated transition to democracy is based on analyses that either downplay or neglect the movement brokers who actively build publics by bringing distinctive sets of communicative strategies and commitments to these fora.

Partisanship provides important narratives and perspectives for participants, structures of mediation, and motivation for participants in publics. But it can also bring manipulation, factionalism, and in-fighting. The book’s punch line and story are elegant: partisanship can contribute to civic vitality, but not always. It does so when skilled leaders draw on appropriate com-
municative styles, which themselves are supported by institutionalized practices and relational contexts, thus highlighting the positive potentials of partisanship while keeping the negative ones at bay. Mische identifies four kinds of democratic communication that undergird different sorts of partisan publics: exploratory dialogue (a Habermasian set of communicative exchanges), discursive positioning (forging collective identities, à la Gramsci), reflective problem solving (akin to what Dewey imagined for publics), and tactical maneuvers (after Machiavelli).

The book also raises some interesting questions for further reflection. First, of course, is the question of whether all political parties are equally “partisan” by definition. What if a political party has as its platform not the narrow goals of a particular constituency, but a broad articulation of identities? The PT, for example, is a party that historically has valued the civic, and its early documents show a lot of influence of Eastern European discourse on civil society. In fact, the “new citizenship” documented by Evelina Dagnino and others refers precisely to this confluence, and citizenship and the civic became highly valued in the PT, especially as its “classist” orientation gave way to social and civic concerns during the 1980s and 1990s. The second question concerns how and whether the different kinds of publics described accommodate difference, which appears in the accounts to be suppressed for the sake of the communication within the publics. The tension between partisan-as-narrow and civic-as-broad sets of identities becomes at least complicated when one imagines publics that recognize difference as an organizing principle. A multicultural space, for instance might recognize specific identities that are both narrow and broad at the same time. The question to ponder is whether such agonistically plural publics existed (and here one might imagine the influence of Arendt and Mouffe instead of Habermas and Dewey) or whether their absence was the price for partisan-civic confluence.


Steven Epstein
University of California, San Diego

At a meeting at Swarthmore College in 1949, a group of scientists formed the Society for Social Responsibility in Science (SSRS) and called upon their peers to refuse to take on work that was incompatible with the public good. In 1959, a group calling itself the Greater St. Louis Citizens’ Committee for Nuclear Information (CNI) promoted the Baby Tooth Survey, which organized parents to mail in their children’s baby teeth in order to test them for strontium-90 from above-ground atomic testing. In 1969, activists from Science for the People (SfP) interrupted the normally staid annual meeting of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science with shouting, holding up placards, and indicting the head of the Atomic Energy Commission for “the crime of SCIENCE AGAINST THE PEOPLE.” These vivid examples from Kelly Moore’s terrific book, *Disrupting Science*, demonstrate both the dynamism and the variability of political activism on the part of U.S. scientists from the end of the second World War through the turbulent 1960s.

A growing body of scholarly literature has considered the effects of “social movements” on “science” or has analyzed the uptake of “science” by “social movements.” This line of research has many virtues, but it has tended to reinforce the presumption that these are separate social domains whose unanticipated collisions are therefore worthy of study. Moore instead explores the intricate threading of social movements inside scientific networks and the diverse and creative ways in which scientists have positioned themselves as activists. She argues convincingly that the cultural and political significance of scientists’ social movements has been overlooked to the detriment of our understanding of the place of science in modern politics. She also correctly observes that the stories we tell about Sixties activism remain incomplete if we leave out the important work of scientists in challenging the technoscientific underpinnings of state militarism.

In contrast to those scholars who have studied the professionalization of social movements, Moore takes us inside what she calls the “social movementization of professions.” In meticulous fashion, she traces how scientists’ political awareness led various groups of them to construct a series of new organizations which, in turn, innovated new possibilities for what it might mean to be both a scientist and a political actor. Moore uses her study of the three exemplary organizations named above—the SSRS, the CNI, and SfP—to distinguish three ideal-typical pathways for how scientists who are critical of the status quo might engage with the political process as scientists: as moral individuals who bear witness, as conduits for the relay of information critical to public debate, and as advocates for new scientific activity that advances the interests of “the people” and not “the system.” Moore explains how these three different organizational
paths also corresponded to distinctive repertoires of collective action, theories of social change, and conceptions of the nature of science.

More profoundly, Moore uses these cases to describe the ironic consequences of the clash between knowledge and power. On one hand, while promoting themselves as virtuous citizens, many activist scientists were highly critical of the old mythologies of science as a politically neutral activity. On the other hand, by encouraging more democratic approaches to science policy, activist scientists helped usher in a world in which ever more diverse kinds of social actors seek to make claims about scientific matters. (In a twist on studies that show how scientists use “boundary work” to protect their turf, Moore calls this the “unbounding” of scientific authority.) As a result, Moore argues, the overall social power of scientists has decreased in recent decades, even as the salience and cultural significance of science as an institution has increased. Thus the most consequential effects of activism by scientists lie not in specific policy changes or enduring organizational forms, but in the double-edged impact on scientific authority. This is a complex argument, and it demonstrates how far Moore is from any simple cheerleading on behalf of activist science. To be sure, Moore has difficulty establishing the relative significance of scientists’ activism on the “unbounding” of scientific authority: Given that scientific institutions have taken hits from many quarters since the Second World War, it is impossible to say just how much scientist activists have contributed to the loss of professional authority and how much that authority has been eroded by outsiders. Moore acknowledges the point but also insists—I suspect correctly—that the role played by scientists in this regard is not negligible.

The analysis of “unbounding” also allows Moore to move beyond two alternative but equally narrow depictions of what motivates scientists to do their work. Neither the traditional conception of the scientist as heroic pursuer of truth at all costs, nor the revisionist account that privileges the motives of professional advancement and the monopolization of authority, does justice to scientists as flesh-and-blood social actors possessing complex goals, desires, dreams, and ethical commitments. Indeed, the narrowly instrumental understandings of scientists as defenders of their professional prerogatives have left us at a loss when trying to understand cases, such as those described here by Moore, where scientists seem willing publicly to question their own claims to cultural authority and special status.

Disrupting Science is first rate work in multiple respects: the quality of the writing and the compelling character of the narrative; the attention devoted to locating scientists’ actions within a broader political and cultural milieu; the careful reconstruction of the history from extensive primary source materials, including both archival documents and Moore’s own interviews with scientist activists; and the skillful interweaving of diverse theoretical resources from the sociology of science, social movements, organizations, culture, the professions, and more. In these pages Moore comes across as the sort of scholar who has taken the time to figure out how everyone else’s work relates to her own, as well as what she has to say back to them. At the same time, Moore’s account serves as an exemplary case study in what she and Scott Frickel have billed in their 2006 book as “the new political sociology of science.” I expect her new book to be read widely across the discipline.