

Howard Ramos and Kathleen Rodgers (eds.), *Politics & Protest: The Promise of Social Movement Societies* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015). 363pp. Paperback \$45.00.

In 1998, David Meyer and Sidney Tarrow articulated what they called the social movement society (SMS) thesis. The thesis held that protest and other forms of unconventional political activity were becoming ubiquitous, that the boundaries between movements and other types of political activity were blurring as movements became institutionalized, and that the use of protest as a political tool was diffusing beyond the young radicals thought to most commonly rely upon it. Their argument spurred debates over topics including whether protest has become more common, whether more and different people engage in protest than previously, and how states have responded to and in some cases facilitated protest (see, e.g. Caren et al., “A social movement generation,” 2011; McCarthy et al., “Recent trends in public protest in the USA,” 2013).

Two decades later, Howard Ramos and Kathleen Rodgers’ edited volume *Protest and Politics: The Promise of Social Movement Societies* draws together Canadian scholars to consider what the Canada case can tell us about the SMS thesis. Contributors consider a wide array of movements that vary in goals, tactics, size, structure, constituency, and location, including the women’s movement, several environmental movements, immigrant rights mobilization, and the religious right. While most chapters are focused on a single movement, several consider broader issues at play in the SMS idea: for example, David Meyer and Amanda Pullum step back to evaluate key strengths and limitations of the SMS argument with an eye to recent US and Canadian mobilizations such as the Tea Party, Occupy, and Idle No More; Lesley Wood addresses changes in policing practices across diverse protests; and Suzanne Staggenbourg develops the idea of social movement communities through a paired case study. For scholars of Canadian movements, and especially those concerned with movement institutionalization, the book’s topical and geographic range will prove useful.

For readers whose interest is more focused on the movement society idea than on the Canadian case, two chapters are especially interesting. First, Staggenbourg’s chapter on movement communities contains the book’s most comprehensive summation of the empirical evidence thus far on the SMS thesis (156-159). Second, Meyer and Pullum’s chapter revisits the original SMS thesis and flags several points deserving more attention: first, the question of mobilization in non-Western societies, and second, the role of new media in movement societies. Further, while support for several core SMS claims, such as the diffusion of protest, has thus far been mixed, Meyer and Pullum persuasively draw on the case of the Tea Party in the US to argue that significant diffusion has taken place, and that this has affected the protest/electoral politics relationship in fascinating ways. While Meyer and Pullum critique the Tea Party and Occupy as highlighting “dark sides” of movement

institutionalization, with the benefit of a year's more data, it appears that these two movements' legacies did in fact shape US presidential nomination contests in ways consonant with activists' goals. As these movements' effects continue to play out in US electoral politics, it seems safest to say that the protest/electoral politics link will remain worthy of interest and attention.

No work is without limitations, and I consider three. First, of the book's thirteen Canada-focused chapters, eleven address liberal movements; only one addresses a conservative movement. This silence is especially important because a core claim of the SMS thesis concerns the diffusion of protest to conservatives and other non-traditional actors. Among the movements covered, Aboriginal issues receive only a few passing mentions; the heavy focus remains on upper-middle-class, liberal, white actors. Second, the book does not fully achieve its ambitions due to unequal attention to different aspects of the SMS thesis. While the chapters considered individually are compelling, there is an overemphasis on institutionalization at the expense of other topics, with several chapters drawing the familiar conclusion that institutionalization carries both risks and benefits. However, I wondered if Canada is an excessively easy case for the institutionalization argument, given the unique nature of the Canadian state vis-à-vis movements (effectively explained in the Introduction and Chapter 3). And I was uncertain how the book's silence on conservative movements interacts with institutionalization claims: do conservative regimes institutionalize conservative movements? Or do they merely reduce support for liberal ones? Finally, while Chapter 1 effectively ties US movements back to their impact on electoral politics, the book is missing a parallel effort to address this relationship in Canada. We see how political shifts affect movements, but not how movements have shaped elections and their consequences in Canada. For these reasons, I learned a great deal about the individual movements covered in the book, but came away uncertain what the Canadian case tells us about the SMS thesis.

Despite these limitations, scholars of Canadian movements will find the book a worthy addition to their collections. Similarly, those whose interest is movement institutionalization will find much to spark their interest here. Researchers most concerned with the changing nature of social movements more broadly, or debates about the SMS thesis, will find much of interest in several of the chapters, while they may wish to skim others.

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