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A Radical Journal of Geography

Cristina Flesher Fominaya, *Social Movements and Globalization: How Protests, Occupations, and Uprisings are Changing the World*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. ISBN: 9780230360860 (cloth); ISBN: 9780230360877 (paper)

Social Movements and Globalization by Cristina Flesher Fominaya is one of the first major monographs to be published on the subject since a new wave of social movements shook the world in 2011. The author links globalizing trends over the last few decades with new forms of mobilization—some of which involve historically marginalized or hitherto silent actors—exploring a number of recent uprisings, occupations, protests and other struggles. Examining the rise of what she calls “autonomous” movements, and showing how they differ from the more institutionalized forms of political resistance which dominated the movements of the early and mid 20th century, Flesher Fominaya presents a creative analysis of globalizing processes. Instead of providing a simplified linear chronology, she pulls together various, often parallel, developments such as geopolitical reconfigurations, increased interconnections, the expansion of neoliberal policies, increased social inequalities, and technological advances. Hence, the book manages to capture the complexity of global, national and local processes, and the ways they have influenced, and been influenced by, the dynamics of social movements.

The book is structured into six main chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. After an introductory first chapter, in the second and third chapters Flesher Fominaya reviews contemporary scholarship on social movements and globalization while addressing the interrelations between them. Issues such as homogenization and heterogenization, diffusing trends of social movements, and neoliberalism as a new form of capitalist globalization are discussed in these two chapters. The fourth chapter, on the global justice movement, provides a history from the Battle of Seattle in 1999 to the Genoa protests against the G8 summit in 2001. The fifth chapter shows the importance of cultural resistance in encountering hegemony and dominant ideologies. A chapter on “Social Movements, Media, and Information and Communication Technologies” explores social movements’ media strategies and the ways in

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which ICTs are transforming mobilization. Before the conclusion, a chapter on the Arab Spring, *Indignados* and Occupy examines the emergence and evolution of these movements in the context of the global economic crisis and global justice movement; Flesher Fominaya compares these movements' tactics and strategies, and considers the ways in which they have influenced each other.

The author's major contributions in *Social Movements and Globalization* are as follows. First, Flesher Fominaya shows that linking globalization and social movements should go beyond understanding the emergence and dynamics of transnational or global movements. She emphasizes the continuing importance of national contexts and underlines that despite the acceleration of globalizing processes historical and cultural trajectories remain very significant. She illustrates how globalization has transformed (and is transforming) these contexts, and highlights the uneven patterns of globalization in different settings.

Second, she emphasizes the importance of cultural resistance, counter-cultural movements, and "lifestyle" movements. Hence, she goes beyond conventional understandings of the correlation between social movements and globalization where economy and politics are recognized as the main sites of conflict. Putting Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to work, she highlights the importance of culture as a site of conflict, and the significance of challenging dominant ideologies which are transmitted through cultural practices is explored over a whole chapter.

Third, much of the literature on the recent uprisings is focused on examinations of either one country or a series of movements which are categorized under a single name (Occupy, the Arab Spring, *etc.*). Flesher Fominaya's book is helpful for those interested in gaining a broader perspective on the recent wave of social movements. From the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings to the Occupy and *Indignados* protests, the author offers an overview of the connections as well as the differences among these movements. Moreover, she offers an analysis of the relationship between the recent global financial crises and struggles to (re)claim democracy. While she analyzes the emergence of *Indignados* and Occupy as direct consequences of the 2008 crisis, she contextualizes the Arab Spring differently, demonstrating

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the role of the authoritarian state in Tunisia and Egypt and tracing socio-economic upheavals to the neoliberal reforms of the late 1990s. Flesher Fominaya does a good job examining these movements as rooted in national contexts while remaining sensitive to their strong transnational diffusions.

Fourth, Flesher Fominaya observes that in the recent wave of social movements there has been a shift from the critique of capitalism to a call for democracy and socio-economic justice. Furthermore, she claims that in the recent wave the state has gained significance; activists' critique is directed less towards "abstract financial processes of global capitalism and/or transnational or supranational actors" (p.187) and more towards national political and economic elites and their roles in configuring global processes. Hence, the author claims that the "reclaiming of the state"—the "democratic turn"—has become a key characteristic of the recent social movements.

Social Movements and Globalization is an admirable book, sketching-out the relationship between recent social movements and globalization. However, it could have benefited from an in-depth analysis of previous struggles, situating the recent movements within their historical context and exploring (dis)continuities from the latter half of the 20th century. Moreover, the book could have integrated movements in the global South more effectively. Although the author at times refers to Southern movements (for example, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and Mujeres Creando in Bolivia) to explain some of her arguments, her general narrative remains Northern. It is unclear how the global South and the struggles of people in these regions over the past half-century fit into the provided narrative. It has not been demonstrated how globalizing trends have influenced major mobilizations in the global South and how contestations there—including anti-colonial movements—have influenced globalization processes.

Nevertheless, *Social Movements and Globalization* provides a persuasive account of how social movements are changing the world and how they have been transformed in recent years. The book is an accessible and engaging read, one that will benefit scholars of social movements and globalization.

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Simin Fadaee

Institute of Asian and African Studies

Humboldt University of Berlin

simin.fadaee@hu-berlin.de

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