
The volume consists of thirty-four contributions on social movements in Latin America, the Near East and the Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Contributors include both scholars and activists. Some of the essays have been made available in English from the original writings in French, Spanish and Portuguese. Taken in its entirety, it provides a panoramic view of social movements in the South. Although not comprehensive in its scope and coverage, it represents the diversity of people’s resistance in its multiple forms: indigenous movements in Bolivia and Guatemala, the workers’ movement in Venezuela, the movement of the unemployed (the *piqueteros*) in Argentina, democracy movements in Colombia and Uruguay, social justice movements in Egypt, new popular movements in Algeria, ‘sit-in wars’ in Morocco, identity struggles in Turkey, civil society assertions in Kenya, Niger, Botswana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Senegal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, campaigns against neoliberal policies in India, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, and resistance movements in Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Contributors to the volume present their assessment of the constraints and dynamics of the aforementioned social struggles. They delineate their emergence, strategies of mobilization and the reach. Indeed, the great differences of national and regional conditions make it difficult to generalise about social movements of the South as a generic category. Yet, one discerns certain patterns across these movements. Most of them turn out to be responses to the aspirations and urges for procedural and substantive democracy. A great number of them are equally informed by an opposition to the adverse effects of neoliberal expansion of the market. True, these responses differ, and they combine in different ways from one country or region to another. After all, ‘the third wave of democratisation’ affected the three continents of the South. However, the Arab world remains untouched by forces of democratisation even now. The shifting balance of power in the international system apart, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy can be credited to the movements that emerged from within civil society in a wide array of countries. Undeniably, democratization did not lead to the expected social progress. Growing unemployment,
widening inequalities and increasing insecurity have often accompanied structural adjustment measures in the countries of the developing world. Neoliberal policies appear to have contributed to the burgeoning of the informal economy and the precariousness of living conditions for large swathe of people. In no uncertain terms, large numbers of social protests are linked to these unsettling experiences of globalisation as testified by this volume. In fact, the losers of globalisation are more numerous than foreseen.

Evidently, movement entrepreneurs and militants play a crucial role in translating social disaffection into a structured contestation. Besides, movement strategies are shaped by the perceptions of the political conjuncture and power relationships in a given polity. These insights are borne out by many contributions assembled in the volume. Contributors also underline the challenge of convergences between movements within and between the countries. Indeed, there is awareness that an increasing number of policies that affect the local ways of living are the result of decisions taken outside the national context, for example, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). World Social Forum, global justice movements, the Latin American opposition to the Free Trade Area of Americas and Asian Networks campaign against the activities of the Asian Development Bank, and the meetings between African social movements on issues such as debt and free trade agreements, are healthy pointers towards convergence.

It is a truism that effective and intelligent orchestration of social movements have the potential to enable the rights of people to triumph even in inhospitable circumstances. Though, social movements frequently need to rely on actors in the institutional political sphere to achieve their policy objectives. Exerting influences on decision-making institutions involves collaboration and building of relationships with political parties. At times, these collaborations lead to clientalism and populism and blunt the radical edge of movement. At other times, unscrupulous leaders use social movements to build political capital to access comfortable positions in public institutions.

In general, left-wing parties emerge as natural political allies of social movements in a number of places. However, left parties also confront oppositional movements once they acquire political power and become the ruling constellation. For instance, in Bolivia, the Movimiento al Social-