Women, Trade Unions and Solidarities

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Introduction

In the search for identity and the *longing* to become a powerful force, trade unions have traditionally focused primarily on free collective bargaining as a way of negotiating conflicts of interests between labour and capital. Conflict between worker and employer was, and still is, central to the ethics of trade unionism in the aim to balance the power that is stacked against the employee, who only has their labour to sell. Up until the late 20th century, this binary division between classes was a unitary aspect of trade union identity, with the 'rootedness' of labour seen as a source of power, particularly in the mining villages and 'union towns' of the UK. However, feminists have often considered the conventional form of trade unions to be oppressive, hierarchal, and thus restrictive of women's differences and rights. Using Hyman's notions of 'imagined solidarity', this article reviews the construct of a 'masculine' model of union identity and considers the extent to which women's identity has been tangential in debates about solidarity. At the same time, it explores the argument that traditional forms of unionism are outdated due to the heterogeneity of workers in post-industrial society. In this context, the article considers the need for 're-imagining' plural solidarities and union renewal that goes beyond conventional forms of unionism. In drawing to a conclusion, it considers the influence of feminist movements and community action as potential coalitions for community unionism.

Imagining solidarities and the mobilisation of bias

In drawing on Durkheim's (1933) notion of 'mechanical solidarity', Hyman (1999; 2001) argues that early trade unions constructed a mythical 'archetypal worker' (as a means to establish a 'class in itself') which has persisted to the present day. This reflects Marx and Engels' (1848) point that there is no inevitability that class identity

leads to class solidarity because social relations are affected 'by those pushing for change and those resisting change' (Crow, 2002:11). Thus, a 'mass' worker image had an essential part to play in redressing this imbalance of power. As an 'ideal type', it characterised union membership as uniting workers against the imbalance in the labour contract, the exploitation of the work process, and the concentration of social and economic power in the hands of a powerful minority. However, it has been argued that, in the call for 'imagined solidarity', unions have traditionally privileged male, white, full-time, manual workers, leading inevitably to the interests of one particular gendered group of workers being placed above the needs of others. This is particularly evident in the appeal for men to earn a 'family wage' as presumed 'breadwinners', and their domination of union leadership positions (Ledwith and Colgan, 1996). Feminists have argued that such privileging has had significant ramifications for women, reinforcing passive stereotypes of women capable of satisfying the roles of homemaking, housework, and childbearing, but dependent on men. Warskett (2001) makes apt comment when she argues that formulation of trade union legitimacy was, and still is, possessed by all the characteristics of dominant cultural understandings that are predictive and male.

To an extent, socialist explanations accommodate gender concerns based on the argument that 'capitalism has long set worker against worker by trade, industry, region, skill, 'race', religion, and sex', and therefore that the struggle for economic justice should take priority over gender justice, because sexism is included within the class struggle (Coates, 1983:65). To cling to this explanation, however, suppresses contradiction in trade unionism *itself* with the failure to condemn sexism whenever issues emerge in union goals and practices.

Women's Structures

By the 1960s, 'class' as the driving force of solidarity was challenged by the re-emergence of feminism. This was a period of progressive movements of workers and students demanding radical change in the workplace, wider society and in politics. In this context, second-wave feminism was part of the challenge to the political and social hegemony significant in the fight for women's liberation (Warskett, 2001). In

counteracting the 'mobilisation of bias' against women *within* unions, equality initiatives from a feminist standpoint rejected the assumption that women and men are 'on a level playing field' in terms of union career progression (Parker and Foley, 2010). This manifested itself in the assertion of 'a "new" kind of politics', a type of feminist ideology, theory and practice that articulated the view that the 'personal is the political' (Dominell, 2006). Up to this point, the struggle for socialism had achieved very little in changing the subordinate role of women within wider society generally, and within trade unions themselves. This is not to say women were not involved in trade unionism, but as Warskett (2001) comments, generally they were relegated to positions of backroom assistants, servers of tea or secretaries.

Developing women's self-activity involved the setting up of women's structures (caucuses etc.) that afforded spaces for consciousness-raising and the rejection of unions' hierarchical and bureaucratic structure through democratic decision-making. In challenging the nature of patriarchy, women's groups developed processes of communication whereby participants gained confidence and skills to challenge external power relations in the fight against sexual harassment, racism, and pay and employment inequity (Dominell, 2006). This was a valuable step forward in highlighting the significance of other bases of interest and identities based on commonalities, whilst raising awareness of how gender inequality is compounded by factors such as disability and racism. As Parker and Foley (2010) point out, women's structures went on to influence the organising of other union structures, such as black and Asian and LGBT union groups that engaged in the 'politics of identity'.

Nevertheless, for all that is said about the success of women's structures and the extent to which trade unionism portrays itself as being egalitarian, and pro-feminist, it remains far from being either. The growth of women's structures has not resulted in women's power-sharing on a *par* with men, nor has it resulted in changes in men's attitudes (Parker and Foley, 2010). More prosaically, if power is equated with *participation* in decision-making, why then do women remain less likely to be trade union leaders, especially when female union density exceeds that of male membership? A growing body of scholars emphasise women's integration into the

status quo rather than changes in men's attitudes as behind the problem of tackling inequalities between the sexes (see Parker and Foley, 2010). In this context, the existence of separate women's structures was deemed to have reinforced the marginalisation of women as marginal workers. Moreover, it raised questions about the extent to which unions should be more concerned with social issues generally, rather than concentrating on the narrow focus of workplace problems (Warskett, 2001). As the campaign 'Women Against Pit Closure' asserted in 1984, women's and children's lives are entangled in the mines as much as men; therefore, they should have a say on what affects the whole community. From the 1980s, however, the combined effects of long-term economic restructuring, lack of commitment to full employment and recession have produced different patterns of inequality that have contributed to a 'crisis' in trade unionism (Hobsbawn, 1981). Subsequent sections of this article outline the changing patterns of employment, some explanations, and calls for trade union renewal.

Social change

It has been argued that, since the late 20th century, traditional conceptions of unions have no longer been applicable because the boundaries between classes are no longer as clear-cut (e.g. Hyman, 1999; 2002). Since the ideological onslaught of working-class activism under Thatcherism, union mobilisation has been ineffective in challenging the deregulation of the market and public sector cuts that have affected white-collar workers (TUC, 2012). Whilst the unseen hand of the market receives praise for its efficiencies under new managerialism initiatives, trade unions are weakened with the decline in male density, as the private service sector has failed to fill the employment gap since the closure of traditional industries (Simms, 2011). In contemporary society, workers' experiences are individualised due to the severed link between work and community, as people no longer live in close proximity to their workplace or share cultural and social pursuits (Hyman, 2002). Such titles as *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (Bell, 1973), *The End of Organised Capitalism* (Lash and Lurry, 1987) and *The Meaning of New Times* (Hall, 1996) parallels this debate that union identity has little or no bearing on the transient, classless groupings that characterise a fragmentised and variegated late modern society. As Hyman (2002)

reflects, the old adage that employers are oppressors has lost ground in academic circles; and sociologists have failed to provide a contemporary class analysis that draws white-collar workers into the working-class stratum.

Changing features of community and workplace

It seems the days of 'machismo' in the workplace are vanishing alongside the shrinking industrial power of the trade unions. 'Flexible' and family-friendly working hours to fit in with childcare responsibilities have become a 'choice' that benefits both women and men. This is certainly a powerful mantra from those defending neo-liberalism, but, also, from postmodernist feminists celebrating the diversity of women and the liberation of individual choices (Dominelli, 2006). This is not to say, though, that traditional grievances have disappeared. As politicians and academics speak the language of choice, freedom and autonomy, the reality is that some people *do not* have any choice; they are either in poorly paid jobs which require long hours, or are employed on heinous 'zero contract hours', struggling to make a 'decent living' (TUC, 2012). This is not new; employers have historically attempted to reduce labour costs in order to improve competitive advantage. Since the early period of industrialisation, such practices as casualisation of the labour force have had a habit of re-emerging: for example, 19th-century workers often turned up for work only to be turned away.

Contemporary social scientists focus on social changes that have effectively resulted in the growth of anxiety and fear of loss that coexist with the growth of choice over gender, race, and class relations (Melucci, 1989). As Beck's (1992:49) analysis of 'Risk Society' describes, there has been a fundamental shift 'from solidarity of need to solidarity motivated by anxiety'. Nevertheless, for all the rhetoric of 'work–life balance', the fact remains that women continue to dominate low-paid, part-time work that compromises women's 'choice' of a career (TUC, 2012). In particular, women ethnic minority workers face further oppressions with the added variable of racism.

Some argue that radical notions of feminism based on the struggle for women's equality and the acknowledgement of the ethical implications of the sexual division of labour are superseded by a discourse of choice and consumerism (Fraser, 1997). A

key aspect to this relates to deepened alienation. Lukacs (1971) argued that 'in an emerging "late capitalism" … workers' false consciousness could be exploited to keep the social and economic system running smoothly' as people are led to believe their situation is both inevitable and rational (in Agger, 1991: 107). Indeed, whilst the influence of equal opportunities policy provided affirmation of gender equality that secured women and men equal treatment *in the eyes of the law*, it has been largely ineffective for working-class women with little scope to escape low-paying jobs, and the double burden of unpaid work in the home. Furthermore, as Warskett (2001) adds, equal opportunities policies have failed to acknowledge that, in certain sectors, the wage gap between men and women has not shrunk because of increases in women's wages, but due to decreases in men's conditions and pay. Thus, patriarchal practices are not easily distinguishable from class oppression.

It is now well-documented that unions should search for renewal strategies that address the needs of women and other discriminated groups with a focus on moving beyond workplace issues towards plural solidarities based on identities and differences (e.g. Hyman, 1999; Wills, 2008; Simms *et al.* 2013).

Trade union renewal in the 21st century

In describing unions as 'bureaucratic bargaining agents … unable to operate as a social movement', Hyman (2002) concludes rather than there being a 'crisis' of trade unions, the traditional model of the union is the problem. This is due to the fact that the impact of industrialisation and localised class experiences is now less significant to a highly diverse workforce. In his calls for renewal of trade unionism, he mirrors the viewpoint of Melucci (1989), one of the founders of New Social Movement (NSM) theory, in recognising that collective actions expressed through NSMs are 'interwoven with the fabric of everyday life and individual experiences' (1989:12). Here emphasis is on a 'plurality of perspectives, meanings, and relationships' that reflect the diversity of participants of NSMs consisting of different economic and ethnic backgrounds, ages, gender, and sexual orientation (Melucci, 1989:20). In this context, the approach to community organising depends on building alliances with community groups and NGOs in order to re-establish the link between community

and union activism, at a time when relationships of solidarity seem to have withered. As Tattersall (2010) acknowledges unions should be visible as community-based organising entities that are less focused on collective bargaining and more focused on wider social issues. Thus, 'organic solidarities' should be drawn into the union agenda because of the potential to reach non-members that have traditionally been left out of decision-making (women, the unemployed, ethnic minorities). To be sure, for every worker, there is a family, and a community – thus, a cost-benefit analysis of union renewal is worthy of consideration. As a result, unions will be able to (re)gain public legitimacy and enhanced power with the recruitment of new members built on strong relationships with faith groups, social groups, co-operatives, and single-issue pressure groups. In addition, such strategic orientations supports Young's (1997) feminist viewpoint on social movements, that there is potential to evolve from identity formation to politicising participants united in a common cause.
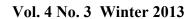
As a horizontal structure within the vertical structure of unions, 'community unionism' is in part recognition that 'workers' interests and solidarities extend beyond the workplace and that the workplace is not the only location of struggle in the relationship between capital and labour' (Simms, 2011:102). But, in reality, there has been very little discussion of community unionism in the UK, and, when it has occurred, the usual case studies based on London Citizens' campaigns for a living wage, and the London-based Justice for Cleaners Campaign, are cited by union scholars (e.g. Holgate and Wills, 2007; Wills, 2008). Some trade union scholars argue that tactics and tensions of organising are ingrained with a functionalist viewpoint that privileges collective bargaining and growing membership, over reciprocal coalitions with community organisations (Holgate and Wills, 2007). As empirical studies suggest, alliances seem to be dependent on, and mainly subject to, a union's need to recruit new groups of workers, rather than a wider constituency (e.g. Wills, 2008). This is a missed opportunity. The fact that women's groups have historically engaged with trade unions to secure support for home workers, equal pay, women, and children's well-being, whilst challenging trade unions' own racist and sexist nature, demonstrates that a 're-imagining' of trade unionism needs to be taken more seriously by trade unions, academics and policy directives. Perhaps the TUC's (2012) recent

affiliations with feminist groups such as the Fawcett Society, the Charter for Women, and UK Feminista that are involved in the recent developments of regional grassroots organising will be a force for change.

Conclusion

This article identifies the extent to which unions are 'part of and an antagonism to capitalism', as trade unionism provides a constant challenge to the dominance of capital and those who enjoy the profits of workers' labour (Coates, 1983). However, while unions emerged as a result of exploitation, their organisation and intentions have privileged a particular, gendered group over other groups. Therefore trade union formulation has privileged 'men's jobs' over women's in its identity and strategic orientations. That said, feminist influences have been able to shape the trade union agenda in the development of the society-axis and this has allowed for more emphasis on issues that affect workers outside of the workplace. Because women are grounded in the community as carers, and employed as paid workers, the union agenda has broadened to become wider than men's interests. Such orientations can be replicated under proposals for union renewal. 'Community' is not external to unions, and it should be defined on the lines of a social structure in which workers and their families are entrenched. If unions are to learn anything, they should draw on the many examples of women's involvement in community action that have influenced policy and wider change on societal issues, such as childcare, improving community life, women's health and multicultural issues (Dominelli, 2006). Union grievances do not have to be based on 'mechanical solidarity' because the building of 'organic solidarities' has the potential to unite workers beyond their workplace experiences, including taking on board single-issues that have traditionally been sidelined in union formation. The combination of all these factors means that unions have the potential to embark upon diverse campaigns. In this way, trade unions are more likely to find themselves addressing social and political questions which are broader than its traditional emphasis on economics and conventional trade union action. Indeed, trade unions will continue to rely on strong membership that can 'mobilise against countervailing power resources' (Hyman, 1999:3) to recapture the ideological initiative against oppressive structures in the workplace and wider society.

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Defining And Measuring 'Empowerment' In Community Based Projects

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'Empowerment', like community, is one of those terms that everyone seems to agree with but which turns out to be equally difficult to pin down. Inglis (1997) suggests that 'empowerment' involves the ability to adapt and cope with change at an individual level, which he contrasts with 'emancipation' which involves structural change with a collective impact. In the current policy context for community education, where resourcing is dependent on proving outcomes, it is important to be clear about how empowerment is defined and how evidence for its attainment can be measured. One useful starting place is to think of empowerment and emancipation as ends of a spectrum. In this sense, there may be outcomes that tend towards people being more empowered or tend towards people being more emancipated. But before community educators can gauge the impact of their work, it is necessary to be clear about what we mean by power itself as this will enable us to assess what empowerment and emancipation entail and how community education makes a contribution to these outcomes.

Power and empowerment: a relational perspective

How we think about power will shape what we understand empowerment to mean. In this article I argue that making power visible is a step towards empowerment and, arguably, a step towards emancipation. Illuminating how power can structure and shape experience is important particularly if individuals and groups have not thought about their experience in such terms.

In developing a relational view of power, a useful starting point is the distinction between *power over* and *power to*. *Power over* refers to the ability of the powerful to achieve favourable outcomes for themselves, particularly where there is a conflict of interests and they have the capacity to further their own. In this case, working with

powerless groups might involve developing resistance to the interests and claims of the powerful, and the more successful community groups are at doing this the greater their degree of empowerment.

Power to is about enhancing the resources and capacity of individuals and groups to achieve their objectives. The powerless can enhance their capacity to act individually or collectively to better articulate, define and promote their interests. Empowerment in these terms connotes a positive capacity to make changes due to improved resources, new knowledge and skills, or new outlooks, attitudes and behaviour. In this process the role of power in limiting expectations and shaping expectations and behaviour can become visible. This visibility may result in latent conflict of interests becoming consciously recognised and subsequent individual or collective action taken to transform the situation.

The relational nature of power relationships requires that for empowerment to occur a shift needs to occur in the balance of power. For instance in a patriarchal society men benefit at the expense of women; in a capitalist society, capitalists benefit at the expense of workers. What is a central issue is that, in a situation where there is a conflict of interest, the powerful have to lose some power for the powerless to be empowered (i.e. the relationship is a zero-sum one) (O'Hagan 1991). If there are winners there have to be losers too. It is this relational view of power which I will explore through the radical three-dimensional analysis of power presented by Steven Lukes (1974).

In Lukes' analysis the first dimension of power involves the capacity of individuals and groups to achieve favourable decisions for themselves. Power in this sense is usually visible at least in terms of the outcomes of decisions with dominant individuals and groups usually having decision-making power. This may include teachers in school, health workers, local councillors, employers or a host of other individuals and groups who occupy roles and positions which can affect people's lives.

The second dimension is the ability of powerful groups to limit what are deemed to be legitimate grievances which need to be acted on. Subordinate groups may have genuine concerns and problems but those in power are able to marginalise and ignore their claims when decisions are made. The routine dismissal of individuals or groups from having a legitimate stake in an issue, for example the treatment of young people as being unready to participate in important decisions, might be an example of this. Conflict in this sense may be visible on the margins but is usually not overt and clearly evident.

The third dimension of power refers to its broader social and cultural exercise which shapes attitudes and expectations so that people accept systemic inequalities as natural or inevitable. Wrongs that need righting are not articulated. The systematic exclusion of people with disabilities from mainstream activities and resources is an example of this. The activity of disability groups and the disability movement has challenged such routine exclusion by challenging the cultural politics of everyday life that legitimate the pervasive exercise of power through culturally powerful assumptions. The third dimension of power is very economical in the sense that it does not require the mobilisation of resources for enforcement; often it simply relies on self-limitation or self-censorship.

In terms of the empowerment-emancipation spectrum the first dimension must therefore involve the capacity of the powerless to influence and change decisions where there are conflicts of interests. If the nature of these decisions has an impact at an institutional or societal level, rather than an individual one, the tendency is towards the emancipatory end of the spectrum. If it is more local or individual then it is empowering.

In relation to the second dimension a shift in the balance of power occurs when the grievances of powerless groups become more visible and legitimate rather than being sidelined or unheard. The outcome of bringing the issue or grievance to light and the legitimate role of individuals or groups to have a voice in it should be regarded as significant in that the underlying relations of power and powerlessness are beginning

to change. When the agenda for decision-making is influenced to include the grievances of the powerless this could be assessed in the same way as in the first dimension of power.

In the third dimension the significance of the impact of changes involved can be more difficult to assess and measure in the short-term. Transforming attitudes and perceptions may have an emancipatory impact in terms of new social and cultural practices which equalise social relations at a collective and structural level. If such change occurs – which is often a long-term and macro level process – it can be said to have a wider zero-sum effect in that the balance of power between social groups alters to the advantage of the powerless. But at the level of community projects the changes may only occur at an interpersonal level or, for example, at an individual level in terms of enhanced confidence and skills without leading to overt conflicts of interest. These outcomes can be personally empowering and are significant even though they may not involve emancipatory systemic change.

The research study[1]

In order to assess what contributions community interventions made to the development of social capital a small research project was commissioned. In undertaking this powerless individuals and groups were asked to identify any changes that had improved their life and to rank the significance of the change in terms of the degree to which things had improved (no change / small change / big change).

The evidence being asked for included participants' meanings as well as concrete examples of changes made. Respondents were also asked to what extent changes could be attributed to their involvement in community projects. Interviews were undertaken with 21 participants in a small number of community learning and development agencies that represented a range of practice in relation to the focus of provision and participants. These included a young mother's group, a grandparents

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[1] The research project was related to the development of social capital in equalities projects and was commissioned by Learning Scotland in 2007. The main focus of interest here is the experience of empowerment and emancipation.

parenting again group, community capacity building projects, a project working with ethnic minorities, a second chance to learn literacies group, a youth project and an adult learning group working in a broadly Freirean-style project. The data below reflects their perceptions and assessments of their ability to influence powerful others in situations where manifest and latent conflicts of interest existed.

The first dimension of power – empowerment against those who take decisions
The main authority figures identified as taking decisions which affected respondents' lives included the government, the justice system, the local council and the various people who carry out their work. In addition, the procedures of bureaucracies, solicitors creating legal obstacles, or influencing the council to carry out repairs, are indicative of a range of powerful others and decision making areas which had a significant impact on everyday life but were difficult for people to challenge and change.

Being patronised by professionals and politicians was a common experience, which in turn made it difficult to influence the decisions and actions of those in authority and power. Not having a clear understanding of how decisions are taken, the anonymity of people who are sometimes in control, or who are difficult to access, were also critical factors in feelings of powerlessness. The cultural politics of family life was commented on in one case through the experience of being observed and assessed by social workers, in the home, in relation to tidiness and parenting practices.

But had involvement in community projects helped in any way? What had changed, in only a large minority of cases, involved the following: having more useful information which could help individuals defend their rights over decisions made, having particular contacts they had built relationships with who could be called on for sound advice and support, or having the confidence to use a solicitor or contact a politician with a sense of purpose and determination. Five people specifically attributed this change to the groups they were involved with, or because they knew more groups and people to now help them. For people in poor and marginalised communities the importance of material resources is an important aspect of personal

and group power. However, all but one reported *no change* in their immediate financial circumstances.

The second dimension of power – challenging the agenda

The ability to challenge the agenda of the powerful was identified as having occurred in a minority of cases. However, six people reported a big change in what they could now achieve as an outcome of their experience with the projects. Of this six, three explained that the important factor was being organised collectively: "If I wasn't in the group, if I was an individual, then it would just be 'Oh it's just somebody else moaning' but because of the group, and because they feel that we're a group that's going to start pressurising for things, that they're starting to listen." The gains people made through their collective efforts also involved individuals acquiring greater confidence, the ability to communicate more effectively, the capacity to be more assertive, the sharing and identification of their own and others' knowledge and understanding, the development of their own distinctive expertise. Collective change can also be a vehicle for individual empowerment.

In practical terms such examples given were of acquiring the skills and confidence to challenge a doctor's decision when previously the individual felt intimidated and ignored, or no longer meekly accepting discriminatory comments from other people at work. Greater willingness to hassle people in authority reflected a shift away from deferential attitudes and an awareness, acumen and capacity to develop sustained actions to lobby decision makers and put forward an alternative agenda for action. Such actions amounted to opening up issues which had been cordoned off and silenced; upsetting the agenda- framing capacity of powerful groups was regarded as success, even if the final decision was unfavourable.

The third dimension of power - Changing expectations and ability to express opinions

Perhaps the most significant contribution in the experience of the sample was in terms of shifting attitudes, opinions, confidence and outlook. Although the exercise of invisible power is enormously powerful and economical it is also potentially vulnerable. It is carried in people's experiences and beginning to recognise how
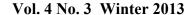
power works socially and culturally, by making it visible in experience, is an educational task.

The power to take on new activities and try new things had changed for the vast majority in the sample and included the following claims: feeling empowered in terms of the ability to influence change as part of a group; acquiring confidence and the ability to participate in an interview; communicating ideas to other groups more clearly; developing persistence and resilience to see things through rather than being put off by initial failure; having a much greater awareness of how to create change and to take a longer-term view of it. In relation to expressing their individual opinions, only six reported no change whereas thirteen respondents stated there had been big changes in their ability and willingness to speak out. The importance of the group in developing confidence, assertiveness and being listened to was the main factor in this.

In such a brief 'snapshot' of experience it is difficult to assess the wider impact of these changes. The benefits that resulted might only occur at an interpersonal and individual level rather than producing wider social change, but nevertheless steps towards empowerment in these terms can lead in the direction of emancipation in the long-term.

Conclusion: the impact of the projects on power relations

The results reported above will come as no surprise to many of those working in community education. The biggest change noted by the respondents occurred in attitudes and ability leading to the *power to* think and act differently and where necessary to challenge authority. The important point is that often this work goes unreported or under reported yet the outcomes are significant and can be measured. In order to do this conceptual frameworks have to be applied and developed to give a clearer, systematised and more rigorous account of the nature of power and empowerment and the achievements gained individually and collectively.

In relation to having an impact on decision-makers the reported success was more limited, but when it did happen it occurred primarily by incremental changes through collective effort. Also the sample of projects included in the study may have skewed the results in this respect because the inclusion of a greater number of campaigning organisations would have potentially had a bigger impact on challenging decisions and the agenda of decision makers. However, it seems clear that respondents in the sample had experienced an increase in their *power t*o act and this had important empowering benefits for individuals as well as being an essential step in the process of emancipation.

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Which Side Are You On? Community Workers In, Against And *For* The State

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> In the last few years the state has taken on the appearance of a battlefield, with cuts in state expenditure, struggles against the cuts, more and more strikes in the public sector, battles against 'scroungers', and sharpening conflicts between state, workers and those who try to 'manage' them. (LEWRG 1980, 62)

One could be forgiven for assuming that these lines from *In and Against the State* were written today for, without doubt, the ostensible parallels between these and current events are clear. I say ostensible because, published in 1980, these words are conveying a state of affairs, and relationship with the state, which is very different to that in which community workers find themselves today.

Using the original publication as my main point of reference, I will examine the relevance of the 'in and against the state' argument for today's community worker. Essentially, this argument highlights the ambivalent nature of the role of the community worker, given its intermediary position between the state and community. This article will explore the extent to which the tensions this produces still exist and will examine whether the adoption of an anti-state position might be a relevant concern for community workers today.

I will begin by briefly outlining the analysis as put forward in *In and Against the State,* examining the ways in which aspects of this argument resonate in the current context, and focusing in particular on the community worker's relationship with the state as a financial resource and the state as a source of policy. Following this, I will explore some significant changes in the political and economic context which call into

question the relevance of the argument, namely the rise of neoliberalism, austerity policies and the appropriation of community development rhetoric by the UK government.

Having explored the ways in which the current context differs from that in which the argument was advanced, I will assess its continuing relevance for today's community worker. I will assert that, though theoretically useful, the argument is practically unhelpful and potentially detrimental to current practice. Rather than adopting an anti-state stance, it is more useful to try to conserve the parts of the state that we need and to find spaces in policy which allow the community worker to support 'new forms of social and political expression' (Shaw 2011, 143).

The analysis put forward in the original book was one to which many community workers at the time related. It highlighted the contradictory nature of the relationship between the community worker and the capitalist state, carrying particular weight with those 'radical' community workers who aimed to tackle the root causes, rather than the symptoms, of social problems. The argument arose at a time when increased state-sponsorship resulted in a somewhat contradictory situation for workers: they found themselves struggling for the transformation of the unjust capitalist society whilst working for the very structures which they viewed as responsible for its propagation (LEWRG 1980). Written from a socialist perspective, it argued that state-sponsored workers must support 'effective, organised oppositional action' (LEWRG 1980, 2) against the essential oppressiveness of the state, a state which often rendered the community worker complicit in its domination of the working class. I will now look at some issues, namely the tensions surrounding funding and policy, which continue to result in conflict with the state.

The relationship between the community worker and the state has changed in many ways since the publication of *In and Against the State.* One thing that endures, however, is the financial dependence of many community workers on the state. Whether working for a local council or in the voluntary sector, the state often remains the sole or major source of funding. At a time of austerity, when the interests of the

community and the state seem to be increasingly at odds, these financial ties continue to be a major source of tension. Moreover, the extent to which funding regimes dictate the work that can be carried out has increased. In other words, not only are state-sponsored workers being funded by a system which is often the cause of the problems with which they are dealing, but by accepting this funding, the possibilities for discussing the root causes are fast disappearing. In an environment where funding is increasingly contingent on outcomes, and the process of acquisition more gruelling, there is simultaneously less room to maneuver and more funding-related work to do.

The state, as holder of the financial keys at a time when increased competition for funding wields a great deal of power over the community worker. For the community worker who is trying to challenge some aspects of the state from which she or he receives funding, tensions are substantial and, in many cases, more pronounced than thirty years ago. I will come to this later when addressing issues of austerity and 'The Big Society'.

Another reason that the 'in and against the state' argument still carries weight is the conflict between policy and the scope for practice in community work. This issue is of course intertwined with that of state funding, but it presents its own contradictions. One of the main points made in *In and Against the* State was that policy can be the realisation of 'the potential of the state for constructing or reinforcing the very problem which community development is deployed to resolve' (Shaw 2011, 139). One aspect of this reinforcement is the representation of groups and individuals in policy. As was asserted in 1980, 'many of the working class seem to be identified by the state as 'irresponsible', as 'troublemakers', 'scroungers'' (LEWRG 1980, 9). Representations of individuals and communities as somehow 'deficient' or 'undeserving' have not diminished since Michael Katz stated that '[t]he vocabulary of poverty impoverishes political imagination' (1989, 3). This vocabulary often infiltrates policy and dictates the solutions that can be selected by community workers, meaning that their role continues to be informed, and often constrained, by government policy.

Discourses which generally present what Mills (1957) calls 'public issues' as the 'personal troubles' of individuals or communities, present a view of the world which holds communities accountable for matters which are often beyond their control. When faced with putting policy into practice, the community worker is encouraged to address symptoms rather than causes of problems and has, for this reason, 'been instrumental in both support of and challenge to dominant elites' (Popple and Shaw 1997, 194). A continuing dilemma is the generation of policy 'from above in order to solve current problems rather than from below in response to needs', as workers must 'strike a balance between the demands of policy and the interests of communities in ways that are not easily resolvable' (Tett 2010, 31). The curtailment of scope for transformational, as opposed to adaptive, practice continues to be apparent in the contemporary context. Moreover, these tensions, rooted in the community worker's relationship with policy and resources, have not merely persisted, they have become increasingly pronounced. I will now look at some of the changes which have paved the way for this.

Given the similarities between the conflicts within the contemporary context and that in which the original analysis was carried out, there is a great temptation to overstate the relevance of the argument for today's community worker. As Shaw acknowledges, '[t]hese tensions remain central, not peripheral, to our contemporary concerns. However, the earlier formation now needs to be modified to take account of the particularities of context' (2011, 139). The 'particularities' of today's context stem, for the most part, from the substantial changes that have been made to the ideological, political and economic landscape since 1979. These changes call into question how relevant being 'against' the state is for community workers today.

In 1980, one year after its initial publication, *In and Against the State* was republished to incorporate details of the 'new mode of domination' which arose following Margaret Thatcher's election (LEWRG 1980, 113). Central to this 'mode', which Michael Sandel referred to as '[t]he most fateful change that unfolded during the last three decades', was 'the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don't belong' (2012, 7). This neoliberal agenda, which championed

privatisation and deregulation, began with Thatcher but has been on the rise ever since. Advocates forwarded the notion that a liberalisation of the market and trade would guarantee individual freedoms, and so 'the laws of the market [began to] take precedence over laws of the state as guardians of the public good' (Giroux 2003, 57). The infiltration of modern political life with neoliberal values has had a significant impact upon what Goeghegan and Powell call 'politicised' community development , 'a form of politics whereby citizens participate in civil society through communicative action in order to directly socialize policy issues' (2009, 444&431). As both successes and failures are portrayed as the result of an individual's behaviour, the connections between root cause and symptoms have been further obscured, and an understanding of problems as rooted in social structures has become increasingly counterintuitive.

When the revised edition of *In and Against the State* was published, Thatcher had 'pledged to cut back drastically on the role that the state plays in [the people's] daily lives' (LEWRG 1980, 116). According to Hall (2011), this 'neoliberal narrative' painted the welfare state as mistaken in its attempts to intervene in the economy, redistribute wealth, ameliorate 'the condition of oppressed or marginalised groups' and address social injustice. Since Thatcher's election, the permeation of modern life by neoliberal values has assisted a decline in the perceived importance of collective social responsibility, sanctioning the gradual retraction of the welfare state. Without doubt, the rise in market-oriented values and roll-back of the welfare state has and will continue to alter the relationship between community worker and the state. Before I address this issue, I will briefly explore how austerity and the big society have further altered the relationship between the two.

> As a profession [community development] was created as a means
> of managing or mediating the relationship between the state and its
> population, particularly in circumstances of crisis here and abroad
> (Shaw 2008, 13).

In response to the so-called economic crisis in 2007, the UK government has

proposed the most far-reaching cuts to the welfare state since its foundation (Taylor-Gooby 2011). Alongside these proposed changes has come an increase in the appropriation, by the UK government, of language traditionally used to define the goals of radical community development. This language, which represented a desire for redistribution of power, has been simultaneously appropriated and stripped of its critical roots. Confusingly, Cameron's concept of 'The Big Society' is centered on the rhetoric of 'democracy', 'empowerment', 'participation' and 'community'. Unsurprisingly, the government's plans for 'empowerment' are bestowing cuts, not power, and responsibility, not 'participatory democracy' (Ledwith 2011, 25-6). So in some ways, austerity and the idea of 'The Big Society' are just a continuation of the neoliberal agenda, with the labelling of individuals and communities as both problem and solution. Today the community has, yet again, been called upon 'to mop up the ill effects of the market', as Levitas states, 'and to provide the conditions for its continued operation, while the costs of this are borne by individuals rather than the state' (2000, 94).

With the community worker in an already unprecedented situation, Cameron revealed more changes, namely the 'presumption' that public services would now be open to 'any willing provider' (Cameron 2011). Adding privatisation into the mix of competitive tendering and new managerialism makes the position of the community worker ever more complex. There is not the space here to delve further into these issues, but raising them perhaps serves to illustrate the increasing complexity of the relationship between the community worker and the state. Having briefly explored some ways in which the community worker's relationship to the state has both changed and remained the same, I will now assess whether the position of being 'in and against the state' is appropriate in the current context for, as Craig says, '[a]n appraisal of the tasks which community development has to face…can only be effective if it is based on an accurate analysis of the ideological, political and economic context within which it is operating' (Craig 1998, 14).

There are many differences between the current context and that in which the original argument was made. Some of these differences, namely the rise of neoliberalism,

austerity policies and the appropriation of community development rhetoric, have put the community worker in an increasingly difficult position. As Shaw and Martin note, before acknowledging its shortcomings, 'in terms of its explanatory force and the coherence of its analysis, [it] remains as convincing as ever' (2000, 404), but how helpful is it in today's practice?

The rise of the neoliberal agenda, and the austerity policies for which it has paved the way, are further complicating the relationship between the state and community workers, who are now forced to defend the very thing they'd once fought against. As Shaw highlights, 'in a context in which the state has been so deeply colonized by the market, it becomes paramount also to work *for* the state' (2011, 139), to acknowledge that the state is itself a contradictory system, with aspects that can be used to both enhance and oppress democracy. With the whittling away of notions of collectivity and, with them, the welfare state, standing against the state could prove to be of greater detriment than good.

What seems to be more important, given the current context, is that we 'step back and gain some critical distance' (Emejulu and Shaw 2010, 6). The appropriation by the government of the 'language of democracy' is proving to be a challenge, but also an opportunity. As Foucault asserts,

> …a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy…[D]iscourse…undermines and exposes [power], renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart(1998: 100-1).

In light of this, instead of taking a stance against state policy, it could be more beneficial to seek to repoliticise it, to use the state's rhetoric of democracy to create spaces for true democratic action.

What seems to be imperative is the preservation of an awareness of the multifaceted

and complex nature of the state as well as the dialectical position that one must adopt in practice. Ultimately, being anti-state could serve to diminish the ability of the community worker to 'believe in the efficacy and legitimacy of their work' leading to a view of themselves 'as the victims rather than the agents of their own marginality' (Shaw and Martin 2000: 405).

In 1980 the writers of *In and Against the State* emphasised that 'our struggle against [the state] must be a continual one, changing shape as the struggle itself, and the state's response to it, create new opportunities' (LEWRG 1980, 79). Without doubt, the role of the community worker will not be free from struggle with the state, but rather than focusing solely on this, time should be spent developing skills of critical analysis, adaptability and creativity. Developing these skills, in the context of 'Austerity Britain', should support the realisation of what Shaw asserts is community work '[a]t its best…a continuing search for new forms of social and political expression in response to new forms of social and political control' (2011: 143). In engaging with the modern state, then, the community worker must look *within* the state and its policies, and find opportunities to repoliticise the discourses of democracy which are pervasive in political life today.

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To What Extent Does The 'In And Against The State' Argument Remain Relevant?

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In and Against the State (1980), written by the London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group, is an exploration of the tensions experienced by the authors – all public sector workers – in their work. These tensions arose in particular from their commitment to promoting social justice and challenging capitalist systems and policies for the people that they worked with, whilst simultaneously being held accountable to state policy and processes. The term has since become representative of the often documented dichotomy in community development, whereby community workers are caught between the state and the community; between people and policies. In the current political climate, the popularity of community development in social policy and the use of community development values and language in the deployment of policy can be seen to cause a similar tension for community workers. This has seen the language of community development, such as 'community empowerment', 'participation,' and 'community' itself, used across the political spectrum, often in ways which work against community development principles (Ledwith, 2011). This process has important consequences for community work and shows the on-going relevance of the 'in and against the state' argument; that is, that the tensions experienced by community workers in mediating between the state and the community are still very much in evidence.

The reasons for the popularity of community development in social policy firstly require examination. The end of the Cold War was arguably most significant: the perceived failure of communism and success of capitalism led to a global 'period of political triumphalism' (Craig, 1998, p.5) for the Right, which allowed for the advancement of neoliberalism to the extent that its values now 'permeate everything about life on earth' (Ledwith, 2011, p.1). With this change in the political climate, neoliberal economic ideology was largely accepted and adopted across political

divides. In the UK, New Labour's response to this was to marry Thatcherite free market/neoliberal principles with their own social democratic traditions, creating a 'hybrid discourse' (Davidson, 2010 in Shaw, 2011, p.ii133) intended to prove their progressive credentials whilst showing their commitment to neoliberal economics (Wallace, 2009). This hybridisation can be seen to continue in current political discourses, such as in the promotion of 'compassionate Conservatism'.

The political atmosphere of the post-Cold War period, particularly the rise of neoliberalism, had other implications for British social policies and political ideology. The development of communitarian theory, which links neoliberalism with ideas surrounding community, is a notable example. From a communitarian perspective, community is seen as a homogeneous entity that shares commonly held moral values, a place where social cohesion is created through the mutual reciprocity of its members (Ledwith, 2011). Crucially, the self-responsibilised active citizen is the agent of this process of community building, with individual capacity to act and the freedom to choose emphasised.

Communitarianism was central to the New Labour project, in which the model of partnership between the state and the community in social policy was used widely for the first time (Ledwith, 2011). Such an approach has subsequently become popular in British politics, seen recently in the perception of community-based social welfare as a solution to the problems and failures of the welfare state (Hancock et al, 2012). In this discourse, social problems are framed in terms of the decline of community cohesion and lowered moral standards (e.g. the 'Broken Britain' discourse). Community becomes a key site for state interventions, with the championing of the use of participatory governance approaches that promote the devolution of power and resources from central government to civil society (both the Third/voluntary sector and, importantly for neoliberals, the private sector). This becomes a way of enacting social political priorities such as democratic renewal (specifically the democratic deficit) and welfare reform (Taylor, 2011).

This process has been described as a shift from 'government to governance… a reconciliation of the role and standing of the state and the forging of new sets of relationships with markets and civil society in sustaining social development' (Wallace, 2009, p.246), where these 'new sets of relationships' occur in the community. From a neoliberal perspective, this empowerment of communities is seen as liberation from state control, and in negotiating such reconciliation, community (and community development) becomes central to the facilitation of community empowerment, participation and renewal (Wallace 2009).

The language and policies surrounding the Big Society can be seen as a case in point. For example, in *Building the Big Society* (Cabinet Office, 2010), the Coalition clearly appropriates the language of community development, using 'empowerment', 'involvement', and 'social action' in their outline of Big Society policies. Ledwith (2011) suggests that, although the Big Society rhetoric implies a 'new form of participatory democracy' (p.1), in application it is undemocratic, and that this rhetoric is actually used to obscure neoliberal ideology. Community work's ethos of community empowerment can thus be seen to have been appropriated by the Coalition, through their advocacy of the transfer of service provision to the community. However, rather than being a product of a desire to extend participative democracy, it can instead be seen as part of the Coalition's on-going drive to reduce public spending (Ledwith, 2011).

In *Building the Big Society*, the Coalition states that 'only when people and communities are given more power and take more responsibility can we achieve fairness and opportunity for all' (Cabinet Office, p.1). However, in the same document, the Coalition say that they 'will introduce new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to bid to take over local state-run services (p.1). These two statements suggest that, given the chance, the community will step in to provide services, often better and more equitably than the public sector. However, in the second statement, there is no discussion of why services might be threatened (budget cuts, for example, or government policies favouring competition and privatisation). The fact that, as public

funding is cut, public services and organisations in the Third Sector that support communities, like the community development field, will be in a weakened position and unable to affect such community engagement, is obscured (Ledwith, 2011).

These statements support Ledwith's claim regardings the undemocratic nature of the Big Society: with the withdrawal of state-run welfare services and the transfer downwards of resources and power, those least able to deal with this effectively, those at the most disadvantage, become responsible for their own poverty (Ledwith, 2011) and the state's responsibility for failure is removed (Taylor, 2011). In the Big Society discourse, community is conflated with community development; the importance of the role of civic society and the Third Sector in the achievement of the Big Society is emphasised, and so community development is framed as a viable alternative to public provision of services (Ledwith, 2011).

The attractiveness of community as a site for such policies has impacts for community development work. For many, most worrying has been the process of incorporation of community development by the state. This arguably began with the election of New Labour: their rhetoric of community, partnership and empowerment was attractive to the Third Sector, who, already naturally allied with the Left and feeling relieved after years of Conservative government, entered into a relationship with the state that was 'less critical' and more 'cordial' than during the Conservative years (Bunyan, 2012, p3). It has been argued that this has led to a weakening and depoliticisation of the community development profession and to the silencing of opposition to government policies. As a result, an intensification of partnership and co-operation between the state and the community sector occurred, and consequently, there was an increase in the political recognition given to community development.

So, as emphasis was being given to community as the site of enactment of social policies, community development became more allied with the state; dual developments with important consequences for community work. Ledwith (2011, p.28), in discussing the involvement of community development in service provision, argues that in being co-opted into supplying welfare, community work runs the risk of

becoming outcome-focussed and losing sight of its social justice values. This again raises the problem of community work being depoliticised and the creation of a culture of 'doing' rather than 'thinking' . Without an ideological base, community work is thus open to political manipulation through its partnership with the state, which, it has been argued, could potentially further legitimise and enable state withdrawal from service provision and welfare cuts (Shaw, 2011).

The professionalisation of community work has also been singled out as part of this process, most notably the increasing managerialism of practice (Shaw, 2011). Shaw argues that this could lead to standardisation and regulation of community engagement practices and to community development undergoing 'incorporation into managerial procedures [that]... create a serious crisis of critique' (2011, p.ii132) for the profession, a view that supports Ledwith's argument. Martin (2006), in questioning the professionalisation of adult education, also highlights that while professionalisation may have improved practice in many ways (e.g. raising the status of the profession), it could also potentially lead to a focus on adaptive or reactive approaches to problems rather than transformative solutions.

By engaging with policies uncritically, community workers could therefore be unknowingly drawn into working in ways that entrench inequalities and social injustices rather than challenging them. Focusing on targets could reinforce mainstream, less risky activities, and promote government policies and standards over community driven action (Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, by critically disengaging, community development could lose the role that it plays in civil society, particularly the potential it has to reflect, represent and support the interests of disadvantaged groups 'against' the state (Miller and Ahmad, 2011).

Nevertheless, despite these developments, it has been argued that there are still opportunities open for such community work. The current trend for partnership working and the use of community development values in welfare provision opens up prospects for the sector, and for the community. Scott (2012) argues that, for example, community planning initiatives are positive chances for community workers to

persuade local authorities of the value of consultation beyond their statutory obligations, thereby transforming how policy-makers view community engagement. This could bring people together, creating new alliances and understandings, 'a combination of both insider and outsider strategies' (Taylor, 2011, p.297) that could be beneficial for community development and the community, with community workers and activists gaining strength from being part of political processes rather than standing outside them. The 'insiders' could also benefit (as Scott argues) from the input of the 'outsiders'. Practitioners could also have a role to play to ensure that opportunities for engagement are open to all community members and that participants in community engagement processes have the support required to take part effectively (Scott, 2012). Community workers could thus influence reform and work from the inside to defend public services, with community-based state interventions being influenced along the lines of community development's own working practices and ideology.
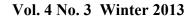
Additionally, depending on community priorities, community workers could also support reform of state processes (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2011): the incorporation of community development by the state could be seen positively as part of a process of bottom-up pressure on the state, not just as a negative result of neoliberalism. An example of successful bottom-up pressure can be seen in the new radical social movements, like the disability rights movement and the feminist movement, whose challenges to the status quo in demanding redistribution of resources and social recognition has led to more sensitive and responsive policy-making, particularly on issues surrounding plurality and diversity (Miller and Ahmad, 2011). Miller and Ahmad argue that community development has become central to social policy because it has been seen to promote social inclusion through its working practices and ideology, and so could have a role to play in continuing such pressure on state processes. Gilchrist and Taylor (2011) agree with this perspective, but caution that, despite political acknowledgement of the value of community work, the state has nevertheless yet to realise that community development's ideological position is inherently allied towards supporting communities rather than meeting policy

objectives, which could lead to further tension between community development and the state.

Still, progressive social change could be promoted and expanded by practitioners using policies of community partnership and empowerment for socially just ends. Ledwith (2011) believes that the on-going use of community empowerment discourses offers 'an opportunity for community development to redefine its radical agenda and to engage with injustice' (p. 2). Community development could thus reclaim terms like 'empowerment', 'social justice' and 'equality' from the neo-liberal agenda, but only as long as awareness is cultivated of the potential for these terms to be used in ways that divert community work and obscure underlying causes of inequalities and poverty (Ledwith, 2007). This could open up new areas of engagement between alternative discourses, such as those promoted by social activists, and the state (Taylor, 2011), thereby enhancing the autonomy of people and communities (Wallace, 2009).

Hogget et al. (2008) describe community development as taking place at 'the point where representative and participatory democracy meet: a public sphere where public purposes and values are continually contested' (p.15). In contemporary Britain, community work finds itself in this position, at the nexus between the state and the community. It has been subject to a process of incorporation by policy-makers over recent decades, and seen the adoption of its language and values in policy discourses, a development that seemingly connects with community development's 'embodied argument' of promoting social justice (Martin, 2012) but which, at times, has been shown to work against it. This could potentially lead to an exploitation of the values of community work and of a diversion and silencing of the profession. Opportunities for social justice and positive change could arise here, but practitioners need to work in ways in which the needs of the community are not subsumed to the needs of policy objectives. The tensions between the state and community development, as represented by the term 'in and against the state', can therefore be seen to be very much alive. The challenge for community development lies in remaining aware of the

processes of co-option and to engage critically with them, working *against* state colonisation of the profession but with*in* the state to achieve real social justice aims.

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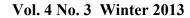
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Review

Learning and Education for a Better World: The Role of Social Movements
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£28.00

My overall impression, after reading the twelve chapters of this book, is of resistance – like shafts of light in all corners of the globe breaking through the gloom of a world fixated on greed. As an activist, I was excited to read about creative social movements and take lessons for my own involvement; as an adult educator, there was much to ponder about how and whether a revolutionary message can be imparted from the comfort of state-funded institutions.

The first section 'Historicising and Theorising Movement Education and Learning' has five chapters. I found them all very stimulating but a slow read. I found the ideas and breadth of research so interesting that my mind went off, eagerly testing theories against campaigns and movements in my own experience. But I also found the language so cluttered with references to other texts and theorists in places that it was hard to get the meaning.

In the first chapter Anne Harley writes about lessons and challenges for her university arising from a small group of students from poor communities attending a course for grassroots community educators in South Africa. They meet together to discuss the relevance of the course to their social movements in what they call 'Living Learning' sessions. The chapter describes a learning process that practises what it preaches. The group shares and publishes its findings, both to make it possible to engage others in the discussion, but also as a political act, challenging the assumption that only the University has valuable knowledge. The challenges posed by the 'Living Learning' analysis echo through the book. They believe that the poor are as good at thinking as anyone else and through this lens re-examine the inbuilt bias of the university, the

assumptions about who needs to learn, what they want to learn and how learning takes place.

From a nonviolent activist's point of view, Elisabeth Steinklammer's chapter 'Learning to Resist' should have been old hat. Yet I found this chapter refreshing in its focus on the power of the small repeated actions we all make which constantly rebuild – or challenge - the status quo. Learning by resisting, she argues, is most likely to happen in a social conflict, where we practise new actions in 'living the change' we want to see and reflect on them. I was delighted that there were illustrations of the kindergarten protests, but would have loved to know more of their context and would have liked more feminist analysis in this chapter.

Eurig Scandrett draws on examples of environmental justice campaigns from Scotland and India to illustrate the way in which lay people in these campaigns learn about the ecological science that is relevant and helpful to their cause. He goes on to show how activists talking to each other across campaigns or taking time to attend relevant courses can help them to see the bigger picture. This is a scholarly chapter bristling with references and Marxist analysis which argues for the distinctive character of political ecology.

In their chapter on 'Reconnecting Intellect and Feeling', Crowther and Lucio-Villegas give a very readable refresher on Marx, Gamsci and Williams. If you are not up on your Marxism, read this chapter first. The writers are concerned with the challenge of developing leadership within social movements which has the calibre to replace the current elite capitalist leadership without replicating it. They rightly see a role for adult educators in this. Touching on the age old paradox, they caution us against education which is constructed as a 'ladder out of communities for individuals to climb rather than a collective resource for change'.

Liam Kane's chapter gives us a really helpful and clear history of popular education in Latin America, its philosophy and practice and current developments. This chapter brought back all the excitement I felt when I first encountered Freire. In my notes I

have written the words 'inspiring' and 'YES!'. Kane recognises that, although popular education is a key factor in the political landscape of many Latin American countries, it may need to be adapted for use in other places. To me it seemed to link to ideas emerging from many other chapters in this book, e.g. that the learning in social movements should be made explicit, reflected on and shared and that to be effective movement leaders and community educators must exemplify power sharing and participation and be thoroughly rooted in the struggle.

In Section 2 'Learning Through Cultural Struggle', it was a delight to read the poetry and stories of the power of the arts in protest and learning in Darlene Clover's chapter. The projects Clover describes – of quilt making, puppetry and photography - make visible the different struggles in creative ways which promote participation. This chapter also brought in a welcome feminist perspective and sparked ideas for campaigns I'm active in.

Astrid von Kotze tells us about the work of successful Popular Education Schools among the 'invisible poor' of a Cape Town township, but she is clear about the limits of this learning. She asserts that resistance is not enough, that the process of imagining and bringing into being a new and radically different way of living is a long slow 'composting process'. Stephen Brookfield talks about Ken Loach's film-making in the cultural struggle and advocates the use of a clip from Land and Freedom as a tool for learning.

Section 3 is headed 'Changing the World' and Budd Hall's chapter 'A Giant Human Hashtag' is a great start. The Occupy Movement has given us the succinct unifying 1% - 99% short-hand way of talking about global economic inequality. Hall sees it is an experiment in 'living the change'. I found it energising to read about the lessons that are emerging from new ways of organising, e.g. the emphasis on consensus decision-making and the importance of leaving ideologies aside. While inspired by the idea of learning to tweet, I skipped to Mark Malone's chapter on 'Tweeting History'. Using his own and others' blogs and tweets, and research into internet traffic at crucial times, he explores the role of the social media during the days leading up to

the Egyptian revolution. I hadn't heard the term NGOisation before reading Aziz Choudry's insightful chapter – but I immediately recognised the phenomenon. He writes as an activist in the struggle against free trade agreements in Asia and highlights again the important knowledge and learning that emerges from grassroots social movements willing to challenge capitalism head on. This knowledge is often undervalued and even silenced by professionalised technical experts from NGOs which claim to be on the side of global justice. I enjoyed Catherine Etmanski's chapter on organic farming as political action in the face of global industrial agriculture, and welcomed the gender analysis and reflections on what she learned working on the farm.

I am very glad I have had the chance to read this book. The wealth of activism and struggle described is inspiring and hopeful. Despite being mostly academics, many of the writers argue that the most powerful learning and most useful knowledge in social movements comes from the struggle, not the academy. So if you are not an academic, read the second and third sections first but persist with Section 1 – it is rich and stimulating underneath all the references. As an activist and a feminist, I found there were lots of ideas to learn from, but less attention to overall strategy of social movements and gendered analysis than I would have liked.

Sheila MacKay
Feminist and Nonviolent Activist

Review

Warning: May Contain Politics.
Poems on Diversity, Social Justice and Community Involvement by Jo McFarlane

This book is not for the faint-hearted, as evinced by the cover which features a saltire with the iconic image of Che Guevara printed across it. At the beginning, the poems are more polemical than poetic and not for the poetry purist. However, the politics and and sentiments are where the book's power lies, and we are introduced straight away with two personal/political pieces, both based in Edinburgh. The first one uses the letters of her name to spell out a wish list for the opening of the Scottish parliament. The second is an angry lament set in a protest at the mound with a regretful twist at the end expressing her chagrin at not having been there.

Throughout this collection of over 50 poems, the overarching theme is that the personal is always political. Poem after poem reflects Jo's interest in community and identity politics. It is at one and the same time postmodern in its playfulness and forceful in its tackling of issues head on. Jo goes toe-to-toe with domestic violence, mental ill health, and social injustice - always with the poet's honesty and courage to tell it how it is, no matter how dark at times. Yet when reading her work you are given the impression that here is a playful author with her heart on her sleeve and occasionally her tongue in her cheek.

I grinned with joy when I read *Glad to be Mad* as it reminded me of an old friend from the comedy scene who worked at CAPS (the advocacy project who wore t-shirts with the Glad to be Mad slogan). The title at once challenges the stigma of mental illness and reclaims the derogatory term 'mad' as a badge of honour. Jo takes it a stage further in the last verse

We are alive
And we are here to shine the torch of hope
That something grander than supremacy exists:

The saving grace of voices joined in protest
And the healing power of love

Here she is asserting her identity, speaking with authority and turning perceived suffering into celebration. This is essentially the best aspect of the book.

Another highlight for me was *Out and Proud* in which Jo again stands proud in her identity, the reference at the end of the poem about being *rainbow-sexual and proud*, the rainbow being the international LGBT flag.

This collection is also angry. *Greatest Hits,* about domestic violence is sickening in its direct descriptions of brutality. It is designed to anger and upset the reader and is fierce in its simple two line rhymes. There is also a sharp witted poem against the tourist industry called *Exchange Rate*, which juxtaposes the reality of life for the people and the

'...sugar coated fizz and beefed up lies
They offer the man on the moon
and steal the magic from the skies.'

As the book goes on the poetry seems to get better, though I don't know if this is by design. In some of the later poems she uses more abstract images to create the feeling and essence of her work. An example of this can be found in *Song of War*, which features the line

'... the lonely harmonica of a boy,
too homesick to remember the tune'

The best poem in the collection for me is *Dystopia*, which is a 2-page epic (most of Jo's poems are very short) which compares the relationship between an inmate and the prison they are incarcerated in to that of a father and son. The prison and its rules, and the grind of day-to-day life teach the inmate to conform and be grateful for scant

reward. But the poem is also a critique of the promise of freedom that religion gives to the afterlife – and in all this a young inmate pits his spirit against his environment.

The book is not without its faults: there are arguably too many poems here, and some are most certainly performance poems which don't work as well on the page. Jo has covered this base, however, by providing a disc containing 34 tracks. The disc is flawlessly orated and Jo's playful voice and gentle Edinburgh accent compliment the work well.

The arts have always been a space for political expression and poetry is indeed a good tool to use for popular education and in this case both the book and the disc can be used for the purpose of educating people, creating critical debate and discussion and opening the space for resistance and change. There are many examples in the book where the subject matter can be explored and pulled apart, but it is the politics of the book which will inspire others to write or tell of their own experience.

In conclusion, if you are a scholar of classic verse and poetry, this may not be the book for you: the poems are very direct, punchy and powerful in their sincerity. But if you are interested in polemical, campaigning, awareness raising and playful work it is definitely for you. It is in the humanity of her work that her strength lies. It is also worth noting that Jo McFarlane has only been writing since 2005, which makes her very young in poetry years. Jo is without doubt an emerging talent who we will be hearing more of in the future.

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The book is on sale form Jo herself at £5.00 + £1.00 postage and packing and she can be contacted on www.edinburghjo.co.uk