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Publication Date

2023

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In Search of the Political:
How Social Movements Enter Liberal Social Change Projects

By

Timothy Wyman-McCarthy

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Rhetoric

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Marianne Constable, Chair
Professor Samera Esmeir
Professor Ramona Naddaff
Professor Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann

Summer 2023

Abstract

In Search of the Political:
How Social Movements Enter Liberal Social Change Projects

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Professor Marianne Constable, Chair

Left critiques of professionalized liberal social change actors such as human rights groups, development organizations, and philanthropic foundations accuse them of depoliticizing or coopting radical social movements. But what happens when the professionals in these third sector institutions take up these critiques and reimagine human rights, development, and philanthropy in their light while maintaining and rearticulating their liberal commitments? This dissertation locates and investigates a search for a more ambitious and political kind of liberal social change by elite progressive civil society professionals in the first two decades of the 21st century. By examining the discourses, tools, and practices these professionals construct to support social movements, it considers the epistemological assumptions, elite self-fashioning, and metaphorical structures that underwrite the entrance of movements into liberal social change projects. The dissertation finds that the terms for progressive third sector elite to support social movements involve assimilating them to 'civil society', which they imagine as an 'ecosystem' made up of different kinds of organizations and actors, each with a role to play. The function of movements, as the actor assumed to be most insulated from and oppositional to the encroachment of market and state power on civil society, is to provide cohesion, direction, and legitimacy to the other, more professionalized and compromised, actors. To avoid coopting movements, these professionals argue that grassroots activists possess privileged knowledge of social problems, while simultaneously fashioning themselves as neutral instruments used by movements to realize their solutions. The dissertation thus analyzes tools including participatory grantmaking and the social change ecosystem framework that third sector professionals develop to secure a non-coopting solidarity relationship with movement actors. These tools are ultimately designed to ensure the autonomy of social movements from elite influence so that the movements can redeem a civil society sphere in crisis. In the process, however, these tools and discourses engender a distinction between elite and 'authentic' political actors, cede responsibility for securing social change to the latter, while framing the telos of that action as the redemption of a space (civil society) that exists alongside rather than as a fundamental challenge to the power of capital and state. The dissertation theorizes this set of discourses and practices as a key aspect of 'movement liberalism', and argues that it remains to be seen the extent to which actually existing movements are conscripted to its project, but that critiques of liberalism nonetheless need to account for both its enchantment with and aversion to 'the political'.

For my grandmother, Dorothy Wyman

Table of Contents

Introduction

In Search of the Political

I. "We are no longer a small, scrappy movement"[1]

In the months after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on May 25, 2020, racial justice organizations received record donations.[2] By one calculation, $4.2 billion in racial equity funding was pledged by corporations, foundations, and celebrities between January and July of that year—an astonishing 22 percent increase from the $3.3 billion given for racial justice between 2011 and 2019.[3] These numbers do not include the millions donated by thousands of individual donors through GoFundMe pages for the families of Ahmaud Arbery (c. $2 million), Breonna Taylor (c. $6 million), Floyd (c. $15 million), and others.[4] By August 11, 2021, the value of pledged contributions towards racial equity had risen to $10.6 billion.[5] While much of this money went to prominent organizations such as the NAACP, ACLU, Color of Change, and the Black Lives Matter Global Network Fund, which alone netted $90 million in donations in 2020[6], smaller entities, such as the Minnesota Freedom Fund, also saw an explosion of financial support, going from about $150,000 in donations in 2019 to some $30 million from 900,000 individual donations after Floyd's murder.[7]

Only four years earlier, this kind of support seemed unthinkable. On February 26, 2016, Alicia Garza, one of the early leaders of the Movement for Black Lives,[8] participated in a plenary panel on "Moments, Movements, and Permanent Power" at the Ford Foundation-sponsored event *From Protest to Power: Behind the Scenes of Disruptive Social Movements*. Garza addressed an audience of activists, researchers, and grantmakers:

> [E]ven with as much activity as BLM and others have advanced there's still relatively little dollars that are circulating, so we need to be paying attention to that. We're still largely not funded by philanthropy, although we do have some very generous and strong philanthropic partners. Which leads me to the thought: what is it going to take for us to transform philanthropy in a way that makes sure that it has movements in its DNA?[9]

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[1] The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation (BLMGNF), *Black Lives Matter 2020 Impact Report*, 22.

[2] See Anderson, "Racial equality groups grapple with surge in donations."

[3] Koob, "What does Candid's grants data say about funding for racial equity in the United States?"

[4] Anderson, "Racial equality groups grapple with surge in donations."

[5] See "Funding for racial equity" on the Candid website, which keeps a running total of grants made and pledged: https://candid.org/explore-issues/racial-equity. Candid also tracks the top funders in this area, which as of writing are McKenzie Scott, JPMorgan Chase, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Ford Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

[6] BLMGNF, *Impact Report*, 20. The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation is part of but not synonymous with the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL). While $8.4 million went to operations and $21.7 to local chapters and organizations, the rest was saved.

[7] Anderson, "Racial equality groups grapple with surge in donations."

[8] The Movement for Black Lives arose in July 2013 as the now-famous hashtag #BlackLivesMatter after George Zimmerman was acquitted of killing Trayvon Martin, and then took off in August 2014 when Michael Brown was gunned down by police officer Darren Wilson, sparking over one hundred days of protest in Ferguson, Missouri. For a brief history, see Woodly, *Reckoning*, 20-46.

[9] For a recording of the panel, see: https://www.fordfoundation.org/the-latest/ford-live-events/from-protest-to-power/.

Two years later, the Human Rights Funders Network, American Jewish World Service, Global Fund for Women, Ariadne (European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights), Peace and Security Funders Group, and Philanthropy New York, many of which were represented at the Ford event in 2016, collaborated to offer a webinar series for grantmakers called *Stronger Together: New Frontiers in Funders Supporting Social Movements*. The webinars, running from April 4 to June 6, 2018, covered topics from "measuring the capacity of social movements" to "making smart investments in social movements for transformative change" to "the role of social movements in influencing public policy."[10] These convenings were accompanied by a small mountain of reports by grantmaking institutions, philanthropy consultants, and researchers on the challenges to and potential of funding grassroots movements like Black Lives Matter. In the words of one foundation employee, supporting social movements was "the topic on the tip of everyone's tongue."[11]

By the summer of 2020, and as a result of mass public outrage, it looked like Garza's call to work social movements into the DNA of philanthropy had been answered. But the outcome has been far from unambiguously positive. While the press remarked in passing on some of the challenges the recent financial windfall posed for small organizations like the Minnesota Freedom Fund, it was the BLM Global Network Foundation (BLMGNF) that came under more intense scrutiny: "Black Lives Matter Has Grown More Powerful, and More Divided" (*New York Times*, June 4, 2021), "Black Lives Matter Movement Is Fracturing As It Grows In Power" (NPR's *All Things Considered*, December 18, 2020), "Black Lives Matter power grab sets off internal revolt" (*Politico*, December 10, 2020).[12] This media coverage told a story of money complicating the operations of an organization that had accrued reputational capital through its association with the grassroots activism of the Movement for Black Lives.

The story actually starts earlier, as BLMGNF, founded in 2014 after the Ferguson protests, grew in size and wealth, with 26 chapters nationwide in 2015. In 2016, with 37 chapters in the US and more globally, BLMGNF partnered with Thousand Currents (then IDEX) which, as a 501(c)(3) organization, could receive tax-deductible donations. By this time in 2016, as Garza appealed to Ford and other foundations for philanthropic support, some local chapters were already raising concerns internally about the transparency of BLMGNF's financials. Then came the summer of uprisings in 2020. George Floyd was murdered at the end of May and in early June the BLMGNF established a $6.5 million fund for "grassroots organizing work" by network affiliates, and another $6 million fund on June 17 for black-led grassroots organizing groups.[13] In July, as criticisms about the organization's financial transparency mounted—the $12.5 million in the two funds represented only a small portion of the money pouring into the organization—Patrisse Cullors, who along with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi founded the Black

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[10] Details of the webinar and its relevant materials can be found here: https://www.hrfn.org/event/webinar-series-stronger-together-new-frontiers-in-funders-supporting-social-movements/. For a representative article along these lines, see Rogers, "The Case for Funding Social Movements."

[11] Interview #10.

[12] Eligon, "Black Lives Matter Has Grown More Powerful, and More Divided." A version of this article appears in print on June 5, 2021, Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline "Tensions Rise As Movement Makes Strides." See also Anderson, "Racial equality groups grapple with surge in donations", and the December 18, 2020 segment of *All Things Considered* on *NPR* with Audi Cornish and Maya King, "Black Lives Matter Movement Is Fracturing As It Grows In Power."

[13] Morrison, "Black Lives Matter network establishes $12M grant fund." The foundation's press release is at "Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation Announces $6.5 Million Fund to Support Organizing Work."

Lives Matter Network, assumed the role of Executive Director, a move described in the press as a "power grab."[14] That same month the organization ended their partnership with Thousand Currents and found a new fiscal sponsor in Tides, a "philanthropic partner and nonprofit accelerator." The Tides press release announced that their partnership "will further amplify the extraordinary, unparalleled successes of BLM's chapter-led, decentralized organizational model, while also allowing BLM to build the necessary infrastructure for sustainability."[15]

However, a few months later, in October 2020, the Foundation moved, allegedly without widespread chapter input, to restructure the organization by splitting it into three separate units: BLMGNF (its 501c3 wing), the BLM Political Action Committee, and BLM Grassroots. According to BLMGNF, in July of that year some 20 chapters came together "to ideate something different: an entity and structure that could remain true to the grassroots origins of #BlackLivesMatter." BLM Grassroots will be a "chapter-driven advisement and decision-making structure" made up of "frontline activists" who will work with the Foundation "while remaining focused on local, grassroots level work." This will allow BLMGNF to "fully lean into its capacity as a fundraising body, grantmaking entity, amplifier, and action-oriented think tank of the movement."[16] In the summer of 2020, BLMGNF applied for nonprofit status with the IRS, which was approved in December, "allowing the organization to receive tax-deductible donations directly."[17] Meanwhile, the organization, refusing to wait for existing elected officials to act in the interests of Black people, announced that it is also starting the BLM Political Action Committee, a "foray into electoral politics," but one which is "not a replacement for the on-the-ground movement": "transforming the world requires both protest and politics. We must vote and organize."[18]

In an organization defined by its status as "a grassroots effort, born in the streets with no central hierarchy," as one reporter put it, such moves "triggered mutiny in the ranks."[19] On November 30, 2020, a group of 10 Black Lives Matter chapters published an open letter titled "It is Time for Accountability."[20] The letter alleges that these changes to the structure of BLMGNF "occurred without democracy" and beyond the view of the local chapters, revealing the lack of an internal accountability mechanism, "despite years of effort" by chapters that "consistently raised concerns about financial transparency, decision making, and accountability." BLM Grassroots, the letter continues, which "was allegedly created to support the organizational needs of chapters, separate from the financial functions of BLMGN," in fact "does not have the support of and was created without consultation with the vast majority of chapters." The letter goes on to cite a lack of transparency about "the unknown millions of dollars donated to BLMGN" and note that "most chapters have received little to no financial support from BLMGN" since it was established in 2013.

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[14] King, "Black Lives Matter power grab sets off internal revolt." See also the Black Lives Matter press release, "Seven Years of Growth: BLM's Co-Founder and Incoming Executive Director Reflects on the Movement."

[15] Tides, "Tides Welcomes Black Lives Matter As A New Partner."

[16] Elsewhere, Cullors describes her goal as Executive Director as ensuring that BLM Grassroots "has the tools and resources it needs to strengthen our movement on-the-ground" and to evolve BLMGNF into "the capacity-building hub we need and deserve" (Black Lives Matter, "Seven Years of Growth").

[17] Morrison, "AP Exclusive: Black Lives Matter opens up about its finances."

[18] BLMGNF, *Impact Report*, 4-5, 24.

[19] King, "Black Lives Matter power grab sets off internal revolt."

[20] "It is Time for Accountability," November 30, 2020. The letter is signed by the Black Lives Matter chapters of Philly, Hudson Valley, Oklahoma City, Chicago, New Jersey, DC, Indy, San Diego, Vancouver, and Black Lives Matter 5280.

In their 2020 Impact Report (the first of its kind), released in February 2021, a few months after the open letter was published, BLMGNF positively frames its recent financial windfall:

> We are no longer a small, scrappy movement. We are an institution. We are mature. We are a growing entity developing its stake in the philanthropic world. We are entering spaces previously unimaginable. We want to show folks that we have a voice here, and that our voice carries weight. For BLMGNF, not having an account of reserves would prevent us from engaging rapidly alongside the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Having an account of reserves is what has allowed us to respond in 2020 in the ways that we have, and it is what has allowed us to imagine and plan for what we can accomplish in 2021 and beyond. Strategically, our sights are set on diving into work at the levels of policy, community investment, arts and entertainment, and research. Such expansive work will require the security that fiscal sustainability provides.

At the same time, the report asserts, the organization will retain its grassroots ethos and inheritance:

> Our movement started at the grassroots level, was built up at the grassroots level, and will continue to be tied fundamentally to the power that lies in grassroots organizing. Growing into a movement that can reach millions globally—rather than primarily domestically—has not been easy…But we remain committed to showing up for Black folks at the most intimate levels, because we are the ones who keep us safe.

The challenge for the BLMGNF leadership has been to articulate this new work on policy, the arts, community empowerment, and research—the objects of traditional philanthropic work in the United States—with the grassroots, direct activism central to the movement's identity. The 2020 Impact Report presents a thesis about how to thread this needle: by "separating the streams of movement work across these two entities" (the BLM Global Network Foundation and BLM Grassroots), it is possible to "remain true to our origin story and our developed strengths through the growth of the movement."[21]

The dissenting chapters, and additional groups that joined since, have not accepted this argument, publishing a second letter, "Tell No Lies," in June 2021.[22] This second letter accuses BLMGNF of exploiting "the pain of families who have lost loved ones to state violence," and of selling out to corporate media, foundations, "and other tools of the system." The signatories argue that BLMGNF coopted local, grassroots units by presenting their hard-won victories as their own, while they "consolidated credibility, power, and resources into an opaque institution." They cite a lack of transparency around how the various entities of the organization relate, staff salaries, why some chapters are recognized as official while others are not (which determines funding allocations), the communication of leadership changes, and the amassing of funds. Nepotism, proximity to power, and access to resources, according to the letter, have "become more important to the Network than making sure that they had a radical vision, objectives, and strategies created through a transparent, democratic decision making process." The concerns of the dissenting chapters are at heart "about the ways liberalism and capitalism have manifested in

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[21] BLMGNF, *Impact Report*, 4-5, 22, 31.
[22] "Tell No Lies," June 10, 2021.

BLMGN and the current iteration of the Black liberation movement as a whole, co-opting and deradicalizing this critical historic moment of revolutionary possibility." The signatories assert that BLMGNF now reflects the nonprofit industrial complex that it once criticized.[23]

The media coverage of this conflict frames it as a fall from grace. The growth of the movement over the past year has "inundated" it with donations, the foundation's "coffers and influence" growing "immensely" after the death of George Floyd. But such growth invited "greater scrutiny," "exposed tensions and challenges," and "caused longstanding tensions to boil over" between "grassroots organizers and national leaders." As one article explains, while the wave of civil rights activism that exploded after Michael Brown, Jr. was killed by Darren Wilson in 2014 "openly embraced a grass-roots philosophy," "avoided individual leaders," and built "a movement by the people, for the people," the growth of BLM has "complicate[d] the road ahead."[24] The ascent of leaders like Cullors has been seen as "a betrayal of the movement's grass-roots spirit." Local activists have taken to airing "grievances" and "chastising national leaders for appearing more interested in publicity and fundraising over the gritty work of pushing for change on the ground." Though started as "a decentralized movement governed by consensus of a members' collective," today BLMGNF "has increasingly moved away from being a Black radical organizing hub and [has] become a mainstream philanthropic and political organization."[25]

* * *

Both the BLM chapter letters and the media narrative around the growth of the M4BL home in on the tension between grassroots movement identity and substantial financial resources. As several commentators note, this is not a new story. One news outlet suggests that the saga recounted above reflects "an all-too familiar trajectory of other grassroots movements"—"the splintering of Black Lives Matter is no anomaly." In the words of the political scientist they asked to comment, "this dynamic sounds familiar": "It's almost a truism that movements will [fracture] over time…It's exceedingly hard to hold movements together over the long haul."[26]

But is this all there is to say about this story? While real and worth probing, the almost exclusive focus on cooptation, and understanding of movement fracture as inevitable (a 'truism'), obscure from view a different set of questions that emerge from this episode. Instead of walking the well-worn path of critiquing elite institutions for coopting grassroots social change projects, this dissertation pursues questions that follow from Garza's remarkable call to inject social movements into the DNA of philanthropy. What Frankenstein's monster emerges from the hybridization of professional philanthropy and grassroots movements? How have movements come to appear as an appropriate object of philanthropic largesse in the eyes of progressive funders? Why the focus on movements now? And what do not just philanthropic professionals, but progressive elites working in development and human rights organizations, think must happen to their social change projects for them to be a non-coopting partner of

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[23] "Tell No Lies" further argues that the Impact Report is "an attempt to mitigate the concerns of donors who gave to BLMGN under the impression that the funds were being distributed to chapters all over the country that they saw doing the work."

[24] Eligon, "Black Lives Matter Has Grown More Powerful, and More Divided."

[25] Eligon, "Black Lives Matter Has Grown More Powerful, and More Divided"; Morrison, "AP Exclusive: Black Lives Matter opens up about its finances"; King, "Black Lives Matter power grab sets off internal revolt."

[26] King, "Black Lives Matter power grab sets off internal revolt."

grassroots movements? What transformations do the demands of supporting movements require of philanthropic, development, and human rights thought and practice?

This dissertation takes up these questions through an analysis of the discourses, tools, and practices crafted by progressive third sector elites as they have incorporated support for grassroots movements into their projects over the past two decades.[27] Exploring the terms on which a discourse on movements enters elite social change projects, I wager, can tell us something about the liberal political imagination at a time of rising illiberalism. This is a study, then, into the order of discourse and regime of truth about grassroots movements fashioned by progressive professionals and their institutions to secure a productive and plausible relationship with them. It follows the figure of the grassroots movement as it is positivized and inscribed into different professional and social scientific discourses, as well as the self-fashioning of the progressive elites invested in supporting movements.

II.   Beyond Cooptation and Depoliticization

Critical approaches to studying elite involvement in grassroots movements frame it as either coopting or depoliticizing. This critical impulse reflects the long but narrow shadow cast by reflections on elite support for the civil rights movement in the 1960s, which explained how philanthropy encouraged civil rights activists and organizations to take more moderate positions over time, effectively blunting and channeling their more radical goals.[28] Left critics of philanthropy in the 1970s and 1990s often turned to Antonio Gramsci to describe foundations as a key actor in civil society advancing elite cultural hegemony.[29] Meanwhile, much of the critical literature on professionalized liberal social change projects in recent decades has focused on their depoliticizing effects or apolitical nature. This is especially the case for human rights and international development, which are shown to favor minimalist rather than maximalist change and to replace political action with technical or legal interventions that reflect government by experts rather than collective agency.[30] In political theory more widely, Wendy Brown and

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[27] "Third sector" is used here and throughout to refer to the nonprofit, non-governmental, or civil society sector—in other words, organizations not affiliated with either government or business that work towards the public good.

[28] See Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; Haines, "Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights"; Jenkins and Eckert, "Channeling Black Insurgency"; Ferguson, *Top Down*; Francis, "The Price of Civil Rights"; and on movement capture in other contexts, see Kohl-Arenas, *The Self-Help Myth*, and Márquez, "Mexican-American Political Organizations and Philanthropy." Corrigall-Brown offers a summary in "Funding for Social Movements." Alice O'Connor notes that foundation engagement with the civil rights movement was "foundational" (by establishing a template) for future philanthropic-movement relations (see "Foundations, Social Movements, and the Contradictions of Liberal Philanthropy," 332).

[29] See Fisher, "The Role of Philanthropic Foundations in the Reproduction and Production of Hegemony"; Arnove, "Introduction" to *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism*, 2-3; Karl and Katz, "Foundations and Ruling Class Elites," 1-5; Roelofs, *Foundations and Public Policy*, 1-3; Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*, 10-23; Kohl-Arenas, *The Self-Help Myth*, 10-11, and "Critical Issues in Philanthropy." For a broader review of critical scholarship on the nonprofit sector from 1970s onward see Coule, Dodge, and Eikenberry, "Toward a Typology of Critical Nonprofit Studies." The authors find that only 4% of articles in the three major nonprofit studies journals between 1972 (when the first was founded) and 2009 "adopt critical approaches." However, there is increasing interest in analyses of the nonprofit sector that draw on critical theoretical and qualitative approaches (see Dean and Wiley, "Critical Theory, Qualitative Methods and the Non-Profit and Voluntary Sector").

[30] For development, see Harriss, *Depoliticizing Development*; Li, *The Will to Improve*, who combines Foucauldian and Gramscian perspectives; Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard's "Introduction" to *International Development and the Social Sciences*; and Kamat,

others have articulated the way in which neoliberalism threatens the space of the political and the subject of politics.[31] These two critical strands have combined to either render liberal political projects reducible to class interests and parasitic on authentic politics, or as denying political subjectivity altogether or replacing it with economic rationality. If cooptation names the process whereby progressive liberals are parasitic on grassroots politics, depoliticization names the process whereby technical and economic rationalities displace collective political agency with elite discourses and practices. These processes have been robustly theorized in part because the supremacy of liberalism in the second half of the 20th century has required a diagnostic and critical approach to its modalities of power.[32] A common critical response is then to call for the (re)politicization of whatever object or domain has been depoliticized or coopted, whether it be finance, development, humanitarianism, or international law.[33]

These traditions of critique have been particularly effective at explaining the tactics and mechanisms used by elites to maintain the distribution of power in the status quo. Yet they are also limited in several ways. First, they tend to take elite interests to be unchanging and obvious. In critiques of philanthropy, for example, the path of influence is almost always presented as unidirectional: there are social movements out in the world, doing the good work, and then there are foundations giving money and having a moderating effect on them.[34] What is missing in this account is the energetic discussion in the third sector about how *it* will have to transform if it is to *avoid* cooping movements. Thus a 2019 article by political scientist Megan Ming Francis, "The Price of Civil Rights: Black Politics, White Money, and Movement Capture", has circulated among progressives philanthropic professionals; the collection *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (2007), reissued in 2017, has appeared as recommended reading for leaders in the sector; and philosopher Olúfémi O. Táíwò's 2022 book *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else)* has been positively reviewed or cited in the main sector trade publications. The prominence of these critiques, as well as books that promise some kind of solution—such as Edgar Villanueva's *Decolonizing Wealth* (2018)—index both the widespread anxiety in the sector over the risk of cooping movements, and the conviction that supporting movements is what being a progressive

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"The New Development Architecture and the Post-Political in the Global South." For human rights, see Moyn, *The Last Utopia* and *Not Enough*; Meister, *After Evil*; and Brown, "The Most We Can Hope For?" See also Kennedy, *A World of Struggle*. In many of these accounts, oppositional social movements are implicitly or explicitly elevated as the necessary alternative; see, for example, Escobar, "Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development, and Social Movements."

[31] Brown, *Undoing the Demos*. See also Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, for another argument that worries about the diminution of the political in the 20th century, focusing more on bureaucracy and organization. There is also a more social scientific literature on depoliticization: see Fawcett, Flinders, Hay, and Wood, eds., *Anti-Politics, Depoliticization, and Governance*, and Lang, *NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere*. For an early and influential sociological argument in this vein focusing on elite capture of political processes, see Couch, *Post-Democracy*. The collection *The Post-Political and Its Discontents*, edited by Wilson and Swyngedouw, engages the writings of Mouffe, Rancière, and Žižek on the post-political.

[32] Michael Freeden and Marc Stears, while noting the internal variousness of the liberal tradition, nonetheless conclude that it is *the* "dominant ideology of the developed world" ("Liberalism," 329).

[33] For example: Meister, *Justice Is an Option* (finance), Li, *The Will to Improve* (development), Ticktin, *Causalities of Care* (humanitarianism), and the many examples of calls to politicize human rights discussed in Chapter 4. See also Blühdorn and Deflorian, "Politicisation Beyond Post-Politics."

[34] McCarthy, "Environmental Justice Grantmaking," 254.

foundation entails in the 21st century.[35] Thus, while the dollar figures given by foundations or corporations to support movements make it into headlines with the specter of cooptation looming over them, the tools and practices that philanthropic institutions use to carry out this support remain uninterrogated. The Gramscian critiques of philanthropy illuminate the politically constraining force of elite or establishment actors, but less so how their hegemonic ideas "translate into institutional relationships and professional practice on the ground," as Erica Kohl-Arenas notes: "theorizing cultural domination without investigating the conflicted professionals, the battles over frames and ideas, and the potential political opportunities revealed, only answers a limited range of questions."[36]

Second, the cooptation and depoliticization arguments reproduce as their terms of analysis an opposition that progressive elites are invested in producing through and in their own discourses. Thus the cooptation framing obscures from view the way that the opposition between social movements and elites, and the autonomy or discontinuity of the former from the latter, is central to the conceptual architecture of progressive third sector actors and institutions.[37] The discursive pairing of social movements and elites as binary opposites has a history. This history, for example, includes the positivization of the social movement in professional discourses of politicization: while throughout the twentieth century progressive philanthropists used the language of social justice, social change, community organizing, and advocacy to indicate their support for efforts to achieve equality in social relations, it is only at the turn of the 21st century that they begin to use 'social movement' as a specific analytical category and a tool for achieving social justice. Today there is a sense that, for social change to be authentic, it must derive from the efforts of something recognizable as a social movement, at least if it is also to accept philanthropic offerings, and so there are material benefits to being recognized as a social movement. There are, of course, histories of social movements, theories of social movements, and even the suggestion that the 21st century has witnessed the rise of "social movement societies."[38] But why activists and academics, politicians and journalists have adopted this term rather than others has remained largely uninterrogated. The effort that goes into discursively constructing grassroots movements as the opposite of elite political action invites its own set of questions. How did 'social movements' come to be the category of choice in the 21st century for funders invested in pursuing 'structural' or 'systems' change, or assume the status as opposite of elite actors rather than civil disobedience, revolution, or something else? How has the solidification of 'the social movement' into a distinct concept and object of knowledge production acted on the political imaginations of third sector professionals? How would one conceive of collective political action in the United States outside of the conceptual language of social movements, and is something lost when any and all collective action oriented towards political change is understood through the lens of the social movement concept?

Third, the attention given to the depoliticizing effects of liberal social change projects makes it difficult to discern and interrogate the ways 'the political' circulates as an ideal within

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[35] See Francis, "The Price of Civil Rights"; INCITE!, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*; Táíwò, *Elite Capture*; Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*. Kohl-Arenas also notes that the INCITE volume is widely read in the field ("Critical Issues in Philanthropy," 30).

[36] Kohl-Arenas, "The Presentation of Self in Philanthropic Life," 681, and Kohl-Arenas, "Critical Issues in Philanthropy," 32.

[37] This formulation is indebted to Miranda Joseph, who writes about the way 'community' and 'capital' are constructed "as discontinuous from each other," despite, and in order for, the discourse of community to enable capitalism. See *Against the Romance of Community*, 1-2.

[38] Meyer and Tarrow, "A Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century."

the professionalized third sector. Two or more decades of analysis about depoliticization, largely in the Foucault-inspired tradition of 'governmentality' studies, has shown how the discourses and institutions of human rights, development, citizen empowerment, and neoliberalism generally, advance an individualizing political rationality that stifles collective action.[39] But what about when the very forces of depoliticization and privatization take on this critique and begin to invest—literally and conceptually—in 'the political' as something which can and ought to be *produced*. Rather than only an abstract formulation wielded by theorists, 'the political' is now part of the technical language of progressive professionals and liberal rhetorics of social change. Indeed, there is a curious echo between radical democratic calls to repoliticize domains of contemporary power coming out of critical theoretically informed humanists and social scientists, on the one hand, and professionalized civil society elite on the other. The latter's project of supporting social movements recognizes and opposes the neoliberal individualization of previous empowerment and self-help discourse, and instead emphasizes collective political action. But it is executed through a technical-social scientific idiom and in a liberal institutional context perhaps at odds with the concept of the political advanced by, for instance, radical democratic theorists. What kind of politicization is this? Are all (re)politicizations created equal? What has to happen to this discourse for it make sense in the mouths of institutions that privatize wealth? What rhetorical postures or maneuvers are needed for this commitment to appear coherent? What concepts are created in the process, to sustain this contradiction? What political horizons or fantasies are articulated through this rhetoric? Once we discard the assumption that the economization of everything is total we can begin to see the ways even institutions deeply embedded in neoliberal and capitalist ways of operating contain counter-movements critical of neoliberal ideology, and that these counter-movements are sincere in their critique of neoliberal practices even as they might continue to deploy neoliberal categories or ways of thinking. We can then ask what kind of idealism is constructed in this effort at internal critique.

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This dissertation thus takes seriously the curious fact that questions raised by the dissenting BLM chapters discussed above are also hotly pursued in the halls of the philanthropic, development, and human rights organizations that attended the Ford Foundation's *From Protest to Power* event, or that logged onto the *Stronger Together* webinar series. Taking the desire of such elite actors for transformational social change at face value allows us to explore the conceptual tightrope they set for themselves to navigate their elite status and investment in dismantling the very systems that makes them elites. How can the undemocratic hoarders of wealth (foundations) support the cause of movements that are deeply anti-capitalist? Is solidarity between these actors possible? What does it mean to cede power to frontline activists, to 'decolonize wealth', or to fund through a reparation's lens? Because these questions circle and name contradictions—the desire to fund that which opposes you, to be in solidarity with those who name you as their enemy, to confront privatization while participating in it—they have generated a profusion of discourse in the third sector, with foundation CEOs, consultants, grant managers, and industry researchers scrambling to offer answers. Consequently, new positions like "Social Movements Advisor" and "Social Movements Evaluator" have appeared, and third-sector support organizations, networks, and consultants have started marketing their services to philanthropists interested in supporting movements. In this dissertation I follow these discourses,

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[39] Kohl-Arenas, "The Presentation of Self in Philanthropic Life," 681-682.

individuals, and organizations to understand the intellectual project currently undertaken in the third sector to support social movements.

This research departs, however, from the growing work on the rhetoric *of* social movements by communications scholars, or on the role of emotions in protest and the role of language in framing collective action by social movement scholars. These literatures seek to understand language in its tactical uses by political actors, with an eye to both persuasion and disruption.[40] Researchers writing in this vein have shown both how 'the language of contention', to use Sidney Tarrow's formulation, is used by movement actors to frame their actions, and how this language diffuses throughout and gains new meanings in different contexts. My project is consciously not this. Instead of trying to dissect the rhetoric *of* specific social movements, I look at the rhetoric *about* social movements as a concept wielded by elites wanting to make sense of and intervene on behalf of the range of actors and processes captured by the label 'social movement'. This means that I focus on a different, more elite cast of characters than these other studies. However, this suggestion that 'social movement discourse' is a particular political language that has risen to prominence within elite, liberal, progressive social change circles in the first decades of the 21st century is not an argument about the impotence of social movements to put forth their own political vocabularies and languages of contention—contemporary critical theory generally, and social movement studies to a lesser extent, has turned with great energy to the task of recovering and then theorizing from social movement ideations.[41] What is striking, however, is that the elite subjects of this study also participate in this act of reading and reconstructing movements, even as they remain ambivalent about their capacity or right to do so. Critical theorists and elite professionals gaze in the same direction, even if to different ends. So while the dissertation does not focus on the rhetoric of specific movements, it does help us understand the field of power and contention within which movements construct and disseminate their political vocabularies, and the competing (elite) discourses through which such vocabularies are interpreted or reinscribed. My hunch is thus that elite third sector social movement discourse represents, following Nikolas Rose, one of today's "novel territorializations of political thought and action."[42]

III.   Method

Understanding this novel territorialization of thought and action will first involve immanently inhabiting the political vision and practical logics of the organizations and individuals that set out to fund social movements. As Erica Kohl-Arenas observes, "few studies

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[40] See Stewart, Smith, and Denton, *Persuasion and Social Movements*, Bowers, Ochs, Jensen, and Shulz, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, Morris and Browne, *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*. A good overview is Cox and Foust, "Social Movement Rhetoric" and the essays collected in *What Democracy Looks Like: The Rhetoric of Social Movements and Counterpublics*, edited by Foust, Pason, and Rogness. On the concept of 'framing' in social movement research see Snow, "Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields." And on emotions and narrative in movements see the work of Polletta, especially *It Was Like a Fever*. In general on language in social movements see Tarrow, *The Language of Contention*, and Steinberg, *Fighting Words*. A pioneering account in political science focusing on symbolism in politics is Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*. None of these studies, however, take 'social movement' itself to be part of the language of movements, seeing it instead as the neutral term to describe the thing—social movements—whose language is being analyzed.
[41] See for example Woodly's efforts to understand the political theory of Black Lives Matter in *Reckoning* or Michelle Moody-Adams's *Making Space for Justice*, discussed in Chapter 3.
[42] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 327.

[of the third sector] address the often-contested professional spaces between pure imperialist cooptation and idealistic market-based promotion."[43] This space of the third sector is not a foreign land to me. Since 2014 I have intermittently worked in or adjacent to human rights and development organizations, as intern, administrator, and researcher.[44] Even before this professional experience, when I was an undergraduate student assuming leadership roles in my university's branch of Amnesty Canada, I found myself steeped in progressive liberal ways of imagining social change—human rights, humanitarianism, multiculturalism, empowerment. While the time I've spent in different organizations has contributed valuable insight into their workings, as I began this doctoral research I soon realized that immanently inhabiting the political imagination of progressive third sector professionals requires, perhaps paradoxically, that I turn away from the 'case study' model. While there will be moments when I offer more detailed analyses of one particular organization, this dissertation necessarily takes a wide set of sometimes very differently positioned organizations as its main object of analysis. This is necessary because the trend I want to interrogate exists in and through a network of organizations and specific individuals within organizations, the reports they write, read, circulate, and cite, the conferences and webinars on social movement funding they organize and attend, and so on. In-depth ethnographic engagement with a single institution would not be able to capture the multiple moving parts of this discourse, in part because it is a discourse under construction as part of a progressive movement within the third sector, interacting with and at times supplanting other discourses which remain operational.[45] It is also a discourse appealing to philanthropic foundations, human rights groups, and development organizations, which are rarely analyzed together despite sharing discursive techniques, underwriting assumptions about social change, and even personnel. Accordingly, the analyses that form the core of this dissertation are grounded in 21 interviews conducted between January 2020 and October 2021 with a range of third sector professionals based in the US, the UK, and Europe[46]; attending or viewing recordings of approximately 40 webinars on topics related to movement funding best practices or progressively reforming the third sector[47]; analysis of around 50 reports on these same topics published between 2001 and 2023; and a review of coverage on third sector innovations in these same two decades in trade publications including the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *Alliance Magazine*, *Inside Philanthropy*, and the blogs of the National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy, Candid, Bridgespan Group, Human Rights Funders Network, and other leading philanthropic and third sector support organizations. This material represents the substantial grey literature produced by the third sector on how to support social

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[43] Kohl-Arenas, "The Presentation of Self in Philanthropic Life," 678. Later: "there have been hardly any studies that focus specifically on the micro-practices of professionals who work within private grant-making foundations" (678). In seeking to fill this gap, I also draw inspiration from Monika Krause's careful study of the practical logics of humanitarian relief organizations in *The Good Project*.

[44] These roles included Disability Rights Law Intern for Human Rights Watch (2015), Program Coordinator for the Alliance for Historical Dialogue and Accountability and the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University (2016-2017), and Research Fellow for CARE USA's first Social Movements Advisor (2018).

[45] For example, a 2017 publication by American Jewish World Service, "Investing in Social Change," combines human rights, social enterprise, and social movements discourses. It claims that "in many ways, AJWS thinks like a startup investor" and names itself "A Venture Funder for Social Change," at the same time as it aims to support movements.

[46] Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) IRB Protocol Number: 2020-08-13541.

[47] I had access to many of these webinars due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced organizations to move normally in-person events online, allowing them also to open them to a wider audience.

movements, and through which both lay and academic social scientific accounts of movements are generated and circulated.

The third sector is famous for (and self-deprecating about) the speed at which terminological fashions rise and fall, making any attempt to pin down its discourses challenging. This means the researcher must at times pursue a view from 30,000 feet to try to piece together how these different discourses operate together, or not. Understanding the third sector as an ecosystem (to use one of the sector's favorite terms) proved essential to seeing how it regards its role in social change. But some kind of cohesive object of analysis is nonetheless necessary. Accordingly, throughout the following chapters I use terms like "third sector progressive elites" or "progressive civil society professionals" to designate those advancing this order of discourse. The group I have in mind is actually somewhat narrower than these terms suggest, referring specifically to Global North philanthropic, development, and human rights professionals who see themselves as at the head of a progressive movement within these sectors. They are third sector "thought leaders," occupying policy, research, and executive roles at leading organizations such as the Global Fund for Women, CARE USA, American Jewish World Service, the Ford Foundation, or the Human Rights Funders Group, to name a few.

The organizations and individuals who are the subjects of this dissertation, even more specifically, are brought together by a collective project to 'support social movements'. While Chapter 1 provides an account of this project and its key organizational champions from around the year 2000 onwards, what I want to emphasize at the outset is that this group of professionals gains coherence as an object of study not from geography, organizational affiliation, or any marker of identity such as gender or race, but from a shared conviction that they are actively participating in the radicalization of professionalized civil society. There are, however, some general characteristics to this group. On the whole, they are Global North-educated, professionally successful, institutionally-secure, economically-stable, cosmopolitan, and urban-dwelling. Most were born sometime in the 1960s-1990s, and began their careers in the 2000s. Many have graduate degrees in the social sciences or humanities and some have activist backgrounds. On the face of it, this group belongs to what Barbara and John Ehrenreich famously dubbed in 1977 the Professional Managerial Class, or PMC: mental laborers like teachers, professors, doctors, lawyers, and social workers whose status comes more from education than from control of capital.[48] Their point was that not all workers have the same relationship to capital, and that meaningful solidarity between the professional and working classes required being "upfront" about the differences between the two.[49] While the Ehrenreich's were making an intervention into Marxist theory in the name of building a broad movement capable of holding together both mental and physical laborers, today the PMC label has become "an ultraleft slur."[50] The actors who I focus on in this dissertation can justifiably be identified as

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[48] See Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, "The Professional-Managerial Class," and "The New Left and the Professional-Managerial Class." Barbara Ehrenreich's later *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (1989) gives an account of the professional middle class's class consciousness, specifically their self-understanding as elites.

[49] See Press, "On the Origins of the Professional-Managerial Class: An Interview with Barbara Ehrenreich." In Gabriel Winant's gloss: "[T]he raison d'etre of the PMC, seen at a formal level, was the reproduction of capitalist society writ large…The Ehrenreichs proposed to resolve this debate by positing the PMC as a distinct, bounded social layer. Located between labor and capital rather than ultimately part of one or the other, with its own distinctive consciousness—roughly, meritocratic rationality—and its own organizational and political infrastructure, the PMC bears contradictory loyalties and antagonisms in both directions" ("Professional-Managerial Chasm").

[50] Press, "On the Origins of the Professional-Managerial Class." The PMC label morphed into a left slur in part because of the way the PMC cohered with the rise of neoliberalism, partnering with the bourgeois owners of

belonging to the PMC, but they are determined to imagine precisely the solidarity relationship with the civil society equivalent to the working class—grassroots activists and community organizers—for which the Ehrenreich's called but which never materialized on a large scale. Thus if the critique of the PMC is that it never succeeded in imagining itself as "the antagonists of capitalists,"[51] the professionals who form the object of this study set out to do precisely this, even if imperfectly, expressing antagonism to capitalism as a 'system' but pointing to grassroots activists as the 'proper' subject of the antagonism. They share the PMC self-description as "radicals-in-the-professions" keen on dismantling expertise from the inside,[52] or as what Ananya Roy calls "double agents."[53] In other words, what distinguishes and coheres the subjects of this dissertation is that they have tasked themselves with figuring out how to use capital against itself, an intriguing project given that the foundations for which many of them work have, in Alice O'Connor's words, been the "arbiters of liberalism" through 20th century United States history.[54]

This group of professional's awareness of their contradictory position invites an explosion of discourses, ideas, and self-fashioning projects. The dissertation thus analyzes the rhetoric and logic of the practices, tools, discourses, and sensibilities constructed by and circulating amongst them. The tools of rhetorical analysis are especially valuable for this project because, in addition to being movers of money, the subjects at the heart of this dissertation are often skilled "discursive strategists" (Judith Butler's phrase) who use technical, social scientific and activist language to designate certain kinds of actions and actors as belonging to *social movements*, and then define what that is and is not.[55] Following Butler's account of bids to nominate some states or movements as democratic and not others, we can recognize the assertation that something is or belongs to a social movement as "a wager, a bid for hegemony,"[56] that erects a border between political action that leads to authentic social change and that which does not. This dissertation thus asks what is at play in the speech act that names something as a social movement. This is a discursive strategy with very real and oftentimes immediate material effects: if a grantee fails to convince a program officer that her organization is a mover and shaker in some kind of social movement, it might spell the end to whatever work

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financial capital to "[bring] about a political resolution to the economic and social crisis of the 1970s," rather than closing the gap "between the radical professionals and the demobilized working class" (Winant, "Professional-Managerial Chasm"). Catherine Liu's *Virtue Hoarders: The Case Against the Professional Managerial Class* (2021) is an example of a left polemic framing the PMC as unredeemable.

[51] Winant, "Professional-Managerial Chasm."

[52] Winant, "Professional-Managerial Chasm."

[53] Roy's *Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development* (2010) charts how poverty experts within institutions like the World Bank "articulate and practice critique" of the Washington consensus (191). For example, Roy describes one professional's efforts as "an unmaking of truth in a machine committed to the 'accomplishments of truth'" (195). As Roy argues, "the very strength of such auto-critique derives from the 'insider' status of these double agents: that they speak from within the project of development." But this insider position simultaneously "reaffirms the legitimacy and authority of the Washington consensus on poverty…This is the 'doubleness' of these types of dissent—that they simultaneously challenge and renew the role of the World Bank as the arbiter of development" (85-86). As Roy observes, such doubleness "is neither false consciousness nor betrayal," but rather "speaks to the structural reality that our work acquires meaning only through the defense of the structures within which we produce that work…The double agent cannot necessarily seek to smash, tear apart, and burn down the structure, but the double agent can occupy the structure, burrowing in, claiming territory, and marking a terrain of action." I follow Roy in asking: "How are such critical imaginations forged?" (197).

[54] O'Connor, "Foundations, Social Movements, and the Contradictions of Liberal Philanthropy," 331.

[55] I'm here riffing on Judith Butler, *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 3, who is talking about who decides what states and movements will be called democratic.

[56] Butler, *Notes*, 4.

they are doing. For the third sector elites, the stakes of naming their partners as social movements might include their progressive credentials and justification for existing at all. This is one reason why there is such intense attraction to discursive play in the sector, and sense that it might hold the answer, that the right words in the right combination will unwind the contradictions of elite support for movements. This leads these actors to try different vocabularies on for size, search for descriptive metaphors—ecosystem, infrastructure, lifecycle—or obsess over linguistic precision. While this language on one reading is thus in the service of resolving or obfuscating contradiction, on another it does very real work in structuring thought about the capacities of actors, set parameters for legitimate political agency, and define the terms of right relation between different actors involved in social change.

To some extent, then, this dissertation is a study in what Foucault calls in *The History of Sexuality* "the internal discourse of the institution—the one it employed to address itself, and which circulated among those who made it function."[57] What Foucault says there of the discourse on children's sexuality aptly describes progressive third sector elite discourse on grassroots movements:

> enclosing them in a web of discourses which sometimes address them, sometimes speak about them, or impose canonical bits of knowledge on them, or use them as the basis for constructing a science that is beyond their grasp—all this together enables us to link an intensification of the interventions of power to a multiplication of discourse.[58]

The twist is that in my research this understanding of the relation of discourse to power is complicated by the fact that the discourse in question is *about* power itself and, crucially, *not* exercising it—even if the 'power' that third sector elite talk about refers both to something that can be held or taken as well as, at times, to the more capillary and constitutive kind of power that Foucault describes. One of the distinguishing features of this group of professionals is how self-aware they are of their status as elite, powerful members of the nonprofit industrial complex, and how central the language of power is to their discourse and practice. Work on the third sector in the governmentality tradition has attended carefully to how power works to create subjects (through discourses of empowerment or community[59]), but less has been written on the self-fashioning of those in the institutions unspooling this discourse.[60] I'm interested, in other words, in both the construction of 'social movements' in a particular order of discourse, and of the self-fashioning of the elites who undertake this work of construction.

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[57] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 28.

[58] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 30. See also, more generally, Foucault, "The Order of Discourse."

[59] See, for example, Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower*, and Rose, *Powers of Freedom*.

[60] There are of course exceptions. Liisa Malkki's *The Need to Help: The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism* (2015) asks that we not only recognize "the agency, will, and specific motivations of the 'recipient' of humanitarian aid" but also "the frequent weaknesses, neediness, and non-universality of the humanitarian 'benefactor'—the giver who, no less than the receiver, always sets out from a social and existential position both specific and precarious" (8). Erica Kohl-Arenas's "The Presentation of Self in Philanthropic Life" (2017) draws on Erving Goffman's work to add a "micro-sociology of power" to Gramsci's theory of hegemony attuned to "performance, idealization, negative idealization, and disruption" (677). See also Susan Ostrander's ethnographic study *Money For Change: Social Movement Philanthropy at the Haymarket People's Fund* (1997), which argues that the question of whether philanthropic foundations risk coopting grassroots movements can only be answered through close attention to "the social relations of philanthropy" (6) in any given context: who are the grantmakers, what power do they wield, and how is that power organized institutionally?

One final note on method. While many of the individuals I interviewed identify or have identified in the past as activists or participants in social movements, in this project I have intentionally bracketed the political imaginations *of social movements*. This might make what follows appear lopsided or incomplete. The primary reason for this decision was to avoid assuming the distinction between philanthropic foundation or NGO on the one hand, and social movement on the other, and instead understand the construction and effects of this distinction *in* elite discourses. The point is precisely to interrogate the gaze of progressive funders as they look towards social movements, not reproduce it. In fact, the primary move in critiques of organized philanthropy's engagement with social movements is to say that the one makes political claim x and the other political claim y, to juxtapose these as more radical vs. less radical, and to leave it at that. This argumentative move, however, in effect confirms the incommensurability between the worlds of social movements and other kinds of organizations within the third sector that progressive philanthropists themselves are trying to assert. While I do not want to contest the fact of any differences between such modes of political action and organization, I do want to avoid reifying the discursive operations I aim to explore. We will learn more if we move past asserting the difference between social movements and their elite partners and instead ask about how those elites assert this difference as a simple matter of fact.

IV.   Chapters

Chapter 1, "Civil Society in Crisis and the Promise of Social Movements," argues that progressive third sector organizations support social movements by assimilating them to civil society. Starting in the last two decades of the twentieth century we begin to see the neoliberalization, professionalization, and commercialization of the third sector and the blurring of the boundaries between the state, market, and civil society with the rise of government-led private-public partnerships and of market principles within nonprofits. For progressives in the sector, the creep of neoliberal rationality into the nonprofit and philanthropic space has crowded out authentic, community-led change, threatening to replace it with market-led visions of social change. Meanwhile, the rise of authoritarian states abroad and right-wing populism at home threatens to diminish the space of citizen action to address problems like climate change and poverty. Combined, these dynamics lead progressive third sector professionals to invest in a narrative of civil society in crisis, facing encroachment by both state and market forces. This is the 'problem-space' in which the progressive edge of the sector invests in the redemptive power of social movements.

Meanwhile, starting in the 1960s and 1970s the 'social movement' began to shift both in academic and elite professional conversations from being associated with irrational crowds or reactive rioters to being associated with rational political actors voicing legitimate grievances to and against official political authorities. The civil rights movement in the United States burnished the reputation of the social movement, which became increasingly a term used to designate something positive and credible. The contemporary social movement concept in the hands of both social scientists and third sector practitioners is the exact opposite of the image of 'the masses' it once signified; instead, the attributes once associated with elites—the reason and progress of civil society—are projected onto grassroots activists, distinguishing them from right wing populists (the new masses). The specific power of social movements *in the eyes of* development, human rights, and philanthropic organizations is that they signify a purified civil

society—operating beyond the 'inside track' of formal politics and largely eschewing market rationalities while still being oriented towards influencing formal politics (laws, elections, administrations, etc.) in the direction of ameliorating the conditions of those left behind by the market or excluded from wielding formal political power. The concept of social movement taken up by progressive civil society institutions frames it as a form of collective political action that is *outside* a formal political sphere corrupted by market rationality in the neoliberal age but still *within* a liberal political imaginary that sees civil society as the repository of legitimate, authentic democratic practice.

The subsequent chapters turn to the ways that the affiliation of social movements with (and within) civil society is part of a regime of truth constructed through specific discourses, tools, and practices. Chapter 2, "Fantasies of Non-Instrumentality: Knowledge and Power in Participatory Grantmaking," explores one prominent third sector technology for purifying civil society of elite influence: participatory grantmaking, the involvement of grantees or other representatives of a target community in deciding the allocation of grant money. Through an analysis of the growing movement for participatory grantmaking in the sector, the chapter explores the way progressive funders address the danger of coopting movements by imagining a sphere of political action untainted by capital or the influence of a hegemonic elite. Two interconnected rationalities undergird participatory grantmaking's promise to circumvent cooptation. The first is *non-instrumental relationality*. Through an analysis of the #ShiftThePower campaign I show how progressive funders insist on the unique agency of the subaltern by arguing that the lived experience of marginalization provides the disadvantaged with a kind of knowledge inaccessible to elites, assigning privileged, experience-based knowledge (*mētis*) to the former and technical, expertise-based knowledge (*techne*) to the latter. Participatory grantmaking is attractive because it places grant decision-making in the hands of those with lived experience, thus moving funds to grassroots movements while preventing grantmakers from producing knowledge that can then be used to intervene in, instrumentalize, and thereby coopt them.

The second rationality is the *non-hegemonic control of resources*. This idea is premised on the possibility of liberating capital from the hands of hegemonic elites and reformulating it as a neutral 'resource' available to the disadvantaged. Through an analysis of recent texts by philanthropic thought-leader Edgar Villanueva designed to help foundations #ShiftThePower, I show how capital is said to be 'liberated' through the self-critique of foundation elite who are called upon to reckon with their own privilege and renounce their ill-gotten control over wealth. In Villanueva's work, "decolonizing wealth" entails that beneficiaries of historical injustice (such as foundation elites) perform humility, complicity, and culpability by naming and specifying how their relationship to wealth has compromised their ability to see the world clearly. This complicity needs to be named and located in the person of the elite professional so that the *capital* they control can be recognized as itself neutral, and therefore ripe for redeployment as 'medicine' capable of healing the world. Both non-instrumental relationality and the non-hegemonic control of resources are necessary for participatory grantmaking to neutralize the possibility of elite cooptation through a conceptual partitioning of the space of capital (elite, expert, toxic) and the space of authentic political action (grassroots, experience, healing). These elites thus develop an account of knowledge, experience, and power that is meant to separate toxic capital from authentic political actors while still moving resources to them, all the while providing elite actors with a role in radical social change—the care of

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themselves through a performative, public confession of privilege. This is one way that elites inhabit the subject-position of a problem while understanding themselves as part of the solution.

While Chapter 2 reveals one technology for distancing elites from grassroots movements, Chapter 3, "The Ecosystem Metaphorics of Movement Liberalism," attends to the ways third sector elites figure a new kind of proximity to and relationship with movements. This proximity is imagined and represented through the idea of the "social change ecosystem." While 'systems thinking' and 'systems change' have circulated in third sector discourses since the early 2000s, the metaphor of the ecosystem has increasingly gained traction as a tool for articulating how elites understand their role in social change efforts since the mid-2010s. The social change ecosystem refers to the interrelation of differentiated movement tactics including mass protest, community organizing, personal transformation, government lobbying, litigation, service provision, and advocacy. The chapter analyzes how third sector professionals such as foundation staff use this ecological semantics to imagine relationships of solidarity between different kinds of political actors, in particular grassroots activists and third sector elites. It argues that the solidarity relationship with grassroots actors that third sector elites' figure through the social change ecosystem is a key imaginative construct of *movement liberalism*, Scott L. Cummings's term for the use of movements within legal scholarship that tries to articulate a role for the courts in progressive social change while maintaining a distinction between law and politics. Movements "create new norms, reshape politics, and shift public opinion," allowing courts to take on the role of merely "confirming an already developed social consensus rather than shaping a new one."[61] The chapter argues that the account of progressive politics advanced by movement liberalism is a much wider phenomenon, holding out a redemptive promise to elites across the development, human rights, and philanthropic sectors. Many progressive social change organizations are grappling with the question of how to constrain their own power and agency without compromising their legitimacy as contributors to progressive change by reformulating their theories of change using the political grammar of movement liberalism to challenge the specters of cooptation, imbrication with states and capital, and technocratic ethos that haunt professionalized progressive organizations today.

Attending to the ecological semantics that many civil society elites deploy helps draw out key features and consequences of movement liberalism. The chapter thus analyzes the social change ecosystem framework as developed by the influential Ayni Institute and presented to progressive funders as a grantmaking tool in venues like the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Tracing this ecosystem framework to a branch of organizational theory in the 1970s called organizational ecology, which started to cross-pollinate with the sociology of social movements in the 1990s, the chapter shows how conflict between different organizational forms evolves from being a natural feature of the ecosystem in the organizational literature to being a problem to be redressed when the ecosystem idea enters the discourses of progressive social change funders in the 2000s. If in Chapter 2 cooptation is the problem progressive elites need to solve, in Chapter 3 that problem is competition. Thus the conflict inherent in organizational ecology is progressively replaced by a cooperationist theory of ecosystem dynamics in the third sector mobilizations of the concept that harkens back to the holism and functionalism of 19th and 20th century organicism. The function that third sector elites assign themselves is to regulate the different parts of the ecosystem in order to avoid competition between them and to ensure the stability and harmony of the organic whole. To avoid the degree of control that such regulation implies (which would once more risk cooptation), progressive foundations invoke social

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[61] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 362, 363.

movement actors as the vital element at the center of the larger progressive social change organism, providing its direction (telos) and ideological cohesion (unity). The task for progressive elites then becomes the identification of this vital element and the representation of their functional relationship to it—in the process articulating the category of the authentic political actor within the grammar of movement liberalism. The chapter takes seriously the search by third sector professionals for a metaphor capable of securing their place alongside progressive movements.

Chapter 4, "Paracapitalist Imaginaries: Movements, Civil Society, and Genres of the Political," unpacks some of the implications of movement liberalism's dance of proximity and distance for both the understanding of political subjectivity and the horizon of political possibility it invites. The chapter reads the material analyzed in the previous chapters to uncover the plot of the story about social change that elite civil society professionals tell through their words and practices. Taking as an example the ways both liberal and radical democratic scholars propose to '(re)politicize' the human rights project, the chapter shows how a consensus around an essentially political notion of human rights has emerged: radical democratic *and* liberal politicizations of human rights involve creating an autonomous realm of transformative agency signified by grassroots movements. This is the case despite radical democratic thinkers seeking to critique liberalism, revealing how the political grammar of liberalism shifts to accommodate criticisms. However, what is specific to movement liberalism's approach to formulating and securing this autonomous realm of political agency, I argue, is its zero-sum calculus when it comes to political agency: professionalized elites work to circumscribe their own agency in the name of enabling the agency of grassroots movement actors, effectively splitting the 'self' of social change. Drawing on genre theory, which is attentive to the ways genres apportion truth, authority, and agency in narratives, the chapter shows how progressive third sector professionals approach their own potential for political action through the lens of tragedy, while viewing the political action of the social movement actor through the redemptive lens of romance. Movement liberals toggle between political disenchantment and political re-enchantment: a tragic outlook requiring self-containment, a fear of wielding power, and humility in the face of the unknowable consequences of political action, and a romantic outlook that seeks to negate the tragic by folding it within a redemptive quest by virtuous heroes signifying wisdom and power. It is a story that refigures what radical democrats think of as an autonomous space of the political as a specific *subject* imbued with political power: it ontologizes political possibility in the being of a particular actor, the grassroots activist.

What is it, precisely, that is redeemed in the redemption narrative of movement liberalism? The chapter argues that the reason this interplay of political disenchantment and re-enchantment remains part of a liberal story is that it amounts to a kind of politicization meant to secure a liberal conceptualization of civil society as a counterforce to state and market power, rather than the reordering or upending of the idealized balance between state, market, and civil society. Underwriting movement liberal politicizing efforts, in other words, is a *paracapitalist imaginary*: the vision of a space beside and in tension with but not existentially threatening to capitalism. Progressive elite third sector discourses and technologies inscribe the 'social movement' as the redeemer of civil society, civil society as essentially progressive, and a redeemed civil society as the telos of collective political action. Thus movement liberalism is underwritten by a conceptualization of the political that draws on both tragic and romantic sensibilities to rhetorically sediment an essentialist conceptualization of political subjectivity while limiting the kind of transformation that subject can legitimately pursue. The chapter does

not present a *history* of movement liberalism but rather shows how certain impulses in liberal thought are taking on a new form that we can start to discern, name, and analyze. As a 'genre of the political', movement liberalism helps us to specify an emergent strain within liberalism that has a particular relationship to politicization as an aspiration and a challenge, and that renders previous critiques, such as those by radical democratic theorists, less potent.

These four chapters are more variations on a theme than an argument that progresses linearly, each drawing out a particular feature—distance, proximity, agency—to paint a picture of movement liberalism, the political rationality and grammar diffusing through the professional network at the heart of the dissertation. The conclusion points to some of the different future avenues for theorizing movement liberalism, and reflects on the stakes of doing so in one line of analysis—the possibility of thinking solidarity across status differences.

V.   Historicizing Liberal Political Grammars

In the conclusion of *Bland Fanatics: Liberals, Race and Empire*, Pankaj Mishra provocatively compares today's Anglo-American intelligentsia to Jonathan Lear's account in *Radical Hope* of the Crow Indians, whose forced transition from a nomadic to a settled way of life in the mid-19th century, claims Lear, led to the destruction of both their mode of existence and the concepts they once used to understand the world. "It is no exaggeration to say," writes Mishra, "that many in the Anglo-American intelligentsia today resemble the Crow Indians, after being successively blindsided by far-right insurgencies, an uncontainable pandemic, and political revolts by disenfranchised minorities."[62] While in the decades after the Cold War a transatlantic liberal consensus in politics, business, and media "broadcast their conviction that the world was being knit together peaceably by their guidelines for capitalism, democracy and technology," we now know that this period, defined by neoliberal globalization, a disastrous war on terror, the rise of China, financial crisis, and the Trump presidency, really heralded a phase in which "many ideas and assumptions dominant for decades were rapidly becoming obsolete."[63] Mishra suggests that "those who insisted that there [is] no practical alternative to Western-style liberal democracy and capitalism" are left unable to explain not only China's success, India's mix of democracy and Hindu supremacism, and the election of far-right demagogues at home, but are also "largely bemused, too, by the biggest [racial justice] protests in the United States since the civil rights movement."[64] What he describes as the intellectual trauma and narcissism of two generations of liberal thinkers and doers render them ill equipped to understand "the deeper structural changes of a suddenly unfamiliar world."[65]

As this dissertation shows, however, the intelligentsia within these progressive, post-WWII professionalized liberal social change projects *are* engaged in efforts to develop concepts responsive to this changed, unfamiliar political world. If neoliberalism has undertaken a decades long assault on 'the political', some progressive third sector elites are now trying to imagine their own roll in re-invigorating 'the political'. The chapters that follow thus describe the tools developed as part of a particular liberal relation to (re)politicization, tools that come out of a critique of neoliberalism from within one of the sectors arguably transformed wholesale by it.

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[62] Mishra, *Bland Fanatics*, 234.
[63] Mishra, *Bland Fanatics*, 234-235.
[64] Mishra, *Bland Fanatics*, 235.
[65] Mishra, *Bland Fanatics*, 237.

The authorizing assumption underwriting these movement liberal technologies is that there is a space or actor within civil society that is beyond the reach of capital or state influence and that is powerful enough to challenge them. But is such purity possible or desirable? What kind of political actor or formation is rendered illegitimate or illegible when set against such an ideal? And can we conceive of emancipatory political practices and projects today that defy articulation within the terms of civil society? Is this the privatization of politicization itself, or something else? In other words, the dissertation shows that there is a need to historicize the grammar of liberalism to account for its own responses to cooptation, depoliticization, neoliberalism, populism, and illiberalism—to the crisis narrative of liberal modernity. Liberal political grammar is not necessarily stable over time. The dissertation offers 'movement liberalism' as one term that can contribute to this project, a term that attends specifically to an emerging strain of liberal thinking invested in political authenticity, but that thinks about the role of purity and authenticity in progressive politics without relying on the language of political correctness, identity politics, virtue signaling, or other polemical formulations about puritanism that circulate in popular political discourse today; these debates can only get us so far towards understanding the depth of the nexus between political subjectivity and political action. If conservatives in the United States increasingly turn to something like Carl Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction, movement liberals turn to the elite/grassroots distinction. If conservatives reach for political power and argue that their ends justify their means, movement liberals stake their hopes and credibility on the nature of the means. The dissertation draws out this liberal orientation to the political, the terms of which are constitutive of the entry of social movements to the liberal project. As the conclusion notes, the extent to which movements are conscripted to this project remains an open question, but the force of its political grammar needs to be theorized precisely because it is self-consciously non-coopting. This bid for liberal relevance in an illiberal age means that we need to develop critical tools and projects attuned to liberalism's view of its own uncertain future rather than just its triumphant past.

Chapter One

Civil Society in Crisis and the Promise of Social Movements

The Global Fund for Women (GFW) has worked with social movements since its founding in 1987, but only began to name them as such around 2013 or 2014. At this time, according to a former director, it started developing its publicly-available Movement Capacity Assessment Tool, a resource to help movements understand their strengths and needs (now available in its third edition).[1] By September 2020, when GFW released a new 4-year strategic plan, it committed to "doubling down on supporting intersectional gender justice movements across the globe." By "shifting towards a movement-led approach," the fund plans to "fuel rising people power globally to increase their impact and accelerate change."[2] The American Jewish World Service (AJWS) has followed a similar trajectory. While AJWS, which was founded in 1985, was already supporting movements, the organization began to frame its mission in these terms only around 2014, according to one Vice-President. Two years later, in 2016, staff within AJWS started a working group to "concretize" what they meant by social movements, resulting in the development of their Social Movement Assessment Tool. The tool, though designed for internal use, garnered wide interest within the sector: AJWS was even contacted by international development organizations inquiring about how to use the tool to assess development programs *as social movements*.[3]

Recognizing this growing interest, third sector support organizations—including monitoring and evaluation consultancy Innovation Network, foundation watchdog National Committee on Responsive Philanthropy, and grantmaker associations Human Rights Funders Network and Edge Funders Alliance—have started to consult on, facilitate discussions around, or advocate for the support of social movements over that of more established NGOs. An associate at Innovation Network confirmed that they've seen "a definite uptick" of interest in evaluating social movements since 2011.[4] This trend extends beyond human rights grantmakers, development organizations, and philanthropic foundations to the law: while according to Scott L. Cummings social movements were relatively marginal to US legal thought prior to 1990, we are currently in "the moment of social movements," with empirical insights about movements from sociologists becoming increasingly central to mainstream US legal thought. Social movements now hold a "privileged position" in the field, says Cummings, "presented in laudatory terms as the engines of progressive transformation."[5] In the words of another director at GFW: social movements are "the topic on the tip of everyone's tongue."[6] There is so much excitement about funding movements in the third sector and beyond that ORS Impact, a social impact measurement, evaluation and strategy consultancy, felt compelled to release a report called "Not Always Movements: Multiple Approaches to Advance Large-Scale Social Change" in June

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[1] Interview #8. https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/apply-for-a-grant/movement-capacity-assessment-tool/.
[2] https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/announcing-new-strategic-plan-latanya-letter/. The strategic plan summary can be found here: https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/our-approach/.
[3] Interview #5.
[4] Interview #6.
[5] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 360-361.
[6] Interview #10.

2020, offering a word of caution against stretching the social movement label too thin by conflating it with other means for achieving social change.[7]

It would be easy to assume that the rise of social movements as the analytical category and rhetoric of choice for progressive funders at the beginning of the 21st century is just one more example of faddishness in a sector infamous for generating buzzwords. One might also ask if this concept's ascendency is simply a case of an industry-wide public relations effort, a new coat of paint on an old façade: *social change philanthropy*, *social justice philanthropy*, *advocacy grantmaking*, and *social movement funding* are, after all, sometimes used interchangeably in scholarly and practitioner writing, and definitions of these terms appear broadly comparable.[8] This dissertation, however, wagers that the turn by a range of differently situated elite progressive social change actors to the project of 'supporting movements' can teach us something about the evolution of liberal political discourse. Thus the present chapter argues that both these elites' justification for and method of supporting social movements involves assimilating movements to the concept of civil society. Progressive leaders in the third sector make the case for supporting movements on the grounds that civil society is in crisis and grassroots movements are needed to defend civic space against the encroachments of (especially authoritarian) states and the market. In contrast to the narrative of gradual moral enlightenment that the field tells about itself, the enthusiasm for funding social movements is better understood as an attempt by progressive elites to redeem and then insulate a properly political concept of civil society in a neoliberal and populist age. These same elite actors also argue that movements emerge and thrive in places with a vibrant civil society. Thus support for movements is support for civil society, and support for civil society is support for movements. This chiasmatic structure of argumentation is central to a third sector effort to construct an order of discourse through which an idea of grassroots social movements is assimilated to an idea of civil society. Assimilating the former to the latter, however, raises questions. If contemporary social movements seek, in large part, to challenge neoliberal economic policies and their attendant social ills, how and why would philanthropic foundations, the epitome of privatized wealth, support them? What must happen to elite social change institutions for such assimilation to appear possible? In other words, something other than simple cooptation or appropriation is happening here. The cooptation framing of this relationship assumes that the social movement is brought into a given social world and conceptual system created and governed by the elite third sector actors, whereas what I follow are the ways these elite liberals reinvent themselves and along the way their conceptualization of 'the political' in and through their encounter with grassroots movements. Movements are not simply folded into something that already exists, but rather are occasion for and part of a transformation or reinvention of the elite actor and their understanding of political action; this reinvention entails its own set of power operations.

While Chapters 2 and 3 look at the tools and practices nonprofit professionals have developed to navigate such complications, this chapter charts the context for and terms on which 'social movements' enter liberal social change projects. The argument proceeds in three parts. The first part asks: to what progressive third sector predicament do 'social movements' offer an answer? I show how the third sector in the United States—the institutions and organizations of civil society that, in theory, exist to the side of and in balance with the state and the market—has

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[7] ORS Impact, "Not Always Movements: Multiple Approaches to Advance Large-Scale Social Change."

[8] Compare the definitions of social change philanthropy (in Ostrander, "Legacy and Promise for Social Justice Funding," 33, and Rabinowitz, *Social Change Philanthropy in America*, xii), social justice grantmaking (in Foundation Center 2005: 5), and social movement philanthropy (in Jenkins, "Social Movement Philanthropy," 53).

been transformed by market rationalities starting in the 1980s. The marketization and commercialization of the third sector has blurred the boundaries between state, market, and civil society, leading progressives within the sector to doubt the efficacy of NGOs to bring about transformative social change. The fear is that the distance separating civil society organizations—so central to the American national imaginary from Tocqueville to Robert Putnam—and the state and market is becoming more difficult to maintain in the face of private-public partnerships, the devolution of social services to non-profits, and the popularity of 'social enterprise' (making profit while doing good). Over the past several decades prominent progressive foundations have argued that civil society is weakening, that the devolution of social welfare responsibilities to NGOs is undemocratic and depoliticizing, and that large-scale, transformative change that doesn't rely on the market is required to address the enormity of intersecting social, economic, political, and ecological crises. This narrative contrasts with Silicon Valley 'theories of change' that rely on market principles (philanthrocapitalism, the 'double bottom line', social enterprise) while also distrusting the 'inside track' of change through formal political processes, such as the courts or lobbying, which are seen as too slow, piecemeal, or conservative. In this context, interest in funding social movements began to emerge in the late 1990s, accelerated in the 2000s, and spiked sharply after the 2016 Presidential election.

Part two of the chapter notes that for social movements to be 'supported' by progressive foundations they are first rearticulated through a positivist language as part of civil society. While movements were supported by progressive foundations in the past, they weren't supported *as* social movements, and their value as movements wasn't tied to a discourse of civil society's strength or weakness. This progressive third sector project of constructing movements as emerging from and in the service of civil society finds its intellectual echo is the history of the social movement studies discipline. Jumping back in time, the section charts the conceptual evolution of 'social movement' from its origins in 19th century European social theory, through early 20th century American positivist sociology, to the contemporary field of social movement studies that arose after and was marked indelibly by mid-century civil rights activism. In its journey, 'social movement' goes from signifying an irrational mob swept up in the movement of history to describing a group of rational actors who plan, make claims, and seek resources as they pursue collective political goals. The reigning paradigm for the study of movements argues that because there is no shortage of grievances in contemporary societies, social movements will form whenever affected groups can acquire the resources that make collective action possible or likely to succeed; thus where there exists a robust set of pre-existing civil society associations and organizations able to supply resources—money, but also coordination, convening space, communication channels, and a constituency—social movements will flourish. While it is difficult to demonstrate a causal connection between the professional third sector approach to movements and this evolving social scientific concept, both itineraries of the concept suggest that, rather than being exceptional or extraordinary, social movements are actually endemic to Western political modernity. This section of the chapter thus traces how in these two discursive domains the 'social movements' has become a political keyword of our time.

The final part of the chapter explores what this regime of truth about the status of social movements within civil society obscures or omits from the conversations progressive third sectors elites are staging about authentic and radical social change. Social movements appear to progressive funders as an attractive solution because they simultaneously emerge out of civil society (its associations and organizations) and overwhelmingly target government and corporate

power; social movements represent, in the eyes of progressive third sector actors, a non-instrumentalizable, autonomous power latent in civil society.

Through historicizing the concept of social movements and the neoliberalization of the third sector, the chapter lays out the 'problem-space' of progressive third sector elites in the 21st century. David Scott describes a problem-space as a "context of argument" and dispute, "an ensemble of questions and answers around which a horizon of identifiable stakes (conceptual as well as ideological-political) hangs."[9] It is a way to understand that the "questions that seem worth asking and the kinds of answers that seem worth having" are not timeless.[10] Indeed, new problem-spaces are "generators of new questions and new demands," and thus it is important "to read historically not just for the answers that this or that theorist has produced but for the questions that are more or less the epistemological conditions for those answers."[11] In the problem-space of late 20th and early 21st century progressive, US-based civil society organizations, the bureaucratization, commercialization, and marketization of the third sector is a problem for which the support of social movements appears a compelling solution. However, this solution itself generates a new ensemble of questions: if social movements can redeem civil society from the encroachment of state and market, but strong social movements require more material support to succeed, how can they be funded by philanthropic foundations (the government-sanctioned private holders of public wealth) without furthering the encroachment of capital? What does it look like, practically, for these actors to be anti-capitalist? The next two chapters will turn to the tools progressive funders are constructing to navigate this paradox—participatory grantmaking (Chapter 2) and the social change ecosystem framework (Chapter 3).

I.   Blurred Boundaries: The Third Sector in Crisis

Histories of philanthropy in the United States typically start with the claim that in the early 20th century philanthropy boldly shifts its emphasis from *charity* to *change*.[12] While charity across the Euro-Atlantic world was understood for centuries through Christian values of generosity, compassion, and stewardship of the community,[13] institutionalized in voluntary associations throughout the colonial era, by the early 20th century philanthropy in America was a distinctly "capitalist venture in social betterment."[14] The incredible wealth of the Gilded Age led industrialists like Carnegie and Rockefeller to build new philanthropic institutions such as the general-purpose foundation, through which they underwrote "experiments in education, science, and medicine."[15] The first half of the twentieth century also saw the emergence of mass philanthropy as disposable income rose and even Americans of modest means contributed to philanthropic causes through community foundations, giving campaigns, and national

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[9] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 4.
[10] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 4.
[11] Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 7.
[12] Dowie, *American Foundations*, 2. Philanthropy has a long history of defining itself against charity; see Davies, *What is Philanthropy For?*, 13-39.
[13] See Nagai, Lerner, and Rothman, *Giving for Social Change*, 10-13.
[14] Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, 2.
[15] Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, 2. The Russel Sage Foundation, established in 1907, is considered the first general purpose foundation, with its mandate to improve "social and living conditions in the United States," and was followed quickly by the Carnegie (1911), Rockefeller (1913), Rosenwald (1917), Guggenheim (1925), Kellogg (1930), Ford (1936), and what would become the Mellon (1940-1941) foundations. See Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 96.

organizations. This use of private wealth for public goods was "entrenched" when Congress instituted the income tax in 1913, which exempted philanthropic expenditures from taxation and ultimately fostered a nonprofit (or third) sector to exist alongside the state and the market.[16] Over time, American citizens and their leaders have come to rely on the third sector to provide services and to test innovative social policies.

The history of philanthropy is of course more complicated and thematically rich than this brief sketch suggests. The sector's ever-expanding historiography covers early philanthropy and volunteerism[17]; the rise of the 'scientific philanthropy' of early foundations which sought to address root causes through policy change rather than the palliative solutions of charity[18]; left and right populist reactions to foundations as undemocratic threats to federal authority leading to Congressional investigations[19]; philanthropy's relation to race and American foreign policy[20]; its role in underwriting the early research university, social science disciplines, and social work profession[21]; and the impact on the sector of Roosevelt's New Deal, Johnson's Great Society liberalism including the War on Poverty, the rights revolution and protest movements of the 1960s, and Reagan's championing of volunteerism over government paternalism.[22] There is also a growing interest in philanthropy among political theorists, political scientists, and philosophers.[23]

This dissertation focuses on one part of this story: the progressive edge of the third sector, called variously advocacy, social change, social justice, or social movement philanthropy. Scholars and professionals tell the story of a sector either gradually adopting progressive values or turning to support radical activism when 'inside track' avenues for progressive change (such as lobbying representatives to pass legislation) appear closed during Republican administrations. The first story is an *progressive narrative*, charting the evolution of ideas as individuals and institutions awaken to the value of funding grassroots activists.[24] In this narrative, contemporary social movement philanthropy is traced back to a few foundations in the first half of the 20th century—the American Fund for Public Service, Schwartzhaupt Foundation, Julius Rosenwald Foundation, Field Foundation, and Stern Fund—which supported organizing hubs like the Highland Center or voter organizing in the South.[25] Throughout the 1950s there was an increase

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[16] Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, 3. See Frumkin, *On Being Nonprofit*, for an account of the rise of the nonprofit sector as a concept.

[17] Clemens, *Civic Gifts*.

[18] See O'Connor, *Social Science for What?* and Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life*. According to Sealander, only the institutions established by Andrew Carnegie, members of the Rockefeller family, Edward Harkness, Olivia Sage, and Julius Rosenwald adopted policy-shaping as a goal (12).

[19] Brilliant, *Private Charity and Public Inquiry*.

[20] See Ferguson, *Top Down*; Morey, *White Philanthropy*; and Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*.

[21] Sealander, *Private Wealth & Public Life*; Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*.

[22] The most helpful historical overviews of philanthropy are Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," Dowie, *American Foundations*. For a conceptual overview of how philanthropy has changed, see Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist."

[23] See Reich, *Just Giving*; Reich, Cordelli, and Bernholz, *Philanthropy in Democratic Societies*; Roelofs, *Foundations and Public Policy*; Powell and Clemens, *Private Action and the Public Good*; Schneewind, *Giving*; Sievers, *Civil Society, Philanthropy, and the Fate of the Commons*; Illingworth, Pogge, and Wenar, *Giving Well*; Lechterman, *The Tyranny of Generosity*; Cordelli, *The Privatized State*; and Woodruff, *The Ethics of Giving*.

[24] See Rabinowitz, *Social Change Philanthropy*; Ostrander, "Legacy and Promise for Social Justice Funding"; Jenkins and Halcli, "Grassrooting the System?"; Nagai, Lerner, and Rothman, *Giving for Social Change*.

[25] See Samson, *The American Fund for Public Service* and Institute for Media Analysis, *The Stern Fund*. Rabinowitz says that the American Fund for Public Service "may be the first of the social change philanthropic foundations" (*Social Change Philanthropy*, 42).

in funders keen on supporting early civil rights activism,[26] followed by the entrance of some major foundations like Ford in the 1960s, which pushed a more liberal reformist vision of civil rights. Thanks to the institutional entrepreneurship of a 'radical flank' inspired by the activism of the 1960s and especially the civil rights movement, the field slowly integrated New Left values into its grantmaking practices.[27] Their efforts produced the consolidated and coordinated subfield of social change philanthropy by the 1970s, institutionalized in the 'alternative foundations'—the Vanguard Foundation in San Francisco and the Haymarket People's Fund in Boston—brought together by the Funding Exchange.[28] Called 'social change philanthropy' until the end of the 1980s,[29] in the 1990s progressive funders begin to coalesce around the label 'social justice philanthropy', reflecting the "institutional entrepreneurship" of key foundations that begin to frame their giving through the discourse of social justice—which was common in progressive circles since John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, but "increased markedly" in the 1990s—in an effort to transform philanthropy.[30]

Alongside these institutional entrepreneurs we hear of wealthy individuals awakening to their complicity in social ills, confronting capitalism's essential evil, and disavowing their inheritances by devoting them to social change in a demonstration of their commitment to radical political causes. Thus the American Fund for Public Service was established in 1922 by Charles Garland, "an idealistic, communist-sympathizing, twenty-year-old heir to a Wall Street banking fortune."[31] There are numerous accounts of young people of means who attend university in the 60s and 70s, inherit wealth, and support the civil rights movement or opposition to the Vietnam War by funding activism, expressing guilt or anxiety over the contradiction between their progressive politics and inherited wealth.[32] In this narrative, philanthropists and foundations take their cue from the values of progressive activists, turning their grantmaking towards social change to respond to the growing push for expanded citizenship rights in the second half of the 20th century as a broader set of groups (racial minorities, women, prisoners, persons with disabilities) advocated for not just political but also social rights like education, economic

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[26] Including the William C. Whitney Foundation, New York Foundation, Norman Foundation, New World Foundation, Taconic Foundation, Ottinger Foundations, Huber Foundation, Institute for World Order, and the New York Community Trust.

[27] Nagai, Lerner, and Rothman, *Giving for Social Change*, 36; and Suárez, "Grant Making as Advocacy," 260-263.

[28] This expansion of social change funding in the 1970s reflects the fact that foundation support for social movements tends to peak about 5-6 years after the height of protest activity (Jenkins and Halcli, "Grassrooting the System?" 247). Major foundations, points out Alice O'Connor, conspicuously lagged behind civil rights movement activists ("Foundations, Social Movements, and the Contradictions of Liberal Philanthropy," 330).

[29] Rabinowitz, *Social Change Philanthropy*, 6.

[30] Suárez, "Grant Making as Advocacy," 260-263. Suárez's data comes from article titles during these decades from the *New York Times*, the *Social Science Citation Index*, and *the Chronicle of Philanthropy*. He found that 12% of foundations in his database "incorporated social justice discourse into their programming" (269). In fact, the NCRP's 2003 report "Understanding Social Justice Philanthropy" names Rawls's concept of justice as fairness as "the groundwork" for social justice philanthropy (10). But see Sanghera and Bradley's "Social Justice, Liberalism and Philanthropy" for a discussion of why many progressive British foundations are reluctant to use the term 'social justice'. Elsewhere, Suárez and co-authors Husted and Casas note that foundations (their focus is community foundations) have in recent years increasingly acted as "policy entrepreneurs" advocating for social change (see "Community Foundations as Advocates").

[31] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 100. See Samson, *The American Fund for Public Service*.

[32] Odendahl, *Charity Begins at Home*, 163-186. This dynamic continues today, for example through the work of organizations like Resource Generation, which organizes young people of wealth. See also the report "Moving Money and Shifting Power for Social Justice: Voices of Wealthy Next-Gen Donors" by Dale and Azizi (2023).

advancement, and public services.[33] This progressive narrative is supported by the steady (if modest) increase in dollar amounts as well as percentage of total foundation giving directed towards social justice causes over the course of the 20th century.[34]

The second explanation offers a *functionalist narrative*. Here, progressive funders turn to social movements when Republican administrations make the 'inside track' of formal political channels less attractive, necessitating the use of 'outside track' pressure by grassroots activists. Jenkins and Halcli thus argue that the "maturation of movement philanthropy" took place during the Reagan and Bush administrations: "the threat of a conservative administration with several well-known 'new right' figures in prominent decision-making positions spurred liberal and progressive funders to invest more heavily in social movements."[35] In this narrative the goals of progressive funders are assumed to be constant, but the means for achieving them shift; choosing to support movements is a function of changing political conditions.

These narratives form part of the conceptual DNA of the activist edge of the philanthropic sector. The progressive narrative is cited to show how the tradition of social change funding involves the renunciation of capital by wealthy individuals while the functionalist narrative furthers the idea that movements offer a route to social change beyond formal government mechanisms. Together, these narratives help contemporary progressive philanthropists articulate their field as historically distinct from both the state and the market. These narratives, however, fail to account for the rise of social movement discourse *specifically* as the discourse of choice in the 21st century for progressive third sector actors. They don't explain why social movements come to signify the 'progressive values' prized in the progressive narrative or the preferred 'outside track' tactic in the functionalist narrative; that is, they do not explain the shifts in how these progressive funders conceptualize what they were doing or actively shape their projects in new terms. Within both the progressive and functionalist narratives, social change, social justice, and social movement philanthropy are used

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[33] Jenkins and Halcli, "Grassrooting the System?" 239.

[34] Social justice funding has steadily increased over the past 70 years—from three foundations giving four grants totaling $85,700 in 1953 to at least 146 foundations giving some $88 million to social movement activities in 1990, representing 1.1 percent of all foundation giving in that year (Jenkins and Halcli 1999). Other estimates suggest that up to 3 percent or even as much as 10 percent of institutional funding goes to social and economic justice causes (Ostrander 2005: 34). According to Independent Sector and The Foundation Center, social justice grantmaking between 1998 and 2002 accounted for 11 percent of foundation support, reaching $1.76 billion in 2002 ("Highlights of Social Justice Grantmaking"). The largest share of this went to economic development, followed by health care access and then civil rights. While the dollar amount of funding for social justice increased more slowly than did overall giving, the number of individual grants grew at a faster pace, and the number of foundations making at least one social justice grant increased as well, as did the number of organizations receiving these grants, which grew by 31 percent, suggesting "a possible broadening of support for social justice activities" in the sector ("Highlights of Social Justice Grantmaking"). A Foundation Center study found that in 2009 some 14 percent of grant dollars awarded by major US foundations went to social justice philanthropy (totaling about $3.1 billion). A NCRP report found that 1,121 of the biggest US foundations gave $2.9 billion in social justice philanthropy in 2011, accounting for 12 percent of foundation grant money spent in that year (Jagpal and Laskowski, "The State of Social Justice Philanthropy 2011"). See also O'Connor, "Foundations," 330.

[35] Jenkins and Halcli, "Grassrooting the System?" 235-236. The argument doesn't totally hold up. Indeed, when George W. Bush was in power (2001-2009), social justice funding increased from 11 percent of all foundation giving in 2002 (totaling $1.76 billion) to around 14 percent in 2009 (totaling $3.1 billion). However, during the Clinton years (1993-2001) or the Obama years (2009-2017), social movement funding continued to make up between 12-14 percent of foundation giving. See Independent Sector and Foundation Center, "Highlights of Social Justice Grantmaking" and Foundation Center, "Key Facts on Social Justice Grantmaking." Bothwell also describes the history of social change grantmaking largely in terms of democratic vs. republican politics in "Philanthropic Funding of Social Change and the Diminution of Progressive Policymaking."

interchangeably. They thus miss the fact that social movements appear as an analytic that foregrounds a *method* for achieving social change (social movements) rather than the *goal* of that social change (social justice). Thus the widely-used definition for social justice philanthropy developed by the Foundation Center and Independent Sector in 2005—"the granting of philanthropic contributions to nonprofit organizations based in the United States and other countries that work for structural change in order to increase the opportunity of those who are the least well off politically, economically and socially"[36]—would not work as a definition of *social movement* philanthropy because the latter is at pains to distinguish the nonprofit organization and the social movement as means by which to achieve change. The reason given for turning to social movements is precisely the need to *change the agent of social change* from NGOs to grassroots movements.

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> It is no scoop to say that philanthropy has rapidly and deeply professionalised over the past decades. Actually, the whole story of institutional philanthropy is a story of professionalisation, underpinned by the idea that charity is not enough, or even harmful, and that donors need to structure and strategise their giving, with goals, metrics, institutions and tools. It is the story of turning an impulse of the heart into a rational enterprise and by doing so, creating an industry.[37]

Why has the language of social movements appeared as an especially compelling order of discourse for progressive philanthropy? To understand the interest in supporting movements we need to look at broader structural changes to the third sector and critiques of these changes coming out of its progressive wing. Running alongside the arguments for funding movements in reports, webinars, and interviews are critiques of the professionalization and commercialization of third sector institutions, which have become increasingly 'businesslike', and a concomitant loss of faith in the efficacy of bureaucratized, expert-led NGO projects.[38] These critiques are sometimes explicit, as in the case of a 2020 webinar on "Power and the Role of Philanthropy", where former Ford Foundation grantmaker Moukhtar Kocache ended his presentation with a quote by Michel Foucault: "Modern bureaucratic institutions exude rationality, scientific expertise, and humane concerns, but really they amount to an arbitrary form of an exercise of power that has been normalized."[39] Top-down planning, cumbersome grant reporting procedures, and 'red tape' are routinely cited as ways Global North institutions hold power over their Global

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[36] Foundation Center (2005, 5).

[37] Benjamin Bellegy, "Professionals of Humility."

[38] As Billie Sandberg notes, "While there is no definitional consensus on the term 'businesslike' itself, it is generally accepted that it involves the professionalization, rationalization, commercialization, and marketization of nonprofit and voluntary organizations and their functions" ("Critical Perspectives" 29). See also Nickel and Eikenberry, "A Critique of the Discourse of Marketized Philanthropy."

[39] Kocache at "Power and the Role of Philanthropy" hosted by WINGS (online) on 24 November 2020. In fact, Kocache quoted from an Encyclopedia Britannica article on Foucault, see https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-philosophy/Foucault-and-postmodernism. Kocache seems here also to conflate what Foucault would call sovereign and disciplinary power.

South grantees.[40] At other times, the critiques are implicit in recommendations for how to effectively fund movements: the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) tells grantmakers to "Streamline your application and reporting requirements, and minimize what you require of applicants and grant partners. Offer alternative communication methods, such as phone proposals and interviews," noting that "Activists' work shifts quickly. Be nimble and reactive by offering rapid response grants. Speed up the turnaround on applications and timing of grants distribution."[41] As these recommendations suggest, something is lost when an impulse of the heart becomes an industry.

Such criticisms are responding to the blurring of market, state, and civil society through the rise of public-private partnerships, devolution of public services to nonprofits, and the turn by businesses to pursuing social goods through frameworks such as corporate social responsibility, social enterprise, or philanthrocapitalism in the final decades of the 20th century.[42] That the nonprofit world has been so completely transformed by neoliberal policies and thinking is at first glance surprising. As Billie Sandberg points out,

> Traditional histories of the American nonprofit sector and its theoretical base tell us the nonprofit sector is, in part, an alternative to the marketplace. So, this leads us to ask questions such as, why are nonprofits being incited to act like businesses? Why is 'good' nonprofit management and leadership now being framed in language we once reserved for for-profit businesses?[43]

The answer to these questions can be found in the political and economic history of the mid-20th century. In the 1970s, even before the energetic introduction of neoliberal policies by the Reagan administration, the third sector was becoming increasingly professionalized and commercialized. The push to professionalize philanthropy was part of a bid to reassert institutional legitimacy after the upheavals of the 1960s, during which some foundations, especially Ford, offered support for civil rights. Even though little of this money went to grassroots activism and Ford's grantmaking remained "firmly delimited by the consensus liberalism of the philanthropic establishment," the more political edge to this grantmaking led to congressional investigation by the House Ways and Means Committee, and, ultimately, to the Tax Act of 1969, which banned foundations from funding "political or propagandistic activities," increased reporting requirements, and mandated a payout rate.[44] The Act led to a crisis of confidence in the sector, and the new regulations resulted in "a more prominent role for legal and accounting expertise and to a professionalization of foundation staffs more generally."[45] In the year after the 1969 Act

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[40] See, for example, the speakers at "#ShiftThePower: what power and how far has it shifted?" hosted by Alliance on 27 May 2021. https://event.webinarjam.com/replay/45/m2373b7rs25fmos52o.

[41] National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy webinar "Creatively Funding Social Movements" held on 15 February 2017. https://www.ncrp.org/2017/02/creatively-funding-social-movements.html.

[42] See Alexander and Fernandez, "The Impact of Neoliberalism on Civil Society and Nonprofit Advocacy"; Maier, Meyer, and Steinbereithner, "Nonprofit Organizations Becoming Business-Like"; Kamat, "The Privatization of Public Interest"; Eikenberry and Kluver, "The Marketization of the Nonprofit Sector"; Eikenberry, "Refusing the Market"; Nickel and Eikenberry, "A Critique of the Discourse of Marketized Philanthropy"; and Raddon, "Neoliberal Legacies." For an early discussion of this trend, see Smith and Lipsky, *Nonprofits for Hire*.

[43] Sandberg, "Critical Perspectives," 29.

[44] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 59-61; Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 106; and Ferguson, *Top Down*.

[45] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 61. On this process see Frumkin, "Private Foundations as Public Institutions." See also Smith and Lipsky, *Nonprofits for Hire*.

passed, legal and accounting fees doubled for foundations, and administrative expenses which in 1966 accounted for 6.4 percent of grant outlays rose to 15 percent by 1972.[46] These increased administrative burdens affected recipient NGOs as well, as public scrutiny of foundations prompted an ever increasing attention to evaluation and therefore reporting requirements for grantees. Program officers began awarding grants for specific projects, which are easier to evaluate and measure, and less for general operating support. Sector organizations like the Council on Foundations encouraged these bureaucratic and professionalizing efforts as they "worked to reassert philanthropic legitimacy," describing foundations as public trusts instead of private entities, and emphasizing responsiveness and transparency.[47] These efforts increased the formal coherence of the sector, as it coalesced around a "heightened…commitment to professionalism and disinterested expertise."[48] The 1969 Tax Act, along with the creation of the 501(c)3 tax designation for nonprofits (in the Revenue Act of 1954) and the Filer Commission established in 1973 to study the third sector, together "served to homogenize the landscape of nonprofit and voluntary organizations around a philanthropic norm, making the sector and its activities more legible, governable, and, ultimately, amenable to the aims of neoliberalism."[49]

These changes were also, in part, a response to the emergence around the same time of a professionalized and commercialized advocacy industry in the United States. After the protest movements of the 1960s the US government became increasingly activist when it came to industry regulation, spurring an expansion of citizen engagement and political activism by businesses, both of which took on a more professional tenor.[50] On the one hand, the social movements of the 1960s morphed into an advocacy explosion—sometimes referred to as the 'rights revolution'[51]—in which groups advocating for the rights of the marginalized as well as of the general public (environment, consumers, children) proliferated, increasing from 98 in 1955 to 688 in 1985. This advocacy was mostly in the name of middle-class reform movements promoting "environmental protection, consumer rights, and governmental accountability" (think Ralph Nader and the Sierra Club). These accountability movements tended to be professionalized and to rely on "litigation, public education efforts, and lobbying," leading to a shift in funding from groups with a history of protesting (like African American civil rights organizations) to middle class reform-oriented organizations.[52] On the other hand, this explosion of formalized citizen engagement and consequent government regulation prompted "a countermobilization of business and industry lobbying groups."[53] A new job, the public affairs consultant, hired by corporations, interest groups, industry associations, government agencies, and unions to shift public perception or mobilize mass public participation, emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.[54] These public affairs consultants borrowed the tactics used by social movements, in what one commentator calls a "commercialization of advocacy" or "astroturf" (i.e. fake grassroots).[55]

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[46] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 61.
[47] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 62; Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 106.
[48] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 108.
[49] Sandberg, "Critical Perspectives," 30.
[50] Walker, *Grassroots for Hire*, 51.
[51] See Tushnet, "The Rights Revolution in the Twentieth Century."
[52] Jenkins and Halcli, "Grassrooting the System?" 239-42. See also Dauvergne and LeBaron, *Protest Inc*.
[53] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 57-58.
[54] Walker, *Grassroots for Hire*, 7, 51.
[55] Walker, *Grassroots for Hire*, 8.

Professionalization accelerated throughout the last decades of the 20th century and was joined by increasing commercialization. In 1980 the National Council on Philanthropy and the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations merged to form Independent Sector, which provided research and data collection for the field, leading to its "increased formal coherence."[56] That year also saw the election of Ronald Reagan, who "styled himself an evangel of voluntarism" and set against a generally liberal class of "nonprofit professionals allied with government bureaucrats" the vision of "a neo-Tocquevillian idyll, populated by religiously committed volunteers."[57] Reagan's administration was not as disastrous for the nonprofit sector as many feared—it actually grew in terms of the number of charitable tax-exempt entities— though when you exclude federal payments for health services (such as Medicare and Medicaid subsidies) "the value of federal support to nonprofits dropped by around a quarter in real dollar terms between 1980 and 1984."[58] Government support for social services also shifted from producer subsidies to consumer subsidies such as vouchers, forcing nonprofits to increasingly rely on earned income for revenue. According to one estimate, 75 percent of nonprofit income generated to compensate for budget cuts during the first part of the Reagan administration came from fees for services.[59]

The commercialization of nonprofits, however, was not merely a defensive response to economic hardship; rather, it registered an "affirmative incorporation of market-oriented approaches and a consumer-oriented ethos into nonprofit practice."[60] The third sector's venture into the commercial world stuck long after Reagan left office: between 1997 and 2007 about 60 percent of nonprofit revenue growth came from commercial income, and nonprofit revenues over these years actually outpaced those of the economy in general.[61] The influence of neoliberal rationality and the New Public Management approach to public services (i.e. the use of private sector management models to increase the efficiency of public services) increased steadily. Nonprofits began using the language of business—'marketing' their products to 'customers' according to 'business plans'—and courting corporate leadership for CEO and board positions as they worked to diversify revenue and "balance earned revenue, government grants, and charitable contributions."[62] Meanwhile the new West Coast organizations countered the bureaucratic professionalism of East coast philanthropy with new ideas about "social return on investment, performance metrics, and logic models."[63] For example, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, established in 2000, has had an enormous impact on philanthropic norms in the 21st century, pushing a "no money without metrics" sensibility that requires projects to provide measurable targets and deliverables.[64] This has fueled the rise of randomized-control trials, impact assessment, and faith in big data analytics within the sector as part of "a new evaluative regime."[65] New consulting outfits—Social Venture Partners (1997) and Bridgespan (2000)—and

[56] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 62.
[57] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 67. Historian of philanthropy Peter Dobkin Hall identifies the 1970s and 1980s as the time when community foundations began growing in popularity, in part reflecting the greater interest in the local and volunteering that Reagan invoked (see "The Community Foundation in America," 195-196.)
[58] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 67.
[59] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 68. See also Frumkin, *On Being Nonprofit*, chapter 5.
[60] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 69.
[61] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 72.
[62] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 69.
[63] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 113.
[64] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 115.
[65] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 78. For a recent example, see Alnoor Ebrahim, *Measuring Social Change: Performance and Accountability in a Complex World*.

publications like the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (founded 2003) emerged to push these norms.[66]

While many of the developments tracked above are internal to the US third sector, they reflect and, in some cases, have produced global trends. Philanthropic support for international civil society initiatives increased dramatically in these decades, effectively promoting the privatization of public provisions abroad. With the fall of communism, Western leaders argued that a strong civil society could help democracy take root in formerly Soviet states and satellites.[67] Thus George Soros and the Ford Foundation committed significant resources to supporting Eastern European civil society organizations.[68] This, along with calls to support the nascent civil society institutions of the new postcolonial states, led to a "global associational revolution" that saw "an explosion of nonstate, nonproprietary organizations in nearly every region of the world" such that, by the late 1990s, there were more than 20,000 INGOs operating worldwide.[69] If there was declining faith in the welfare state in Western countries, international aid funders from the United States likewise "grew increasingly suspicious of corrupt government bureaucracies in recipient nations and of the capabilities of states to perform effectively as agents of development," preferring, instead, what they believed was the "flexibility, efficiency, responsiveness to community needs, and entrepreneurialism of NGOs" and local organizations, even as they failed to actually address the social ills they targeted and thereby necessitated support for ever more NGOs.[70]

Much of this NGO work operated within the frameworks of human rights and international development. While ascendant in the 1970s and 1980s, it is in the 1990s that human rights become a basic concept of global politics as a key post-Cold War "explanatory framework."[71] As Jessica Whyte shows, that human rights and neoliberalism share historical terrain is no coincidence: both saw the taming of (particularly postcolonial) state power as a moral imperative. The early Mont Pèlerin neoliberals "attributed to the market a series of anti-political virtues: checking and dispersing power, facilitating social cooperation, pacifying conflict, and securing individual liberty and rights."[72] The cooperation, mutuality, and peace of commercial society (i.e. civil society) was an alternative to the violence and conflict of mass politics; thus the early neoliberals developed a concept of human rights "as protections for the market order."[73] The major early human rights organizations, including Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, and MSF, drew from this account of rights, focusing much more on the need to discipline the new postcolonial states than on the economic welfare or self-determination of those at home or abroad.[74] Rather, these NGOs

> embraced the central neoliberal dichotomy between commercial or 'civil society'—
> understood as a realm of freedom, voluntary interaction and distributed, private power
> that checked the centralized power of the state—on the one hand, and politics, understood

[66] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 113.
[67] On the history of INGOs, and in particular the significance of the Cold War for the development of transnational civil society, see Thomas Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (2014).
[68] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 70.
[69] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 70.
[70] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 71.
[71] Hoffmann, "Human Rights and History," 282.
[72] Whyte, *The Morals of the Market*, 14.
[73] Whyte, *The Morals of the Market*, 28.
[74] Whyte, *The Morals of the Market*, 29.

as violent, coercive and conflictual on the other. They defended the same (anti-)political virtues the neoliberals attributed to the market: restraining political power, taming violence and facilitating a margin of individual freedom. Like the neoliberals, major international human rights NGOs initially embraced law to restrain politics, while avoiding engagement with those social and economic rights that could only be achieved through political action, not judicial sanction.[75]

Quinn Slobodian's work on neoliberalism and the end of empire supports Whyte's argument, showing how Geneva School neoliberals dreamed of global institutions designed "to encase the global market from interference by national governments."[76] Hayek's objective to 'dethrone politics' involved protecting the economy through appeal to a higher level of governance— variously the League of Nations, investment and competition laws, and international institutions like the WTO.[77] Like the early human rights NGOs that Whyte discusses, the Geneva School neoliberals emphasized the need to check "the autonomy of nations" through laws in order to protect the world economy from the messiness and violence of politics.[78]

Whyte and Slobodian show how neoliberal thought pushed for the depoliticization of civil society, requiring us to reassess the "celebratory perspective" on human rights and development NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s.[79] While the classic liberal perspective still understands NGOs as the bedrock of translational civil society or, following Habermas, central institutions of the public sphere and therefore poised to *challenge* the state, critical accounts of neoliberalism and poststructuralist analyses see more ambiguous divisions between private and public, state and civil society, and (following Foucault) recognize the more corpuscular dynamics of power.[80] In the liberal view, NGOs "come to make sense through an articulation of a negative form," as an alternative to states and corporations: *non*profit, *non*governmental, *third* sector.[81] At the same time, NGOs further state forms of governmentality; many NGOs must register with states, abide by their rules and regulations, and accept contracts to provide welfare services not offered by the state.[82] As Bernal and Grewal argue in *Theorizing NGOs*, we should see continuity between NGOs, states, and the market, because

> the NGO form produces and converts what is outside the state into a legible form within a governmentality that parallels official state power…Moving across what is included and excluded by the state also makes the NGO form key to neoliberal projects of privatization and state withdrawal.[83]

Bernal and Grewal note that in the last decades of the 20th century, feminist activism shifted from taking the form of political movements to "advocacy and action in feminist and women's

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[75] Whyte, *The Morals of the Market*, 29-30. For an alternative account downplaying the *essential* connection between human rights and neoliberalism, see Moyn, "A Powerless Companion."

[76] Slobodian, *Globalists*, 20.

[77] Slobodian, *Globalists*, 20.

[78] Slobodian, *Globalists*, 24.

[79] Bernal and Grewal, "The NGO Form," 1. See also Sabine Lang, *NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere*.

[80] Bernal and Grewal, "The NGO Form," 5.

[81] Bernal and Grewal, "The NGO Form," 7.

[82] Bernal and Grewal, "The NGO Form," 7.

[83] Bernal and Grewal, "The NGO Form," 8. See also the special issue of *Critical Sociology* introduced by Ismail and Kamat, "NGOs, Social Movements and the Neoliberal State."

NGOs," which are less threatening to donors than mass movements.[84] According to Peter Dauvergne and Genevieve LeBaron, "much of the world's activism now occurs inside NGOs working to pay for salaries and offices and with guiding approaches of strategic compromise with states and business."[85]

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The critical study of development and human rights NGOs has done much to excavate the neoliberal, neoimperial, and governmental entanglements of this once lauded institutional form. If the NGO form, at least when viewed through liberal eyes, continues to make pretenses to remaining to the side of state and capital, or needing to strike 'strategic compromises' with them, other third sector actors and discourses outwardly embrace neoliberal reason and rhetoric. These discourses are sometimes filed under the umbrella labels of social enterprise or philanthrocapitalism. *Social enterprise* refers to the practice of a nonprofit adopting commercial ventures to generate income "as an intrinsic component of its charitable mission."[86] *Philanthrocapitalism* denotes a range of contemporary philanthropic practices that incorporate business concepts and language.[87] In the philanthrocapitalist imagination, everyone wins when business and social purpose pull in the same direction:

> By making their social and environmental objectives more explicit…businesses can increase their positive impact and scale it up through market forces, far beyond the usual nonprofit project or government-funded program. And…by operating in the market and adopting business thinking, nonprofits can raise the revenue they need to expand and sustain their work and make it more effective.[88]

As proponents of the practice Matthew Bishop and Michael Green put it, when philanthropists focus on creating profitable solutions to social problems they will be able to "attract far more capital, far faster, and thus achieve a far bigger impact, far sooner, than would a solution based entirely on giving money away."[89] In this way, "entrepreneurship can become synonymous with humanitarianism."[90] Philanthrocapitalism is necessary, its proponents claim, because government resources are insufficient to address ballooning social ills, and thus far traditional philanthropy has been ineffective, more often seeking to "generate positive publicity" than "change the world."[91] Through the power and scale of business, philanthropy can finally achieve transformational social change. In tune with this assessment, a profusion of guides on how to

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[84] Bernal and Grewal, "The NGO Form," 10-11.
[85] Dauvergne and LeBaron, *Protest Inc.*, 109.
[86] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 72.
[87] For overviews see Edwards, *Small Change*, 18-24. See also Salamon, *Leverage for Good* and *New Frontiers of Philanthropy*. Most histories of philanthropy written after 2000 conclude with a discussion of philanthrocapitalism. See, for example, Dowie, *American Foundations*; Vallely, *Philanthropy*.
[88] Edwards, *Small Change*, 17.
[89] Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 6-7.
[90] Giridharadas, *Winners Take All*, 47.
[91] Bishop and Green, *Philanthrocapitalism*, 7.

most effectively use these business principles to advance social change have appeared in the past decade.[92]

These new conceptualizations of the third sector have led to new discourses—social entrepreneurship, social investing, social innovation, impact investing, venture philanthropy, and corporate social responsibility—that explicitly articulate social change as the purview of the market, seeking to generate both social and economic gains.[93] Judging by word prevalence, the discourses that make up this "terminological wasteland" have gained considerable popularity.[94] While existing as a concept since at least the mid-1800s, *corporate social responsibility*, the idea that behaving responsibly is important for a corporation's reputation and thus bottom line, solidified in its present form starting in the 1950s, and has exploded in use since the late 1990s, becoming institutionalized within the business world.[95] *Social entrepreneurship* became popular in the 1980s, referring to the work of individuals or startups who leveraged market forces and inspirational leadership skills to fund and scale up their 'breakthrough insights' into social problems. The most prominent example is Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunnus, whose Grameen Bank in Bangladesh has received hundreds of millions in support and inspired other microfinance enterprises.[96] For foundations, market paradigms have led to the rise of *impact investing*;[97] while the Ford Foundation experimented with this idea in the 1960s, it is in recent decades that foundations have started to use their endowments as a way to promote good while generating income.[98]

Along with these discourses and practices have come new financial tools—the limited liability company and the donor-advised fund most prominently, as well as credit enhancements, fixed-income securities, quasi equity, social-impact bonds, and microinsurance[99]—which have begun to decenter the traditional general-purpose foundation as the institutional form of choice for philanthropy. While foundations have nevertheless exploded in number in the United States during the last decades—from around 30,000 in 1985 to over 86,000 in 2015—today the living donor, rather than the posthumous foundation, has become "the leading agent of change in the philanthropic sector."[100] The 'lean' and 'agile' company that can produce both social good and

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[92] A small sample includes Gelobter, *Lean Startups for Social Change: The Revolutionary Path to Big Impact* (2015); Goldseker and Mood, *Generation Impact: How Next Gen Donors are Revolutionizing Giving* (2017); Chang, *Lean Impact: How to Innovate for Radically Greater Social Good* (2018); Janus, *Social Startup Success: How the Best Nonprofits Launch, Scale Up, and Make a Difference* (2018).

[93] Farley, "Shifting Notions of Philanthropy," 48.

[94] Salamon, *Leverage for Good*, 15.

[95] Soule, *Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility*, 19-25. See also Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir, and Davídsdóttir, "A Literature Review of the History and Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility," and Carroll, "A History of Corporate Social Responsibility: Concepts and Practices."

[96] Martin and Osberg, "Social Entrepreneurship"; Peredo and McLean, "Social Entrepreneurship"; Mort, Weerawardena, and Carnegie, "Social Entrepreneurship."

[97] Clarkin and Cangioni, "Impact Investing." Impact investing is a term that "grew out of a series of meetings convened by the Rockefeller Foundation in the mid-2000s as part of its effort to rally private investment houses, and the private investment capital they help direct, into support for the burgeoning social enterprises emerging in both developed and developing countries around the world" (Salamon, *Leverage for Good,* 18).

[98] Ford earmarked $1 billion of its endowment for "mission-related investments" in 2017.

[99] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 116. An LLC like Open Philanthropy "is not required to disclose information, such as staff salaries or annual operating costs," enabling "funders to avoid the regulatory requirements that accompany tax-exempt status as a foundation," giving them "greater privacy, flexibility, and control than traditional foundations can offer." In *Leverage for Good* Salamon surveys several such new social-impact financial tools (55-77).

[100] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 73-74.

profit is beginning to replace the bureaucratized and professionalized foundation that gives money to NGOs to develop new social policy or provide services. The view of mega-philanthropists is telling. Letters from the nearly 200 participants in the Giving Pledge—an initiative encouraging billionaires to give more than half their wealth away before they die—collectively "express frustration with bureaucracy" and "portray government action as hopelessly incomplete, inadequate, and slow. All share the tacit assumption that philanthropists such as themselves have the right to intervene upon and shape the public sphere."[101] The letters emphasize investment, innovation, entrepreneurship, the efficiency of markets, and the power of technology to solve social problems over the work of traditional organizations.[102] And their goals are wildly ambitious: the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative aims to "help cure all disease in our children's lifetime."[103] The upshot of all of this is that in order to attract the attention of the Giving Pledge philanthrocapitalists, traditional nonprofits "have to act like start-ups or incubators, be prepared to scale, and talk about ambitious plans for growth and impact."[104] Over the course of the past half century, we've seen a new vision in which "businesses should be philanthropic and nonprofits should be entrepreneurial."[105]

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

This enthusiasm for philanthrocapitalist thinking has provided plenty of grist for the critical mill.[106] Some critics worry that, like the high modernist debacles scrutinized by James C. Scott in *Seeing Like a State*, philanthropic projects led by the Gates Foundation and others display a thoroughgoing "solutionism," arriving at the (often) Global South scene "to impart knowledge" rather than to understand the problem.[107] Against those who advocate for the benefits of market thinking, detractors warn against top-down overreach by either powerful, undemocratic institutions like philanthropic foundations or mega-rich individuals like Gates and Zuckerberg.[108] Other critics point to the way philanthrocapitalists are subject to two incompatible masters: because foundations only exist because of the unequal distribution of wealth, they are unlikely to address injustices that stem from it, making them "passively complicitous" in gross inequality.[109] As Anand Giridharadas argues, when those who have something to lose from genuine social change are placed in charge of producing such change, they will develop an "elite-led, market-friendly, winner-safe" version of it, as has been the case in the third sector since the Gilded Age philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie.[110] These two lines of critique are connected: solutions to social problems that pose little risk to the interests of the wealthy tend to be technocratic rather than political. The belief that both business and society can come out on top, that there can be harmony among the interests of the haves and have nots, has led to

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[101] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 117.

[102] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 117-119.

[103] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 118. https://givingpledge.org/About.aspx.

[104] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 121.

[105] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 122.

[106] See McGoey, "Philanthrocapitalism and Its Critics"; Jenkins, "Who's Afraid of Philanthrocapitalism?"; and Eikenberry and Mirabella, "Extreme Philanthropy."

[107] See, for example, Linsey McGoey, *No Such Thing As a Free Gift*, 240-241.

[108] This has been helpfully described by Daniel Immerwahr in *Thinking Small* as a 'Modernization Comes to Town' narrative, commonly directed at mid-century development projects (5).

[109] Dowie, *American Foundations*, 191.

[110] Giridharadas, *Winners Take All*, 9, 11.

"watered-down theories of change that are personal, individual, depoliticized, respectful of the status quo and the system, and not in the least bit disruptive."[111] Similar charges of preferring technocratic, individualized, or legal solutions to political ones has been a prominent line of critique of development and human rights discourses and practices.[112]

Critics of philanthrocapitalism name either formal politics or a strengthened civil society as the alternatives. Thus Linsey McGoey suggests that while the better financing of small non-profits—where the real work of civil society is done—"would do considerable good," the main solution lies in fixing the tax and regulatory structures "that deplete the funds available for government spending."[113] Giridharadas, likewise, invokes "politics as the place we go to shape the world," carefully describing politics as not just elections or court decisions but as civic life more generally, "the habit of solving problems together, in the public sphere, through the tools of government and in the trenches of civil society."[114] These critics join a tradition reaching back to the earliest days of philanthropy in America of juxtaposing the unaccountability of foundations with the virtues of a publicly-accountable, if imperfect, political system, what Giridharadas describes as "fearful, conflictual politics…the inherently messy business of negotiating and reconciling incompatible interests and coming up with a decent plan."[115]

But formal politics is not free from the market's reach or even philanthrocapitalist projects. The market-state division has also eroded, with rulings like the *Citizens United* case allowing private wealth "to more directly and clandestinely shape American politics" such that "the lines separating the once-distinctive roles of philanthropist, political patron, and lobbyist have become increasingly blurred."[116] Public-private partnerships, though always a part of the sector, have increased in scope and formalization, such that "the imperative to pursue cross-sectoral partnerships has recently been more fully incorporated into the formal infrastructure of governance."[117] Like the political landscape, the nonprofit sector has come to be increasingly polarized, with donors supporting partisan causes and policies by directing money to advocacy groups.[118] While the first three quarters of the 20th century saw what a number of commentators describe as a "healthy tension between state and philanthropic interests," today we see an near universal "governmental embrace of philanthropist-led schemes."[119]

Recognizing the limitations of formal political processes, some critics emphasize the centrality of civil society for solving social problems. Michal Edwards argues that there is something fundamentally incompatible between the world of business and the world of civil society, that "business thinking and social transformation operate on entirely different logics."[120] Edwards' book *Small Change* is devoted to elaborating the essential difference between these two worlds: markets have a single bottom line, profit, whereas social change has many objectives; markets satisfy wants according to an individual consumer's means, whereas civil society seeks to realize needs regardless of status; markets function through competition,

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[111] Giridharadas, *Winners Take All*, 120.
[112] See Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*; Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Meister, *After Evil*; Moyn, *The Last Utopia*; Brown, "The Most We Can Hope For."
[113] McGoey, *No Such Thing As a Free Gift*, 241.
[114] Giridharadas, *Winners Take All*, 261, 227.
[115] Giridharadas, *Winners Take All*, 219-220.
[116] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 119.
[117] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 76-77.
[118] Soskis, "A History of Associational Life," 77.
[119] Horvath and Powell, "Seeing Like a Philanthropist," 119.
[120] Edwards, *Small Change*, 15.

whereas civil society relies on cooperation to meet ends like building strong communities; market norms operate in terms of individuals while civil society seeks the public good, broad participation, and democratic accountability; market innovation is rapid and the goal is to scale up fast, whereas the organic change achieved through the complex, conflictual process of civil society is often slow.[121] Ultimately, philanthrocapitalism focuses on "building up the health, skills, and assets of individuals" rather than supporting collective action aimed at systemic change, and thus "it leaves the structure of economic, social, and political life largely unchanged."[122] This poses a real threat to the future of civil society, says Edwards, because as nonprofits increasingly turn to philanthrocapitalist thinking and "distance themselves from any real sense of membership, they may cease to be training grounds for democracy and conduits for popular pressure from the grass roots."[123] Edwards calls this 'civil society lite', and contrasts it with "the power of collective action."[124] Time and again, citizen power, greater involvement in the political process, and a broadly defined notion of civil society are cited as the political, collective alternative to philanthrocapitalist ways of advancing social change.

The problem is that it is not so easy to distinguish 'real' from 'lite' civil society. As several Foucault-inspired scholars of governmentality have shown, the very languages of a seemingly robust civil society—participation, empowerment, community—have appealed also to those governments, institutions, and corporations seeking to advance neoliberal policies. In the final decades of the 20th century the problems of society were given a source: lack of civic participation and community cohesion. The theory of *social capital* provided the intellectual groundwork. Prominent among both international development experts and promoters of civil society in the United States, social capital was made popular by Robert Putnam's 1995 essay "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," and subsequent book.[125] For Putnam, in a community with significant social capital, "networks of civic engagement foster sturdy norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust," facilitating the resolution of "dilemmas of collective action."[126] While the term was used in the 1980s, it "surged dramatically" in the late 1990s across a range of fields and disciplines.[127] Its popularity at this time can in part be attributed to the post-Cold War economic crises in postsocialist countries. Because governments and markets failed to bring "order, prosperity, distribution, and change," a "unique space" emerged "for a social and institutional explanation of how key parts of society work (or not)."[128] In stepped social capital, with Putnam, its preeminent intellectual, having the ear of presidents Clinton and Bush. From 1999-2005, a range of national governments and the World Bank "overtly sought to incorporate social capital issues into policy deliberations."[129]

Social capital theory inspired a new interest in discourses of community, empowerment (also called capacity building), and participation, each of which sought to increase social capital at the local level and thus to address the problem of political disaffection and social isolation

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[121] Edwards, *Small Change*, 66-76.

[122] Edwards, *Small Change*, 9.

[123] Edwards, *Small Change*, 55.

[124] Edwards, *Small Change*, 10. Edwards elaborates on what he sees as a more authentic civil society in *Civil Society*.

[125] Putnam, "Bowling Alone" (1995) and *Bowling Alone* (2000).

[126] Putnam, "Bowling Alone." For a conceptual history tracing social capital back to Lyda J. Hanifan and the critical pragmatism of John Dewey, see Farr, "Social Capital." See also Portes, "Social Capital."

[127] Woolcock, "The Rise and Routinization of Social Capital, 1988-2008," 470.

[128] Woolcock, "The Rise and Routinization of Social Capital, 1988-2008," 473.

[129] Woolcock, "The Rise and Routinization of Social Capital, 1988-2008," 474. Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 175.

brought about by rapid modernization. The language was appealing to governments and civil society actors across the political spectrum, for whom these discourses help name both a problem and its solution: community breakdown, lack of civil participation, and generalized feelings of disaffection and lack of power require investments in community, participation, and empowerment. A consensus thus emerged around the self-evident goodness of supporting projects that claim to facilitate participation, revive community, or empower citizens as a move to combat the problems of mass society like isolation.

These new discourses of civil society, however, have turned out to be deeply compatible with neoliberal political projects. *Empowerment* discourse rose to "near universal appeal" in the 1960s during the War on Poverty, representing a strategy for all kinds of social movements (civil rights, feminist, the urban poor, welfare rights, environmental) as well as neoconservatives (Jack Kemp, Peter Berger, and Richard Neuhaus) who equated it "with the privatization of public services and with market solutions to the problems of urban poverty and racism."[130] Whether motivated by New Left values or a conservative fear about the dissolution of society or commitment to the entrepreneurial spirit, empowerment as a tactic remains the same: "to act upon others by getting them to act in their own interest," it "targets the capacities of the 'powerless,' measures and seeks to maximize their actions, motivations, interests, and economic and political involvements."[131] By way of example, Barbara Cruikshank argues that the antipoverty movement "defined and constructed 'the poor' as 'powerless'" and then used social scientific knowledge to 'empower' them in the name of their "eventual self-government."[132] Thus empowerment is, according to Cruikshank, a 'technology of citizenship' within the liberal arts of government. *Participation* is another technology of citizenship, one that has become perhaps "*the* buzzword of the neoliberal era."[133] Participation discourse, like empowerment, is deployed by governments as well as civil society organizations to "call[] forward an entrepreneurial citizen" and to emphasize "self-regulation, responsibility for individual problems, and a nonconflictive partnership with the state."[134] Shifting responsibilities to individuals (or communities) and channeling conflict into state-sanctioned participatory forums "paves the way to a depoliticization of the public sphere": government-led participatory democracy initiatives like participatory budgeting are merely "a perverse form of neoliberal responsibilization" masquerading as "a citizen revolution."[135]

Finally, the popularity of 'community' discourse can be attributed to its potential as a 'third space' that mediates between state authority, free exchange in the market, and the rights of autonomous individuals.[136] This space, according to Nikolas Rose, appears in liberal, market-based democracies simultaneously as "a kind of natural, extra-political zone of human relations" and "as a crucial element in particular styles of political government," making it both a target of political power and "a counterweight to it."[137] The 'empowered community member' is thus

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[130] Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower*, 67-68.

[131] Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower*, 68-69.

[132] Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower*, 69. See, for example, the history of Community Action Programs.

[133] Baiocchi and Ganuza, *Popular Democracy*, 7. For critiques of participation discourse along these lines, see Mohan and Stokke, "Participatory Development and Empowerment"; Leal, "Participation"; Cleaver, "Paradoxes of Participation"; Cooke and Kothari, *Participation*; and Lee, *Do-it-Yourself Democracy*. Baiocchi and Ganuza take a more positive view, but provide a helpful overview of the critical position, see pages 6-10.

[134] Baiocchi and Ganuza, *Popular Democracy*, 7.

[135] Baiocchi and Ganuza, *Popular Democracy*, 11.

[136] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 167.

[137] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 167-168.

considered by various administrative agencies to be the 'local expert', whose special knowledge positions her as up to the task of taking responsibility for administering what were once public goods and services.[138] Rose attributes the rise of community to the turn by left intellectuals, during the collapse of state socialism, away from the party and towards civil society, and a simultaneous revival of civic republicanism in political philosophy (by figures like Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, and Alistair MacIntyre) which counterposed the isolated individual of liberal citizenship to "the active republican citizen, guided by common virtues and a commitment to the common good" whose engagement in community affairs "would revitalize civil society."[139] The rhetorical deployments of 'community' by both Clinton and Blair were "infused with notions of voluntarism, of charitable works, of self-organized care, of unpaid service to one's fellows."[140]

Thus even those concepts within civil society that aimed to counter the atomization and excessive individualism produced by late capitalism appeared compatible with neoliberal logics that decentered government action and emphasized individual or community responsibility for solving social problems. In other words, the more communitarian concerns with social cohesion and political engagement that arose alongside and in response to the transformation of the third sector ultimately index the reach rather than limits of neoliberal rationality. The contemporaneity of the rise of social capital-related discourses with neoliberalism in the last decades of the 20th century is not coincidental. The theory of social capital as Putnam developed it combines the values of communitarianism and the individualism of rational choice theory.[141] Putnam drew on Alexis de Tocqueville's argument that liberal democracy requires a robust civil society but disregarded his observation that civil society associations don't flourish in highly unequal societies, "undermining the importance of the link between equality and civic engagement" and providing an "appealing narrative" to major political parties in the United States and UK across the political spectrum.[142] For example, the UK's New Labour Party of the 1990s, breaking from social democratic ideals of the party two decades earlier, focused on "the expansion of opportunities for all" instead of redistribution, aiming "to foster social capital creation by holding together the modernization of the state and the creation of stronger social ties."[143] Tony Blair's vision, which sought to balance individualism and interdependence through social capital creation to avoid social disintegration, points to "the moment of alignment between social capital discourse and neoliberalism."[144] David Cameron's conservative party agreed that bottom-up solutions to issues like poverty were preferable to government action because they were more efficient.[145] Putnam's theory thus helped leaders across the political spectrum argue that "the disadvantaged need more social capital to insure themselves against the odds of a competitive world," implying that "being powerless is a result of not having enough capital rather than a

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[138] See Constable, "The Rhetoric of Community."

[139] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 168-169.

[140] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 171. Community discourse became especially prominent in the 1980s and 1990s, though there is a long history of mobilizing communities to solve local issues, as seen for example in the Community Action Programs of the 1960s. On the discourse of community in American politics see Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*; Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*. See also Simon, *The Community Economic Development Movement*. For a critique of community development see Immerwhar, *Thinking Small*.

[141] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 356.

[142] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 357-358.

[143] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 359.

[144] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 360.

[145] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 361.

structural problem of society."[146] These social capital-based rhetorics and others, like capacity building and the 'new localism', appeal "both to the left and the right, since [they] draw upon both a faith in local cultures and a suspicion of the regulatory state."[147] Thus through "the political objectification and instrumentalization" of community, participation, and empowerment, "[p]olitics is to be returned to society itself," not "in a social form," but "in the form of individual morality, organizational responsibility and ethical community."[148]

These late 20th century social capital-based political rhetorics "helped to conceal the contradiction between the encouragement of civic engagement and the neoliberal political agenda."[149] If distrust in the state and the devolution of responsibility for social problems to individuals, civil society organizations, and communities are caused by neoliberal policies, the rise of community, participation, and empowerment turn out to be products as much as responses to neoliberalism's effects. These social capital-based discourses provide a link between the conceptual worlds of philanthrocapitalism and social movement philanthropists: both draw deeply on the languages of community, participation, and empowerment, are suspicious of top-down efforts at social change, and valorize local or grassroots action.[150] This uncomfortable convergence by philanthrocapistalists and progressive third sector social change funders has placed the onus on each to articulate what is distinctively valuable about *their* version of social change. Around the time that philanthrocapitalist and social enterprise actors make the case for the market's power to drive change at a massive scale, progressive third sector actors begin to advance the idea that social movements can bring about 'transformative systems change' and do so in a democratically legitimate, authentic way. The problem-space of late 20th and early 21st century progressive third sector elites in the US—in which the third sector is increasingly infused with market principles and the growing popularity of social capital-based political rhetorics compatible with neoliberal policies—provides the epistemological conditions in which 'social movements' appear as an answer, as *collective* efforts to recover a civil society that is pervaded by inauthentic and undemocratic forms of social change. Social movements, in this context, promised a more transformative instance of 'returning politics to society' in a form that the state or market cannot instrumentalize.

II.   Funders Turn to Social Movements

While many third sector actors invested heavily in projects framed through the social capital-based discourses of community, participation, and empowerment in the 1970s-1990s, the financial crisis of 2007-2008 and mounting calls for transformational changes to the economic system highlighted the insufficiency of such programs to meet the needs of the moment. As Ferragina and Arrigoni argue, the contradiction between civic engagement and the neoliberal political agenda that social capital discourse helped smooth over has not been easy to conceal since the 2008 global financial meltdown: social capital's neoliberal itinerary has come under

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[146] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 363.

[147] Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 13. See, as an example of the recent enthusiasm for localism, the texts collected in De Young and Princen, eds., *The Localization Reader*.

[148] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 172, 174-175.

[149] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 361.

[150] For social movement funders, see: community organizing, participatory grantmaking, and movement capacity building. On the philanthrocapitalist side we see support by social-impact investors for the Grassroots Business Fund, which came out of the World Bank's International Finance Corporation. See Salamon, *Leverage for Good*, 8.

pressure as austerity measures leave publics around the world less receptive to these rhetorics of empowerment especially when paired with neoliberal policies.[151] For those progressives not convinced by social enterprise and philanthrocapitalist arguments that market power is the key to achieving social change at scale, given its role in producing the growing inequality that drives popular discontent, social movements have emerged as an appealingly political alternative promising transformational change while remaining free from market influence. It is as the star of social capital falls that the star of social movements rises amongst third sector progressives.

The process of adopting social movement language in progressive third sector organizations began in earnest in the early 2000's. While organizations certainly discussed movements before this, at this time 'supporting social movements' is articulated as a call to action and distinct theory of change in the sector. Early in this turn was the New World Foundation's 2003 report "Funding Social Movements," which begins by noting that there has been "a lot of discussion in philanthropic circles lately about funding social movements."[152] The report argues that "almost all movement agendas represent an effort to close the enormous gaps in wealth, health, privilege and power that are rapidly growing wider in the era of globalization."[153] Following from this, one of NWF's core principles is that basic social goods and needs—water, medicine, education—"require public and non-profit sectors that are driven by social outcomes, not market imperatives."[154] While conservative lawmakers "dismantle federal entitlement programs, surrender the tax base to the rich, and indenture future generations to austerity and debt," social movements have proven to be "sometimes irresistible forces because they assert the demands of ordinary people independently of established government and corporate power" and on a scale commensurate with them.[155] NWF wants to fund movements because it sees them as countervailing forces in "the destructive wake of federal devolution, corporate globalization and a renewed drive to empire in US foreign policy."[156] The "vacuums of government" created by the "abrogation of domestic programs to an agenda of privatization and cowboy corporatism" is in fact "producing fertile opportunities for democratic movement building."[157]

Prior to the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, NWF was the main progressive foundation arguing for the support of social movements as a strategy for combating the neoliberal capture of government. Most progressive funders in the early 2000s still used the languages of social justice, advocacy, and community organizing.[158] Social justice philanthropy

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[151] Ferragina and Arrigoni, "The Rise and Fall of Social Capital," 361. They elaborate: "Prior to the start of the economic crisis in 2008, the tension between rising economic inequality and the demand to strengthen civic engagement was undermined by neoliberalism's capacity to sustain a certain level of economic growth. We claim that this capacity contributed to a transposition of social capital theory within public discourse…The limitations of finance as the central engine of economic growth, the material hardships fostered by the crisis, and the austerity measures implemented by governments in response to these challenges are critically undermining the legitimacy of neoliberal policies" (364).

[152] New World Foundation, "Funding Social Movements," 1.

[153] New World Foundation, "Funding Social Movements," 3.

[154] New World Foundation, "Funding Social Movements," 3.

[155] New World Foundation, "Funding Social Movements," 3-4.

[156] New World Foundation, "Funding Social Movements," 11.

[157] New World Foundation, "Funding Social Movements," 12.

[158] For example, industry groups like NCRP, Foundation Center, and others offered overviews of the field using this language. See The Neighborhood Funders Group, "Community Organizing Toolbox: A Funders Guide to Community Organizing" (April 2001), NCRP, "Understanding Social Justice Philanthropy" (April 2003), Alliance for Justice, "Investing in Change: A Funder's Guide to Supporting Advocacy" (2004), GrantCraft, "Advocacy

was also critical of neoliberal social change rhetoric; despite the "economization of everything and every sphere"[159] social justice foundations carefully and consistently avoid neoliberal rhetoric. In a text analysis of documents from the 50 largest social justice philanthropies (by asset size), Courtney Jensen found that they "are regularly, both explicitly and subtly, challenging the dominant neoliberal ideology" by "eschewing concepts like 'double bottom line' and 'income strategies' and supporting organizations engaged in community organizing," revealing that these foundations "view the community, not the market, as the proper vehicle for addressing social needs."[160] But neither have social justice philanthropies tended to identify neoliberal globalization as a major object of opposition, as did NWF. One reason has to do with scale: as tactics for achieving social justice, advocacy and organizing retain associations with interest-group politics and community-level power building, respectively. From the early 2000s onwards, the difference between community organizing (the Saul Alinsky tradition) and large-scale protest events (associated with social movements) sharpens in funder discourse, even as both are frequently understood as belonging to a broader 'social change ecosystem' (the subject of Chapter 3).[161] Meanwhile, advocacy is increasingly distinguished from both organizing and social movements by virtue of its association with policy or legal rather than normative change, and a sense that advocates work on behalf of an affected group rather than empowering that group to seek change.

A second early report, "Making Change: How Social Movements Work - and How to Support Them," authored by Manuel Pastor and Rhonda Ortiz for the University of Southern California's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (USC's PERE) in 2009, exemplifies the way a unique space is marked out for social movements:

> Social movements, we suggest, exist between the neighborhood terrain, where significant investments can provide comprehensive change for residents, and the state and/or national level where policy change will ensure an overall context favorable for both community health and justice. Social movement organizations and networks…fundamentally seek to challenge the configurations of power that currently produce inequity.[162]

Funding: The Philanthropy of Changing Minds" (May 2005), GrantCraft, "Funding Community Organizing: Social Change through Civic Participation" (2008), Foundation Center, "Social Justice Grantmaking II: Highlights" (2009), Korten, *Change Philanthropy: Candid Stories of Foundations Maximizing Results Through Social Justice* (2009), and NCRP, "The State of Social Justice Philanthropy" (2010). Ira Silver's ethnographic research at the Crossroads Fund, a progressive foundation and member of the Funding Exchange, found an organization at pains to frame what they do as *community organizing* rather than *social service* support (which is what foundations overwhelmingly fund). For instance, a women's shelter would be eligible for grant money from Crossroads if it not only provided services for battered women, but also organized the women "to devise strategies for resisting future occurrences of domestic violence" (493). The key question during discussions about what to fund was whether or not these community organizations had a strong "political vision."[158] See Silver, "Constructing 'Social Change' through Philanthropy." Suárez argues that 501(c)(3) public charities are increasingly using advocacy in addition to their historical role in service provision to pursue social change ("Advocacy, Civic Engagement, and Social Change").
[159] Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 40.
[160] Jensen, "The Perfect Pair or Strange Bedfellows?" 380.
[161] This is the argument of Mark and Paul Engler's *This Is An Uprising*, popular amongst third sector progressives.
[162] Pastor and Ortiz, "Making Change," 1. Like the authors of New World Foundation report, Pastor and Ortiz note in their Forward that "in recent years, there has been renewed philanthropic interest and openness to investing in social movements, community organizing and policy change." USC's PERE came out with a second oft-cited report five years later in 2014: Ito, Rosner, Carter, and Pastor, "Transforming Lives, Transforming Movement Building: Lessons from the National Domestic Workers Alliance Strategy – Organizing – Leadership (SOL) Initiative."

The configurations of power that produce inequity, as the NWF report (heavily cited by Pastor and Ortiz) showed, includes conservative capture of government and what will come to be called neoliberal economic policies. A third early report, Barbara Masters and Torie Osborn's "Social Movements and Philanthropy: How Foundations Can Support Movement Building" published in *The Foundation Review* in 2010, which cites both the NWF and PERE reports, similarly positions social movements as promising change at scale: "To achieve these transformational goals, movements must be large scale, multiracial, multidimensional, multisector, and multi-issue. A movement is *not* the same as a single-issue organizing or policy campaign."[163]

Interestingly, while they invoke the labor, civil rights, and women's movements when situating the social movement form in a tradition of US-based activism, all three of these reports suggest that the most recent successful movement-building effort has been by conservatives throughout the 1970s-2000s. Support for progressive social movements is urgently needed because it was a conservative social movement that proved potent enough to capture the federal government and shift economic policy. In this analysis, a social movement brought the taint of neoliberal ideology to the halls of government and only a countermovement is up to the task of undoing the damage. The twinned evils of neoliberal globalization and conservative government require a method of social change simultaneously on a grand scale *and* outside of market or formal political processes. The conservative movement is both enemy and inspiration.[164]

While there was evidently a conversation in the third sector on social movements in the early 2000s, only after the global financial crisis, and especially in the early 2010s, did excitement build around movements as the key mechanism by which to achieve social justice. Interest in funding movements increased significantly in the wake of the Arab Spring and the Occupy movements (2010-2012),[165] which raised the profile of organized, radical collective action targeting authoritarian leaders and corporate power, abroad and in the United States. *TIME Magazine* named 'The Protester' as its person of the year for 2011.[166] In that year, the California-based Akondi Foundation released "Ecosystem Grantmaking: A Systemic Approach to Supporting Movement Building," and USC's PERE put out a follow-up to their 2009 report, this time funded by the Ford Foundation, called "Transactions Transformations Translations: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements."[167] In 2013 the Bay Area Justice Funders Network released "Funding Movement Building: Bay Area Approaches" and Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO) released "Many Hands, More Impact: Philanthropy's Role in Supporting Movements." The latter compared the LGBT and immigrant rights activism at home and the democratic movements abroad to the ferment of the 1960s, arguing that today "we are experiencing another 'movement moment.'" Two features of this report stand out. First, the report, part of GEO's "Scaling What Works" initiative, which seeks to "broaden the impact of high-performing nonprofits," named support for movements as one of

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[163] Masters and Osborn, "Social Movements and Philanthropy," 13, emphasis in original. *The Foundation Review* is a peer reviewed journal by and for foundation staff.

[164] Influential in this line of argument is Sally Covington's 1997 report for NCRP, "Moving A Public Policy Agenda: The Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations." See also Covington, "Moving Public Policy to the Right:" and Bothwell, "Up Against Conservative Public Policy." For a more recent account, see Jane Mayer, "The Big Money Behind the Big Lie," *The New Yorker*, 9 August 2021.

[165] Interview #6.

[166] See, for details: http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,2101745,00.html.

[167] Akondi, "Ecosystem Grantmaking." In 2014, USC's PERE released a third report, "Transforming Lives, Transforming Movement Building."

four practices for grantmakers to "grow their impact": "this form of collective action is designed to produce sweeping change, often of society's fundamental norms, values and institutions."[168] Second, the report's reference to "international democratic movements" pointed to a new element in the discourse: an eye to supporting social movements outside of the United States. Indeed, while proceeding cautiously so as not to concern donors, in that year the Global Fund for Women, which funds internationally, began using social movement language in its theory of change and initiated work on its Movement Capacity Assessment Tool (MCAT).[169] While up to this point the conversation on supporting movements had been very US-centric, this framework soon began to be exported abroad.[170]

Though the hashtag began in 2013 after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the death of Trayvon Martin, the major 2014 Black Lives Matter protests in the wake of the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in New York rocked major cities and made the continued presence of racial justice movements in the United States impossible to ignore. This was the year staff at American World Jewish Service (AJWS) began talking about social movements,[171] NEO Philanthropy, a public charity "committed to building strong social justice movements," released a pair of reports on building movement capacity,[172] and think pieces such as "Watering the Grassroots: A Strategy for Social Movement Support" appeared.[173] As an expert in movement building in the sector suggested, Black Lives Matter "introduced movements language into the [third sector] space."[174] Indicative of this is the interest of larger organizations. As noted in the Introduction, in February of 2016 the Ford Foundation sponsored an event called "From Protest to Power: Behind the Scenes of Disruptive Social Movements," which brought together the Solidaire funder community, other grantmakers, and activists. The event framed the urgency of supporting social movements through reference to Occupy, the Fight for $15 (minimum wage movement), Keystone XL activism, and the Movement for Black Lives, asking "How are successful movements structured, and how can donors catalyze their growth?"[175] The event featured influential activists including Alicia Garza, who asked the audience, "what is it going to take for us to transform philanthropy in a way that makes sure that it has movements in its DNA?"[176] Other speakers included the founders of Solidaire, the Movement Strategy Center, the Ayni Institute, and Movement Netlab.[177]

By 2016, there was thus considerable interest in supporting social movements in the third sector, priming the terrain for the most catalytic event yet: the election of Donald Trump as

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[168] Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, "Many Hands, More Impact: Philanthropy's Role in Supporting Movements," 3.

[169] Interview #8.

[170] Interview #9.

[171] Interview #5.

[172] See NEO Philanthropy, "Building Capacity to Sustain Social Movements" and "Strengthening Collaborations to Build Social Movements."

[173] Published in 2015 by Mary Joyce on the website of sector publication *The Engine Room*.

[174] Interview #3.

[175] https://www.fordfoundation.org/the-latest/ford-live-events/from-protest-to-power/

[176] For a recording of the panel, see: https://www.fordfoundation.org/the-latest/ford-live-events/from-protest-to-power/. However, the commitment to radical change at Ford should be qualified by reading it's then and current president Darren Walker's book, *From Generosity to Justice: A New Gospel of Wealth* (2023), which stops at imagining 'justice' as merely a more meritocratic or 'fairer' capitalism.

[177] These included staff from 35.org, ColorOfChange, the Open Philanthropy Project, Resource Generation, and others. Recordings of the event panels can be found here: https://www.nfg.org/resources/protest-power-behind-scenes-disruptive-social-movements.

President in November 2016, and the surge of activism that resulted—the Women's March and protests in response to the 'Muslim ban' most notably. According to one estimate, between January 2017 (when Trump was inaugurated) and September 2018, some 25,000 protests involving 14-21 million Americans took place, surpassing the protest activity of the late 1960s.[178] As Erin Mazursky, the founder or Rhize, a network of movement-building coaches, explained, when she founded the organization in 2013 it was hard to get anyone on the phone and few were using movement language—but "everything changed with Trump."[179] The Executive Director of a movement support organization agreed that the election of Trump "changed the game," suggesting "necessity is the mother of invention."[180] An independent consultant specializing in support for social movements confirmed that "Trump's election shocked philanthropy out of complacency": until then, the sector had assumed a progressive narrative, but when Trump came to power, they realized they could no longer rely on formal political change but rather needed an 'outside track.'[181] It is at this time that progressive donors started holding workshops on "what is a social movement" and consulting firms picked up on the trend, offering their services to foundations eager to support movements.[182]

We begin to see another shift in descriptions of social movements. Starting in 2014, greater effort is made to understand increasingly informal groups as the heart of movements. Thus AJWS's "Assessing the Strength of Social Movements: A Strategy Tool for Funders," released in 2016, suggested that the tools used to assess movement capacity need to be different from those used to assess typical NGOs (this was also the year AJWS added 'social movements' as one of three core pillars in their new theory of change).[183] After Trump's election, they started receiving requests by organizations to use their social movement assessment tool to assess a range of projects, including development programs; there was also a dramatic shift of interest towards the topic of supporting movements at that year's Conference of the American Evaluation Association.[184] The Global Fund for Women, likewise, began to receive requests by development organizations, among others, to use the MCAT to evaluate their projects as social movements.[185]

In 2017 widely circulated reports by Rhize, Movement NetLab, and the NCRP were released.[186] The major international humanitarian and development organization CARE hired for its first full-time Social Movements Advisor position. And EDGE Funders Alliance (comprised of 300 donors across 19 countries), along with other philanthropic allies and movement partners, endorsed the "Barcelona Commitment on Reorganizing Philanthropy for Systemic Change," which asks signatories to contribute to systemic change rooted in "[g]lobal, translocal strategies that recognize the importance of place, culture, self-determination, authentic democracy and grassroots-led movements rooted in diverse, organized communities across the globe."[187] As a former NCRP staff member noted, when they joined the organization in 2013 the

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[178] Almeida, *Social Movements*, 26.
[179] Interview #20.
[180] Interview #15.
[181] Interview #9.
[182] Interview #9.
[183] Interview #5.
[184] Interview #5.
[185] Interview #10.
[186] Rhize, "Understanding Activism: How International NGOs, Foundations and Others can Provide Better Support to Social Movements," Movement NetLab, "Living Resource Systems: A New Approach for Supporting Movement Networks," and NCRP, "Creatively Funding Social Movements."
[187] https://edgefunders.org/statement/.

conversation in progressive philanthropic circles was all about transparency, representing grantee voices, accountability, implicit bias in funding decisions, and diversity, equity, and inclusion; by 2017, social movements were top priority.[188] Indeed, in that year the NCRP released their 10-year strategic framework (2017-2026), which emphasized its aim to "intentionally connect to movements that are important drivers of progress and social change in our country." The strategic framework's first pillar states: "NCRP will help drive resources to social movements."[189] That year, they hosted a webinar on "Creatively Funding Social Movements," attracting more registrants (425) and attendees (250) than any previous NCRP webinar.[190]

Thirst for knowledge-sharing on how to support movements has only grown since. In 2018 the Human Rights Funders Network, American Jewish World Service, Global Fund for Women, European Funders for Social Change and Human Rights, Peace and Security Funders Group, and Philanthropy New York collaborated to offer a webinar series called "Stronger Together: New Frontiers in Funders Supporting Social Movements."[191] Influential industry outlets published op-eds on "25 Powerful Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements" (*Inside Philanthropy*) or asking, "Can Aid Organizations Really Be Part of Social Movements?" (*Devex*).[192] And the Global Fund for Women released their Movement Capacity Assessment Tool, monitoring and evaluation consultancy Innovation Network's Social Movement Learning Project published "Amplifying Movement Knowledge for Philanthropy," and the Ayni Institute came out with their 123-page report, "Funding Social Movements: How Mass Protest Makes an Impact."[193] The next year Innovation Network added another output, "Evaluating Social Movement Power: Concepts and Indicators," and in January 2019 Rhize convened a two-day conference, "How We Fund, How We Build," to bring together social movement funders. Though less public-facing than the Ford Foundation summit three years prior, the Rhize event was attended by staff from some 20 organizations committed to funding movements, including a number of major foundations.[194] This activity at the end of the 2010's represents a technical turn in the social movement funding space.

Since the election of Trump, the single most catalyzing event in the rise of interest in supporting social movements in the third sector has been the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. The Executive Director of a California-based foundation that has worked on women's and girls' rights in Africa for over twenty years related how their organization, which focuses on supporting community-based organizations (CBOs), was struggling by 2013-2014 to get the attention of donors because the latter, influenced by Silicon Valley, perceived support of CBOs as being about 'small change' that took too long to replicate or scale up (in contrast to the 'big change' promised by philanthrocapitalists). If before they were struggling to articulate to funders why community-based action was effective or even valid before the summer of 2020, then after there was all of a sudden a lot of interest in the kind of work they were doing.[195] An employee at

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[188] Interview #7.
[189] NCRP, "Strategic Framework 2017-2026," 3. https://www.ncrp.org/about-us/strategic-framework.
[190] NCRP, "Creatively Funding Social Movements," held on 15 February 2017.
[191] Details of the webinar and its relevant materials can be found here: https://www.hrfn.org/event/webinar-series-stronger-together-new-frontiers-in-funders-supporting-social-movements/.
[192] See Lemma, "25 Powerful Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements," and Lentfer, "Can Aid Organizations Really Be Part of Social Movements?"
[193] Global Fund for Women, "Movement Capacity Assessment Tool," Innovation Network, "Amplifying Movement Knowledge for Philanthropy," Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements:"
[194] "How We Fund, How We Build," 30-31 January, 2019, New York.
[195] Interview #4.

Global Fund for Women agreed that "especially after last summer" donors have become "excited about social movements."[196] In 2020, Solidaire, a community of donor organizers, "doubled down" on its commitment to movements, aiming "to move $1 billion to social change movements" within ten years and, through this support, help movements reduce their dependence on traditional philanthropy.[197] As a Solidaire employee noted, after the protests of the summer of 2020, several more moderate funders approached them looking to learn how to support movements; the Packard Foundation gave them a gift of $20 million; their network of donors increased their contributions towards movements from $1.5 million to $17 million; and their institutional membership more than doubled.[198] This increased support from moderate funders is significant given that, according to one employee and member of the Solidaire donor community: "we're anticapitalists!"[199]

Although in production before the 2020 summer protests, *Alliance Magazine*, a premier UK-based trade publication for philanthropists globally, published a special issue in June 2020 on "Social Movement Philanthropy," indicating that the interest in funding social movements was becoming mainstream. As the editors of the issue note, "Where in the last few decades 'formal' third sector organisations have dominated civil society, social movements and other civic actors are now playing a central role."[200] New opportunities reflect this central role. Edge Funders Alliance's 2021 "Global Engagement Lab" provided "a training program for progressive funders, which fosters personal transformation and relationship-building in order to deepen philanthropy's understanding and practice of systemic change."[201] Thousand Current's annual academy for 2021, "Transforming Philanthropy: Academy for Solidarity as Practice," asked potential attendees, "Do you want to see grassroots groups and social movements better resourced?"[202] And in the same year the Human Rights Funders Network, which since 2003 has led strategizing around "ways to increase human rights funding to local grassroots organizations," offered a six-part webinar series on their newly-developed 'community driven grantmaking principles.'[203] The Ayni Institute has also recently launched the Ayni School, which offers (for a fee) an online "Social Movement Course" exploring "why we need movements as a vehicle to create social change and how we must orient strategically based on that premise."[204]

As these workshops, retreats, academies, and courses suggest, there is now a body of transferable knowledge on 'how to support social movements' circulating amongst (mostly) US-based human rights, development, and philanthropic organizations.[205] Where does this knowledge come from? And how have movements come to look like something that *can* be funded in the first place? These reports overwhelmingly cite other reports, forming a self-referential web of grey literature. Nonetheless, some of these publications have engaged academic literature on social movements, several were produced by or in partnership with

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[196] Interview #10.

[197] See Solidaire's "Theory of Liberation": https://solidairenetwork.org/who-we-are/theory-of-liberation/#nav-home-tab_494_2_2.

[198] Interview #12.

[199] Interview #12.

[200] Mahomed, Hopstein, and Krämer, "Overview: Entering the funding arena," *Alliance* (June 2020), 28.

[201] The lab ran from February 2021 to September 2021. https://edgefunders.org/global-engagement-lab/.

[202] The academy ran from March 22 – 26, 2021. https://academy.thousandcurrents.org/.

[203] The webinars were aired between December 2020 and March 2021. https://www.hrfn.org/events/.

[204] https://aynischool.com/courses/social-movements/lessons/the-movement-breakthrough/.

[205] Sector research organizations are also producing reports summarizing movement support best practices. See, for example, Rogers and Ozden, "How philanthropists can support social movements" (Social Change Lab), and Naimark-Rowse, *Dollars and Dissent* (ICNC).

academic institutions, and many of the authors hold advanced degrees in social science disciplines. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the order of discourse about social movements produced by elite third sector progressives resembles the social movement of contemporary social movement studies. While it is not clear exactly what the relationship is between the academic and professional discourses, their homology is significant—in particular their mutual assimilation of social movement to civil society. The next section thus traces the changing signification of 'social movement' in social scientific discourse to draw out some of the ways that over the course of the 20th century movements are progressively differentiated from revolutions and articulated through the concept of civil society.

III.   Social Movements Enter Civil Society in Theory

The term *movement*, in the sense of "actions and endeavors on the part of a group of people working towards…a shared political, social, or artistic objective" was first used in English in 1812 (OED), entering the language in the context of the Oxford movement and Labor movement in the United Kingdom "as a transliteration of the French idiom *dans le movement*."[206] The idiom in French was not positive, calling up "images of lemming-like behavior" on the part of "fringe social groups."[207] Over a couple of decades of use in English, however, the term came to denote "a continuous, unitary process by which the whole working class gained self-consciousness and power."[208] What was once seen as lemming-like behavior comes to look like destiny through the lens of different philosophies of history. The new usage reflected the "emerging historical consciousness" described by influential intellectuals of the era:

> 'Movement' was thus seen as 'historical.' The 'swim' human beings find themselves caught up in is the product of an 'historical order,' a causal sequencing of events, characters, episodes which is 'movement' from past to present. Hegel, Carlyle, Marx, Comte, and Von Ranke suggested that the past contained evidence of human destiny which in time would lead to formulary 'laws of history.'[209]

Both the negative, lemming-like sense of being in movement and the more positive connotation of gaining class consciousness as part of the progression of history deploy 'movement' as a verb: it is force, direction, pull, sweep, destiny, progress. The idealists and materialists of the early and mid-19th century agreed that there was a general movement to history in one direction or another; the debate was instead around "*what* 'moves' in history—the material things which are our physical environment or the human ideas which mediate and interpret the facts of our experience?"[210]

Social movement was understood by mid-19th century thinkers in relation to 'the social question', the problem of poverty, inequality, and various social ills that flowed from them as a result of capitalist industrialization.[211] For a materialist like Marx, the material necessities of this

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[206] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 238.
[207] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 238.
[208] Charles Tilly and Lesley Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2018*, 8.
[209] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 238.
[210] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 238.
[211] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 45.

mass called society "made social transformation inevitable" even as he recognized the role of people in achieving this transformation: "revolution was at once dialectically guaranteed and yet a project of which workers must be protagonists."[212] In Marx's analysis, the social question derived from the main source of social domination—class relations—around which all organizing should be directed in order to catalyze the movement of the proletariat.[213] Thus in *The German Ideology*, written in 1845-1846, Marx and Engels explain, "[w]e call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence."[214] A few years later, in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), they would declare that "the proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority."[215]

For Marx and Engels, proletarian movement and revolution were connected if not synonymous; this link was also made by more conservative voices at the time. Many of the first writings on mass movements appeared "in reaction to the threat of social revolution" in the second half of the 19th century.[216] For example, '*social* movement' entered academic discourse with the publication of German sociologist Lorenz von Stein's *History of the French Social Movement from 1780 to the Present* (1850).[217] In Stein's analysis, the social upheavals in the sixty years after the French Revolution of 1789 were a result of that revolution's failure to realize the equality it promised in the context of the changing conditions of the masses in an industrializing society.[218] The political struggle of the proletariat turned into "a struggle for social reform and institutional changes," in particular over private property.[219] For Stein, like Marx, the contradiction in newly industrializing societies between the property-owning class and the proletariat was the motor for the social movement of the proletariat.[220] In a section titled 'Concept and Law of the Political Revolution' Stein writes:

> We have shown above that, in all forms of the state, the class which rules society also comes to control the state. The social movement aiming to change the state originates within the class which is subjugated to the rule of the powerful. It aims at the elimination of this rule as well as of the corresponding privileges.[221]

At this point in the career of 'movement', again as we saw with Marx, it could be used more or less interchangeably with 'revolution'. This is why the social movement in France is something to worry about for Stein. His analysis of social movement, and the danger of revolution leading to dictatorship, leads Stein to conclude that a monarchy ruling an industrializing society can only survive if committed to social reform and thereby to mediating the conflict between the proletariat and property-owning classes.[222] His efforts to think of such a mediating agent and its

[212] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 45, 47.
[213] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 47-48.
[214] Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology, Part One*, 56–57.
[215] Quoted in Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2018*, 8.
[216] Accornero and Fillieule, "Introduction," 3.
[217] Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2018*, 8. See Lorenz von Stein, *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789-1850*, and, in particular, the helpful introduction to the English edition by Kaethe Mengelberg, 3-39. See in general Koslowski and Koslowski, "Stein, Lorenz von."
[218] Mengelberg, "Introduction," 19.
[219] Mengelberg, "Introduction," 19.
[220] Mengelberg, "Introduction," 21.
[221] Stein, *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789-1850*, 76.
[222] Stein, *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789-1850*, 22.

role in avoiding social revolution ultimately led him to support strong, pro-labor state reforms; some have even called him the father of the welfare state.[223] Thus in different ways, social movement was for both Stein and Marx and Engels "the popular mobilization that brought attention and possibly solutions to the social question," and, more to the point, this mobilization was "the movement of society—conceived as the great mass of people not represented by elite politics and not given power by possession of private property."[224] Thus for the most part, in the 19th century *the social movement*, with its singular definite article, was "more or less synonymous with the progressive course of social change that was pushed along by insurgency from below," whether celebrated or decried.[225] Different elements of this understanding of social movement—as collective action by a 'mass' that is outside of elite politics or property ownership—will be retained in different forms up to the present.

Inspired by a range of sources, including and especially Hegel, Stein's project sought to combine German idealism, French socialism, and Christian charity, but it lacked the positivism of an Auguste Comte in favor of historicist explanations.[226] However, with positivism gaining prominence in European intellectual circles in the latter half of the nineteenth century, *movement*, as a concept hitherto articulated in historicist terms, needed "specification and translation in terms of verifiably observable human activity."[227] As Craig Calhoun argues, when commentators of the time referred to *the* social movement they were invoking a broad array of labor struggles, protests against economic hardship, and socialist political projects, all of which had "merged almost into one idea," though in reality there was a "plurality and range of movement activity in the early nineteenth century" that required explanation.[228] It is in this context that "the argument 'Movement is a phenomenon' was advanced."[229] In other words, a shift occurs relatively quickly after the term's appearance whereby *movement* as "an analogue comparing the flow of social facts to physical movement"[230] in the direction dictated by one or another philosophy of history becomes *movements*—discrete, identifiable, quantifiable, replicable phenomena. Already by the time Marx and Engels and Stein were writing, other commentators had begun to add the adjective *social* (like Stein) and to make the resulting term plural: a German journal in 1848 commented that "social movements are in general nothing other than a first search for a valid historical outcome."[231] Four decades later in his preface to the 1888 English edition of the *Manifesto*, Engels himself adopted the plural—"wherever proletarian movements continued to show signs of life, they were ruthlessly hunted down."

When Marx and Engels and Stein used the term in the middle of the 19th century, it could still signify the collective destiny of a class and the general direction of historical change. By the end of the 19th century, however, the pluralized noun with adjective, *social movements*, was being used regularly by movement actors and commentators in a somewhat broader sense, to discuss the political actions of not just proletarians but famers, women, and other claimants.[232]

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[223] See Koslowski and Koslowski, "Stein, Lorenz von," for Stein's theorization of the liberal social state.
[224] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 49.
[225] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 47.
[226] Stein's place in the history of sociology is discussed in Singelmann and Singelmann, "Lorenz von Stein and the paradigmatic bifurcation of social theory in the nineteenth century."
[227] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 239.
[228] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 49.
[229] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 239.
[230] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 236.
[231] Quoted in Tilly and Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2018*, 8.
[232] Charles Tilly and Lesley Wood, *Social Movements, 1768-2018*, 8.

With the historicist theses about the direction of society's movement as a whole on the wane, and political agitation by groups *within* or *of* society—women, farmers—on the rise, 'social movement' came to be replaced by 'movements', attached to these different groups. Thus in 1866 Lucretia Mott could urge the young women of America at the Eleventh National Woman's Rights Convention in New York City's Church of the Puritans "to make yourselves acquainted with the history of the Woman's Rights movement."[233] By the turn of the century, when writers evoked a movement, they tended to have in mind groups advocating for various causes specific to their interests. The sense of movement as referring to the direction of history had begun to recede; but the figure of 'the social movement' as a distinct form of political action of which 'the Women's Rights movement' was one example had not yet been born. Though at the beginning of the 19th century the social movement was "a form of collective organization transposable across issues and populations that was used by ordinary people to express a variety of claims, grievances, and aspirations and to do so often with little stimulus or guidance from above,"[234] it was not yet a concept travelling under this name:

> The very phrase 'social movement' entered modern vocabulary not as a transposable form of collective action but as a reference simultaneously to the necessary direction of social change and the collective action that would bring it about. Social scientists today speak of 'social movements' in the plural; observers in the early nineteenth century spoke of 'the social movement.' [235]

It was only later that the term was used in a plural sense "to refer to multiple separate and possibly unconnected mobilizations not necessarily embedded in a course of progressive social change."[236] It is to this shift that we now turn.

* * *

It would take an encounter with the budding discipline of sociology in early 20th-century America for 'social movements' to appear as a form of political action that encompassed many of the specific identity-based movements described by late 19th-century commentators and activists. McGee argues that we can find a "linear, unobstructed development" of the positivistic 'movement is a phenomenon' concept that developed in the second half of the 19th century in Europe—the phenomenon of discrete women's movements, peasants movements, etc.—to the early sociology of social movements in the United States.[237] It was in the hands of these sociologists that a distinct kind of collective action understood as 'the social movement' was elaborated; up until this point, the different groups collectively acting or the ultimate goal of the action was coupled to the term 'movement'—the Woman's Rights movement, worker's movements, abolitionist movement. While these movements borrowed tactics from each other and thereby recognized similarities in the form of the collective political action they undertook—many early women's rights activists cut their teeth in the abolitionist movement, for example—

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[233] Quoted in Lisa Tetrault, *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898*, 1.
[234] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 43.
[235] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 45.
[236] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 46.
[237] McGee, "'Social Movement'," 239.

they were not yet understood by academic or popular commentators to be individual instances of a broader *category* of collective action called 'a social movement'.

Social scientists at the turn of the century thinking about the phenomena that would later be called social movements tended to draw on one of three traditions in sociological thought. First, the Marxist tradition, which points to class conflict, alienation, and solidarity within classes as motivating protest. The analysis of alienation and exploitation offered by Marx helped explain how grievances arise from structural contradictions in capitalist societies.[238] Second, Weberian sociology, which offered explanations for the causes of social movement challenges (the fracturing of authority), participation of individuals (values and beliefs, not just class, underpinning and orienting social action), and different models of movements (bureaucratic organizations legitimated through rational-legal authority versus informal, communal movements legitimated through charismatic authority).[239] Finally, the tradition of Durkheimian sociology, which sees much collective behavior as symptomatic "of underlying tensions and problems of social integration" in complex modern societies.[240] If for Marx collective action is caused by class conflict, and for Weber it comes from a fracturing of legitimate authority, for Durkheim it is rooted in the strain or breakdown of society.

Durkheim's thinking on collective behavior casts it as a spontaneous kind of activity associated with mass gatherings like panics or riots,[241] linking his perspective with a fourth major influence on early social movement theory, the French psychologist, popular science writer, and crowd theorist Gustave LeBon. LeBon's *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* appeared in 1894 and earned immediate and widespread success (it has never been out of print).[242] LeBon was writing at a time when the revolution of 1848 was still in living memory, and the turmoil of the siege of Paris and the Commune, which gave rise to the Third Republic in 1870-1871, were even more recent, and contemporary workers protests were causing havoc. Unlike the sociologist Stein, however, who looked to structural issues in society to explain collective behavior, LeBon was influenced by "psychological concepts popular at that time, such as unconscious processes, regression to childhood patterns, and irrational libidinous influences on behavior."[243] The crowd was rendered by LeBon as irrational, pathological, and feminine:

> We see, then, that the disappearance of the conscious personality, the predominance of the unconscious personality, the turning by means of suggestion and contagion of feelings and ideas in an identical direction, the tendency immediately to transform the suggested ideas into acts; these we see, are the principle characteristics of the individual forming part of a crowd. He is no longer himself, but has become an automaton who has ceased to be guided by his will. Moreover, by the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian—that is, a creature acting by instinct. He possesses the spontaneity, the violence, the ferocity, and also the enthusiasm

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[238] Steven Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 15.

[239] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 27-40. Contemporary analyses of the social movement lifecycle (from organic, grassroots movement to institutionalization), leadership dynamics in movements, and different types of Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) bear the mark of this Weberian legacy.

[240] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 49.

[241] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 52-53.

[242] See Robert A. Nye's introduction to the English translation of Gustave LeBon, *The Crowd*, 1-26. See also Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology*, 3.

[243] Johnston, *What is a Social Movement?*, 27-28; and Nye, "Introduction," 12.

and heroism of primitive beings, whom he further tends to resemble by the facility with which he allows himself to be impressed by words and images—which would be entirely without action on each of the isolated individuals composing the crowd—and to be induced to commit acts contrary to his most obvious interests and his best-known habits.[244]

Because, according to LeBon, crowds are unrestrained, contagious, suggestible, and undiscerning,[245] "[t]he solution to the riddle of modernity was thus a matter of crowd control."[246] Crowds, LeBon told statesmen, had to be guided away from the pursuit of the glories promised in the sparkling rhetoric of radical thinkers and leaders, and instead towards their naturally-held traditional beliefs so that material progress and order might prevail.[247] Crowd theory thus had significant utilitarian value.[248]

At first, early 20th century US-based sociologists understood what we today call social movements through the Durkheimian and LeBonian tradition (with the additional influences of Hippolyte Taine and Gabriel Tarde) under the broad label of 'collective behavior', which was championed by the Chicago School of sociology in the 1920s and "dominated sociology for several decades in the mid-twentieth century."[249] Prominent Chicago School sociologist Robert Park studied with John Dewey in the United States and Georg Simmel in Germany, completing a dissertation on *The Crowd and the Public* in 1904, which "provided a bridge between late nineteenth century European crowd theory and early twentieth century U.S. collective behavior theory."[250] Appearing in the 1920s-1940s, these texts reflect the pervasive fear in the United States that communist and fascist movements seen abroad could appear closer to home.[251] In a 1921 text, Park and his coauthor elaborated a distinction between the irrationality of crowds and the reason of publics, filing movements under the former: "all great mass movements tend to display, to a greater or less extent, the characteristics that Le Bon attributes to crowds."[252] Herbert Blumer, writing a prominent overview of collective behaviour theory in 1939 follows Park and Burgess closely in adopting three kinds of 'elementary collective groups': crowds, masses, and publics.[253] But he devotes much more analytical attention than previous writers to understanding movements, proposing that they begin "on the 'primitive level' of the collective behavior" as formless, amorphous action, becoming more formalized and institutionalized over time.[254] The collective behavior theorists are united by a belief that movements are essentially psychological or social rather than political phenomenon.[255] This interpretation of movement activity as irrational derived from the assumption that "modern political systems were open to adjudicate grievances": if citizens could vote, meet with elected officials, or sign petitions,

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[244] LeBon, *The Crowd*, 52.

[245] LeBon, *The Crowd*, 50-51.

[246] Nye, "Introduction," 17.

[247] Nye, "Introduction," 17.

[248] Nye, *The Origins of Crowd Psychology*, 5.

[249] Accornero and Fillieule, "Introduction," 1. For a historical account of the development of sociology as a discipline in the United States and its influences, see Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science*.

[250] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 61. See also Nye, "Introduction," 18.

[251] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 73.

[252] Park and Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, 871, quoted in Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 63.

[253] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 64.

[254] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 64-65.

[255] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 66.

turning to "noninstitutional tactics" does not reflect a rational calculation (at least in the eyes of scholars unattuned to political or social exclusion).[256]

Later Chicago School sociologists, such as Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, began to downplay the relation between movements and crowds and devote more attention to 'social movements' (the *social* now firmly tied to *movement*). Writing in 1957, towards the end of the Chicago School's reign in the discipline, they defined social movements as "a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote a change or resist a change in the society or group of which it is a part."[257] Whereas for Stein social movement meant the attempt of the proletarian class to seize state power, for Turner and Killian it means acting collectively to change something in or about *society*, as distinct from the state, even if the change involves pressuring the state to pursue social reform. The shift in perspective between the early and later Chicago School sociologists points to the influence of intense criticism directed at their model of collective behavior by scholars working in the subfield of political sociology (based largely at Columbia University) from the 1950s to the 1970s.[258] Sociologists working in this subfield began to gain interest in political movements because of both the revolutionary and right-wing reactionary organizing in the United States sparked by the Great Depression as well as the "fascism abroad" which led to WWII. In this context, political sociologists "returned to 'big questions' about broad movement ideologies, social class bases, and shifting political alliances that sustained movements across the political spectrum."[259] Critics charged collective behaviour theorists with being overly individualistic and psychological, and ignoring the role of organizations, solidarity and political strategy.[260] Their political approach to social movement research, as seen for example in Rudolf Heberle's *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology* of 1951, found more explanatory value in Marxist and Weberian concepts than in Durkheimian logic, seeing social movements as reflecting the pursuit of group and class interests and as bound together by ideologies.[261]

The subfield of political sociology, however, took only partial custody of the study of social movements, which were of interest to political sociologists mainly when they intersected with other units, such as parties or unions, or as examples meant to provide insight into organizational behaviour in general; they were not yet central objects of analysis. Movements were further marginalized in 1950s academic discourses by a sense that redistributive struggles were less relevant in an 'affluent society' and after the 'end of ideology'—a focus on "the affluent problems of angst, anxiety, alienation, and the 'lonely crowd'" came to displace "older materialist concerns with conflict, coercion, control, and class struggle."[262] Further, even though

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[256] Almeida, *Social Movements*, 47.

[257] Turner and Killian, *Collective Behavior*, 308.

[258] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 53.

[259] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 77.

[260] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 73. These political sociologists opened up a set of questions that disciplinary boundaries between political science and sociology that had begun to harden in the late 19th century had marginalized: "Sociology had largely ceded questions of politics to its sister discipline of political science. The latter, in turn, defined its subject matter as the organized and institutional dimensions of states, governments, elections, and parties. Because social movements involve extra-institutional elements, they were off the radar screens of political scientists. Thus, sociology analyzed collective behavior as an apolitical phenomenon, and political science studied politics as an institutional system; neither was conceptually predisposed to examine the politics of social movements. Movements were too political for sociology and too unorthodox for political science" (75-76).

[261] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 77-78.

[262] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 90.

political sociologists worked to reclaim social movement's political edge from the psychological explanations of the collective behaviour theorists, some writers working in the tradition still shared with the collective behaviour theorists 'strain and deprivation models' for explaining the causes of social movements; these models "relegate Marx and Weber to supporting roles while bringing Durkheim back for an encore."[263] In the 1950s in the United States, this Durkheimian set of concerns was embedded in sociology's "new theory of social order," a highly positivist structural-functionalism largely based at Harvard.[264] A prominent example is Talcott Parsons's *The Social System* (1951), which leaned on the concepts of structure and function to argue that cultural, social, and personality 'systems' together comprised social order: "culture provided values and beliefs; socialization implanted them into people…; and properly socialized individuals enacted status-roles in the social system."[265] This system remains strong when it meets "functional requisites" like adaptation and integration, but when it fails social order falters, leading to "strain, disequilibrium, and disintegration."[266] Social psychologists at the time such as Robert Merton added to the mix the idea that "individuals interpret their experience by reference to existing or desired group memberships" leading to recognition of one's "relative deprivation": "when people judge themselves to be deprived relative to a plausible reference group, that grievance may provoke them into collective action."[267] In light of these models, contemporary movements, from right-wing fascist movements to the labor and civil rights movement at home and even anticolonial movements abroad, where seen as "fueled by grievances that were understandable in terms of social strain and relative deprivation."[268] Thus throughout the first half of the 20th century, across both collective behaviour theorists and political sociologists, social movement activity was frequently thought to occur when "routine social processes…break down and malfunction."[269] In this tradition, social movements are the other to the legitimate political process; far from expressing the laws of history, they indicate a break in the proper functioning of the social system. Accordingly, sociological knowledge—including analyses of social movements—was valuable insofar as it could be used to prevent such breakdown through mechanisms of social control, harkening back to both Stein's and LeBon's instrumental motivations for studying movements and crowds.

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While the movements of the 1960s "radically altered" how scholars understood social movements, this theoretical response lagged behind the political developments—even in 1975 overviews of collective behaviour theories were likely to feature social strain or deprivation as an explanation of social movement development.[270] But throughout the 1970s the negative connotations of terms like 'breakdown' and 'strain'—conditions to be prevented or

[263] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 91.
[264] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 91.
[265] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 92.
[266] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 92.
[267] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 92.
[268] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 92-93.
[269] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 93.
[270] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 101. It should be noted that strain and breakdown perspectives still circulate in slightly altered form. Piven and Cloward's work on poor people's movements argues that "the lateral integration of movement organization is less important than (breakdowns in) the vertical integration of social structure in explaining mass protest" (102-103). See Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*.

ameliorated—fell out of favor. Critics argued that strain and breakdown theories present social movement participants "as destructive and irrational" while portraying authorities "as normal and reasonable," using overly psychologistic explanations that sidelined the political nature of even the urban riots of the time.[271] The whole 'classical model' of social movements in sociology up to this point (strain and deprivation, mass society, collective behaviour), the critics argued, rested on "a general causal sequence in which some background condition of structural strain provokes a disruptive psychological state that leads to a social movement."[272]

The civil rights movement starting in the 1950s, the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s and especially the antiwar movement of the 1970s, as well as countercultural, anticolonial, environmental, feminist, disability, and queer liberation movements developing throughout the 60s and 70s, fundamentally reordered the perspectives of sociologists, leading to a paradigm shift in the field.[273] The more positive view of these movements, which were seen as responding to justified grievances, led a number of sociologists to rebrand 'breakdown' as 'opportunity', which "signifies something to be sought, desired, seized, enjoyed, valued, and maximized," while still linking the appearance of collective action to structural changes in society: both breakdown and opportunity "refer to external, variable processes that increase the likelihood of collective behavior."[274] The structural-functionalism that dominated sociology in the 1950s started to look irrelevant, and "[t]heories of power, conflict, and domination" began to ascend.[275] There was also a felt need to account for the 'new social movements' of the 1960s, which framed claims and grievances in terms of identities other than classes; this required explanation because the study of social movements had for so long focused on labor movements. In response to this poverty of explanation, researchers started "treating the social movement as a form that could be transposed from one cause to another."[276] The new theories thus presented social movements "as enduring, patterned, and quasi-institutionalized" and viewed participants in them as rational political actors engaged in power struggles.[277]

The need to explain the activity of the 1960s made the 1970s the "formative years" of the budding sub-discipline of social movement studies; it is during this time that "the fundamental orientations that define social movement research today" were developed, namely "the insight that social movements and protest activism are not extraordinary phenomena, but rather are behaviors much closer to everyday political, economic, and cultural life than had been previously thought."[278] The most prominent version of this new paradigm was resource mobilization theory (RMT), which appeared in the mid-1970s. While earlier sociological writing on movements "saw grievances and masses as independent variables leading to movements that then generated leaders and sought resources," RMT instead sees "entrepreneurial leaders and resource availability as independent variables leading to movements that then frame grievances and recruit memberships to suit their purposes."[279] 'Resources' include, in addition to cash, human capital in the form of leaders and a constituency, physical space, pre-existing organizational

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[271] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 105.

[272] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 105.

[273] Accornero and Fillieule, "Introduction," 4; Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 110; Almeida, *Social Movements*, 47.

[274] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 104.

[275] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 110.

[276] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 44.

[277] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 111.

[278] Johnston, *What is a Social Movement?*, 27.

[279] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 114.

infrastructures like unions and church groups, and cultural or moral capital. Thus in contrast to earlier theories grappling with the question of why social movements form (focusing on strains and breakdown), RMT argued that structural conflicts in society make grievances "relatively constant," such that "movements form because of long-term changes in group resources, organization, and opportunities for collective action."[280] The potential for collective political action—grievances—is always-already latent in advanced, industrial societies; forming a movement is a question of catalyzing that latent potential through the mobilization of resources.

One form of this latent potential is the existence of civil society organizations in advanced industrial societies that already possess many of these resources. In RMT, individuals and organizations beyond the movement's participants thus have a role because they control resources, and therefore help determine whether a movement will succeed; supply-and-demand and cost-benefit calculations by rational actors inside and outside the movement become "central to recruitment, mobilization, strategy, and tactics."[281] Resource mobilization scholars describe the civil rights movement, for example, as emerging because of

> the urbanization of the southern black population, increased numbers of middle-class and working-class blacks, growing black college enrollments, and the organization expansion of black churches. These changes simultaneously freed blacks from traditional paternalistic social controls, increased levels of black organization and resources, and placed the black voter in a strategic location in national politics.[282]

While other variations on this analytical theme have appeared in the last fifty years—political process theory, framing theory, social construction theory, new social movement theory—they align with the RMT paradigm, which provides the "fundamental tenets" for social movement studies to this day.[283] As one prominent social movements scholar put it, the acceptance of the RMT perspective has "served to redefine the basic ontological status of social movements within sociology": no longer seen as purely "psychological phenomena born of the efforts of discontented individuals to manage the interpsychic tensions endemic to their lives," social movements are now understood to be "collections of political actors dedicated to the advancement of their stated substantive goals."[284] In this new paradigm power emerges from the collective action of rational individuals, is intrinsic to the social collectivity, rather than from outside the collective, as when a charismatic leader leads a crowd.[285]

Starting in the 1950s through to the 1970s we thus see a distinct field of social movement studies (still largely, but not exclusively, populated by sociologists) emerge as an "institutionalized 'sub-discipline',", with the RMT vision of the social movement as its orienting object.[286] Tracking the frequency with which this language was used across publications in

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[280] Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," 530. The major early statement is McCarthy and Zald's 1973 article, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory."

[281] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 117.

[282] Jenkins, "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements," 532.

[283] Johnston, *What is a Social Movement?*, 38.

[284] Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*, 22.

[285] Nye, "Introduction," 20.

[286] Accornero and Fillieule, "Introduction," 7. No history of this field of study exists. The closest is Buechler's *Understanding Social Movements* (2011), which presents itself as a "sociological history of social movement theory" (4). However, the story of how we get from theories of social movements to high-impact journals (like

English helps us see that, though 'civil rights movement' was used considerably during the 1960s, 'social movements' as a general term only began to be used with any sort of frequency in the late 1970s, before skyrocketing (and surpassing 'civil rights movement') in usage starting in the early 1980s.[287] While in Europe movement research was "highly fragmented" amongst its different national traditions from the 1940s to the 1980s, it becomes increasingly integrated in the early 1990s.[288] In the 1990s textbooks on social movements pitched to an international audience appeared in greater quantity, facilitating the teaching of more introductory courses (especially in sociology departments) on the subject.[289] This was also the period during which European and American scholars started to engage more with each other, such that, today "there is no longer a sharp distinction between American and European approaches."[290]

IV.   Social Movements Enter Civil Society in Professional Practice

While the intellectual roots of social movement theory are 19th century and European, the academic focus on the social movement as an object of knowledge production comes from early 20th century positivist sociology in the United States, formalizing into an academic field throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and is increasingly engaged by elite civil society organizations starting in the 1990s. Throughout this journey, the concept of 'social movement' changes. Initially entangled with 'revolution' when the term appeared in the mid-19th century, social movement referred to the seizing of political power by a newly self-conscious proletariat. In this itinerary, movements were looked upon positively (Marx) or negatively (Stein) depending on the direction and speed you saw history moving; either way, movements had destructive power. Read through an ascendant positivism in the second half of the 19th century, movements were specified into discrete phenomena, eventually losing the sense of the unitary movement of an entire class. Early 20th-century sociologists, drawing on European social theory and in the climate of the intensely positivistic budding social sciences in the United States, spent half a century developing an understanding of social movements as on a continuum with and related to crowds and riots, as existing when normal (and preferred) arrangements broke down, and as justifying the use of sociological knowledge for social control; social movements happened when things went wrong. If 'movement' in the previous century suggested the march of history in a

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Mobilization, founded in 1996, and *Social Movement Studies*, founded in 2002), professional conferences, and dedicated research centers is yet to be told.

[287] This was determined using the Google ngram viewer. The end of the 19th century saw the first usage in the United States of the additional adjective *grassroots* to denote "[o]rdinary people considered as the foundation or main body of an organization, industry, etc., or of society more generally" (1899, OED). It wasn't until the 1980s, however, that *grassroots social movements* appeared with any frequency.

[288] Accornero and Fillieule, "Introduction," 5; Diani and Císar, "The Emergence of a European Social Movement Research Field," 176-178.

[289] Doherty, Hayes, and Rootes, "Social Movement Studies in Britain," 198.

[290] Accornero and Fillieule, "Introduction," 8. This greater collaboration can be dated to the 1986 conference at the Free University of Amsterdam, after which European scholars began to use resource mobilization and framing theories, and North American scholars became interested in collective identity (of the New Social Movement work). See Diani and Císar, "The Emergence," 176. By 1992 Mario Diani could claim that there had emerged an underlying convergence among analytical approaches to studying movements, allowing for a synthetic definition of social movements "as consisting in networks of informal interaction between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political and/or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" ("The Concept of Social Movement," 3).

particular direction, 'movements' now signaled a glitch in an endless present that understood itself to be the end that history had progressed towards: an affluent, liberal democratic, capitalist society. The upheavals at home and abroad in the late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s shook this optimism, lending legitimacy to the term, which exploded in use in English language publications and gave birth to a distinct academic field. Movements come to be seen by progressive academics and civil society professionals "as legitimate and justifiable challenges to political regimes in need of major transformation."[291] The terminological evolution from *collective behavior* to *collective action* to *contentious politics* charts the field of social movement studies' progressive embrace of rationality as the defining feature of movements, which come to mean "politics by another means."[292] The means need to be 'other' because the social movement is a tool wielded by those excluded from economic and political power[293]; its power instead derives from collective action coordinated outside of the sphere of the market or formal political institutions. If at one time social movement portended revolutionary upheaval, in contemporary social scientific discourse movements signify a form of collective action outside the formal political system but directed towards achieving greater inclusion within it.

The social movement's new ontological status—rational, legitimate, political, and dependent on resources—has generated what is referred to as a new social movement 'sector' or 'industry' within civil society, formed of social movement organizations (SMOs) and countermovement organizations. Scholars tracking and quantifying this industry have argued that "[a] social movement sector can emerge only in a society with a distinct political system"— namely, "capitalist societies with rational-legal procedures and dense networks of formal organizations."[294] The vibrancy and extent of this sector has led David S. Meyer and Sidney Tarrow to propose the idea of 'the social movement society', which posits that "the social movement form of representing claims is becoming largely institutionalized in advanced industrial democracies" to such an extent that it is now "part of the conventional repertoire of participation":

> Movements became a viable way of making claims in national politics when the consolidated nation-state assured its citizens regular means of communication, created standard but fungible identities, and provided challengers with uniform targets and fulcra for acting collectively.[295]

This argument draws on Charles Tilly's influential historical account of social movements to project back in time the new RMT understanding of movements to the very appearance of the form. Tilly argues that they are a distinctive form of collective political action that emerged towards the end of the 18th century in Western countries in response to processes of industrialization and urbanization and the expansion of parliamentary democracy, gained prominence throughout North America and Western Europe in the early 19th century, became a recognizable "ensemble of elements" in the mid-19th century as it spread throughout the Western world, ultimately coming to be called a social movement.[296] In this view, social movements

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[291] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 3.
[292] Johnston, *What is a Social Movement?*, 30.
[293] Almeida, *Social Movements*, 6.
[294] Buechler, *Understanding Social Movements*, 122.
[295] Meyer and Tarrow, "A Movement Society: Contentious Politics for a New Century," 4-5.
[296] Tilly, Castañeda, and Wood, *Social Movements*, 9-10.

appear endemic to political modernity itself, a feature of political life as it is known in Western, capitalist societies, even as the past two decades are singled out for their "sustained…heightened levels" of social movement activity.[297]

One of the few third sector reports on social movement funding to survey the social scientific literature on movements, tellingly, chooses the resource mobilization tradition as its intellectual guide, aligning itself with the new ontological paradigm articulated within social movement studies precisely because it secures a place for non-movement organizations like philanthropic foundations in the emergence of movements. Pastor and Ortiz choose an understanding of social movements broadly aligned with RMT because they want to frame knowledge about social movements as relevant to the work of philanthropic foundations: "The model suggests that charitable and philanthropic involvement in social change efforts establish a resource rich context for the expansion of social movement organizations."[298] As I will argue in this final section, and elaborate in the next chapters, the social movement of the 'ontological paradigm' inaugurated by RMT is advanced by progressive third sector professionals in and through the discourse of civil society. What RMT is for social movement scholars, civil society is for elite professionals. *This* is the concept of social movement, shared by social scientists and third sector professionals, that has become one of today's key "novel territorializations of political thought and action."[299]

Funding social movements is often justified as imperative and urgent as a response to the crisis of closing civic space across the globe.[300] Pronouncements about "the global mega-trend of closing civil society space"[301]—whether on account of the creep of market rationality in advanced liberal democracies or authoritarianism abroad—invite support for social movements as a remedy. For example, a 2014 statement coordinated by CIVICUS, "An Open Letter to Our Fellow Activists Across the Globe: Building from Below and Beyond Borders," paints a damning picture of the state of civil society and of overly bureaucratic and brand-conscious organizations within it, citing against this the possibility of building "a broad united front of social movements."[302] A Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report on "The Closing Space Challenge: How Are Funders Responding?" published the next year identified "shifting attention" to social movements as one way to counter the closing of civic space globally.[303] And the Funders Initiative for Civil Society (FICS)—discussed in Chapter 4—states on its website

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[297] Almeida, *Social Movements*, 2.

[298] Pastor and Ortiz, "Making Change," 11.

[299] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 327. Illustrative of this is the fact that between the publication of Raymond Williams' original *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* in 1976 and *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (edited by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris) in 2005, a new entry on 'movements' by Cindy Patton was added (see pgs. 224-225).

[300] The preface to the 4th edition of Michael Edwards' introductory text *Civil Society*, published in 2020, focuses on the crisis of civil society, namely: authoritarian populism, political polarization, privatization, and the bureaucratization of NGOs (viii).

[301] This phrase was used as part of a Human Rights Funders Network (then IHRFG) event on 22 January 2016 on "Closing Space for Civil Society." https://www.hrfn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/HumanRightsLab_SF2016_Takeaways.pdf.

[302] https://www.civicus.org/index.php/fr/medias-ressources/133-blogs/2353-an-open-letter-to-our-fellow-activists-across-the-globe-building-from-below-and-beyond-borders. See also the CIVICUS brief, "Shifting Power and Resources to Grassroots Movements" (July 2019).

[303] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "The Closing Space Challenge: How Are Funders Responding?"

that "there has been an unprecedented attack on civic space over the last twenty years, leaving our engine room of change unsafe and shrinking for many communities."[304]

On the one hand, this pervasive narrative in some sense represents a return to the pre-1970s social movement studies paradigm marked by strain and deprivation models: movements appear when civic space is closed, they are a reaction to the breakdown of the usual political process and therefore, to some extent, outside of the normal functioning of civil society. On the other hand, across these reports and the many others that invoke civil society and social movements, a kind of slippage occurs whereby the two are sometimes used interchangeably or linked together: remember that the editors of the *Alliance Magazine* special issue characterize social movements as a civic actor that, amongst others, are playing an increasingly central role in civil society as 'formal' third sector organizations take a back seat.[305] Social movements are *within* civil society, but, like antibodies, appear mostly when the civic body is ill. The conceptual yoking (if also differentiating) of civil society and social movements in progressive third sector discourse is made possible by the current, post-1970s understanding of social movements. As shown above, the 'ontological paradigm' of the social movement concept that solidified over the course of the 1970s and 1980s via RMT and the political process model, describes social movements as a form of collective action that emerges from civil society—made possible by the pre-existing groups, organizations, and associations in a community—but which is distinguishable from those civil society organizations, such as NGOs, which have proven incapable of addressing today's pressing crises or that have been corrupted by state and market influence.

This concept of social movement—as comprised of rational actors who have been excluded from economic and formal political power who organize, when the resources allow, to fight for the realization of their citizenship rights—is what enables progressive funders to understand their support for social movements *as support for civil society*. As Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato argue, "it is civil society, with its intermediary and autonomous associations…that forms the terrain" on which social movements appear, and so an understanding of civil society "is indispensable to an adequate understanding of the logic, stakes, and potentials of contemporary social movements."[306] This conceptualization of social movements as inherent within and growing out of a strong civil society is crucial for understanding why progressive third sector actors—civil society's bank—have so readily identified social movements as something they can and should fund. These funders, additionally, recognize themselves as being part of civil society, even as they are formally government-sanctioned guardians of privatized public wealth—securing civil society through the support of social movements is also about funders securing a structural position in society for their own institutions.

Without civil society, in this interpretation, we are unlikely to see social movements flourish. At the same time, this account of the social movement-civil society relationship clearly distinguishes CSOs and movements: the latter form on the terrain of the former. This understanding is also clearly indebted to the contemporary itinerary of the social movement concept, which understands movements to be, in the words of Calhoun, "a form of collective

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[304] https://www.fundersinitiativeforcivilsociety.org/how-can-we-defend-and-expand-civic-space/. The almost universally positive connotation of 'civil society' in these third sector discourses should be scrutinized. As Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann notes, the post-WWI history of civil society in Italy and Germany shows us that "a vibrant associational life could entail antidemocratic effects" ("Democracy and Associations in the Long Nineteenth Century," 299).

[305] Mahomed, Hopstein, and Krämer, "Overview: Entering the funding arena," *Alliance* (June 2020), 28.

[306] Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 497, 492.

organization transposable across issues and populations."[307] Third sector actors today recognize a civil society sphere made up of a range of different organizational forms seeking social change. The evolution of the social movement concept has allowed for another layer of differentiation to sharpen in the funders conceptualization of the field: in the 1960s' movement moment it was the issue that became attractive to progressive third sector actors, leading foundations to support movements; grantmakers were addressing issues (civil rights) through support of organizations later understood to be key to these movements (the NAACP). Today, there is an emphasis on funding movements *in general*; funders expect that social problems will have an associated movement attached to them, and this form of political action is what needs to be funded, instead of some other avenue for addressing the issue (such as an NGO, legislative change, or social enterprise). In third sector parlance, there is a felt need to move "from program to process," from building schools and wells to funding education and environmental movements. Funding the civil rights movement and funding civil rights were analytically indistinguishable at mid-century; today, funding women's rights and funding women's *movements* are sharply differentiated by progressive foundation staff. Each social issue can have an associated movement form because, according to the reigning conceptualization of social movements, so long as there are grievances in society there are the conditions for movements; all that is needed is the right combination or quantity of resources, foremost among them, the presence of existing organizations or associations. Rather than exceptional, spontaneous outbursts of an unruly mass society, social movements are regularized though non-institutionalized forms of political action by rational actors *rooted in civil society*.

If today's science of social movements tells us that support for civil society *is* support for social movement formation, commentators on civil society, for their part, argue that support for social movements is crucial for strengthening civil society. In *Civil Society and Political Theory* Cohen and Arato argue that,

> the concept of civil society indicates a terrain in the West that is endangered by the logic of administrative and economic mechanisms but is also the primary locus for the potential expansion of democracy under 'really existing' liberal-democratic regimes … Our point is that only a concept of civil society that is properly differentiated from the economy (and therefore from 'bourgeois society') could become the center of a critical political and social theory in societies where the market economy has already developed, or is in the process of developing, its own autonomous logic … Thus, only a reconstruction involving a three-part model distinguishing civil society from both state and economy has a chance both to underwrite the dramatic oppositional role of this concept under authoritarian regimes and to renew its critical potential under liberal democracies.[308]

The 'dramatic oppositional role' that distinguishes civil society, they go on to argue, could ideally derive from the work of social movements. For Cohen and Arato, social movements "abando[n] revolutionary dreams in favor of radical reform," exemplifying a kind of "self-limiting radicalism"; social movements are "projects for the defense and democratization of civil society that accept structural differentiation and acknowledge the integrity of political and

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[307] Calhoun, *The Roots of Radicalism*, 43.
[308] Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, vii-iv.

economic systems."[309] Cohen and Arato's thesis thus aptly describes the political vision of progressive third sector actors today—what I describe in Chapters 3 and 4 as *movement liberalism*—and the role of the concept of social movements within it. Like these political theorists, the funders discussed in this dissertation recognize social movements as possessing a form of power that is distinct from that wielded by market actors or the state, but strong enough to hold them accountable. They also recognize a need to distinguish movements from the discourses of social capital used by advocates of unregulated markets to make their own case for the benefits of a flourishing civil society in place of paternalistic state intervention.[310]

In this view, social movements need a strong civil society to form, and a strong civil society needs social movements to fend off the encroachment of market and state in order to retain its 'critical potential' to bring about transformative-though-not-revolutionary change. This mutually advantageous relationship links the two concepts so closely that in professional third sector spaces they sometimes come to be used interchangeably. Even in some academic conversations the concepts are inching closer together: perhaps the leading social movement scholar in Europe, Donatella Della Porta, has recently written about the "SMOization of civil society—that is, the hybridization of more established civil society organizations into social movement organizations."[311] Della Porta argues that, going forward, scholars of civil society and of social movements should learn from each other's theoretical tools and explanations.[312] At the same time, as the following chapters will show, funders require that the two concepts be differentiated: by distinguishing social movements from other social change tools, frameworks, and discourses, funders are then able to invoke movements as the more political, authentic instantiation of civil society (the appropriate *means*), one made to the measure of the crises at hand (at the appropriate *scale*). The distinction between an issue and the social movement-approach to addressing it allows third sector organizations to point to and claim allegiance to a more oppositional civil society. Progressive philanthropic elites are describing movements as inside-outside figures: movements appeal because they can be articulated as beyond the reach of government and market, but then need to be articulated as nevertheless inside civil society in order to redeem not just civil society, but also, as I will argue in Chapter 4, the project of liberal political modernity more generally.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that from within the problem-space of the late 20th and early 21st century third sector in the United States—in which the role of producing innovative and large-scale social change is being usurped by market forces as the lines between state, economy, and civil society become increasingly blurred—emerges an profound interest in supporting social

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[309] Cohen and Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 493.

[310] Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 175.

[311] Donatella Della Porta, "Building Bridges: Social Movements and Civil Society in Times of Crisis," 938. Della Porta's article perceptively points to a trend that moves in the opposite direction of the much more commonly identified (and lamented) NGOization of social movements.

[312] An earlier attempt to think (national) social movements and civil society together is Debra Minkoff's "Producing Social Capital" (1997). Minkoff suggests that the two concepts have been held apart because proponents of civil society view social movements as rooted in conflict and organized around (or even generating) "social cleavages," whereas grassroots civic organizations are said to build social capital by transcending and integrating particularistic identities into thick networks of citizens (609).

movements, understood as a self-limiting form of radicalism that promises to make civil society more oppositional to state and market power. In other words, assimilating the 'social movement form' to the broader category of civil society constitutes the discursive terms on which social movements are understood to be available for funding or support by progressive third sector organizations. But as the following chapters will show, far from being uncomplicated, this effort at assimilation raises a set of thorny questions for the sector. Indeed, purifying civil society of market encroachment while being the repository of private capital in civil society poses daunting hurdles. If the turn to supporting grassroots movements is in part about confronting the violence of privatization, what does it mean for the prototypical institution of privatization—philanthropic foundations—to be undertaking this project? If we return to the assertion by the Solidaire employee—"we're anticapitalists!"—we are left to ask: what kind of anti-capitalism is support for the *autonomy* of civil society from state and economy? Is 'reflexive influence' over those spheres the horizon of a politicized civil society for progressive third sector actors? How would such a vision relate to the political projects of the social movements offered funding?

A further set of questions also surface around what is lost when social movements are assimilated to civil society. Social movements are not always and in every tradition conceptualized as in, of, or for civil society. Partha Chatterjee's writing about 'politics in most of the world', for example, associates social movements with *political society* rather than civil society.[313] And when articulated within the discourse of civil society, social movements are separated sharply from related concepts like revolution, and are sutured tightly instead to nonviolence.[314] Even within the history of progressive social change philanthropy the two were not always so tightly linked: funding for civil rights activists in the 1960s was not generally framed as support for civil society in general—though other terms, like 'community', were important framing discourses. Civil society has not always appeared as both the means and end of supporting social movements, but is rather a historically contingent, partial, and particular project of discursively constructing social movements as in and for civil society as a regime of truth. To gain more specificity on what this entails, the next two chapters will turn to how purifying civil society through social movements becomes a *technical* project in the hands of progressive third sector elites.

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[313] See Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*.

[314] See Cox, "*Eppur Si Muove*," where he notes that "the study of revolutions and that of social movements are now routinely separated off as separate fields. Indeed, conventionally, 'social movements' are praised for not being revolutionary; for operating in 'civil society' rather than in the state, or for being non-violent, as against the violence assumed to be defining of revolutions" (127).

Chapter 2

Fantasies of Non-Instrumentality:
Knowledge and Power in Participatory Grantmaking

Over the past two decades the language of social movements has become increasingly prominent in the rhetoric of progressive, US-based third sector organizations. The trend started in the early 2000s and increased exponentially over the 2010's in the wake of the global financial crisis and Occupy movement, Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter protests, election of Donald Trump and subsequent Muslim ban and Women's March actions, high-profile climate change mobilizations, and the murder of George Floyd. In response to these events, several human rights, development, and philanthropic organizations began to convene around the question of how to support social movements. Enthusiasm for funding movements has risen to such a crescendo that one nonprofit consultancy released a report in June 2020 titled "Not Always Movements: Multiple Approaches to Advance Large-Scale Social Change."[1]

In the last chapter, I situated this trend in the problem-space of contemporary progressive third sector actors in the Euro-American world: the perceived boundary blurring between the state, the market, and civil society. I argued that progressive funders have become increasingly attracted to the idea of supporting social movements because, in their eyes, movements promise to redeem civil society from those state and market encroachments that progressives find disquieting. Social movements are supported in part by assimilating them to the concept of civil society. The next two chapters will analyze the conceptual tools and practices that progressive third sector actors use to navigate the complications that arise from this act of assimilation, such as their own contradictory position as state-sanctioned market actors within civil society.

In this chapter, I focus on the sector's response to a troubling contradiction that follows from this position: if many contemporary social movements confront unfettered privatization and the political and social consequences of neoliberal globalization, how can a prototypical institution of privatization—the philanthropic foundation—support movements? This contradiction is often presented by third sector professionals and critical scholars in terms of its consequence: the *cooptation* of social movements by liberal elites and their institutions.

My premise is that attending to the way professionals in elite liberal institutions work through this contradiction will help us specify key aspects of their political idealism as they confront calls for increasingly transformative change from activists, whose political visions hold out at once the promise of progressive legitimation and pose an existential threat to professionalized social change projects. While there have been several different responses to the problem of cooptation, I focus on an increasingly popular one called participatory grantmaking, the practice of involving grantees, representatives of a target community, or other relevant stakeholders in identifying community needs, informing grantmaking decisions, reviewing applications, or even deciding the allocation of grant money.

My argument focuses on two interconnected rationalities that undergird participatory grantmaking's promise to circumvent cooptation. The first is *non-instrumental relationality*. Through an analysis of the #ShiftThePower campaign—a progressive movement in the philanthropic sector that advocates for the adoption of participatory grantmaking, among other

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[1] See ORS Impact, "Not Always Movements."

reforms—I show how the relationship between power, expertise, and experience is redefined in ways that make it difficult (in theory) for elite foundation staff to wield knowledge as power over those disadvantaged individuals and communities who are the object of philanthropic largesse. To counteract the outsized power the cooptation critique suggests they possess, social change funders have started to insist on the unique agency of the subaltern—they turn to the discourse of experience to do so, arguing that lived experience of marginalization provides the disadvantaged with a kind of knowledge inaccessible to elites. Participatory grantmaking is attractive because it places grant decision-making in the hands of those with lived experience, thus moving funds to grassroots movements while preventing grantmakers from producing knowledge that can then be used to intervene in—and thereby coopt—those movements. While grantmakers acknowledge the need to understand their grantees and the social problems they seek to change, they simultaneously and intentionally resist producing knowledge that might facilitate an instrumental relationship between grantmaker and grantee; philanthropic foundations gain legitimacy through proximity to and association with progressive movements, but risk losing it if they fail to maintain a certain distance from them. The ideal and challenge for these institutions is to cultivate non-instrumental relationships of support or solidarity with grassroots movements.

The second rationality is the *non-hegemonic control of resources*. This idea is premised on the possibility of liberating capital from the hands of hegemonic elites and reformulating it as a neutral 'resource' available to the disadvantaged. Through an analysis of recent texts by philanthropic thought-leader Edgar Villanueva designed to help foundations #ShiftThePower, I show how capital is said to be 'liberated' through the self-critique of foundation elite who are called upon to reckon with their own privilege and renounce their ill-gotten control over wealth. In Villanueva's influential work, "decolonizing wealth" entails that beneficiaries of historical injustice (such as foundation elites) perform humility, complicity, and culpability by naming and specifying how their relationship to wealth has compromised their ability to see the world clearly. This complicity needs to be named and located in the person of the elite professional so that the *capital* they control can be recognized as itself neutral, and therefore ripe for redeployment as 'medicine' capable of healing the world.

I argue that both non-instrumental relationality and the non-hegemonic control of resources are necessary for participatory grantmaking to neutralize the possibility of elite cooptation through a conceptual partitioning of the space of capital (elite, expert, toxic) and the space of authentic political action (grassroots, experience, healing). Together, these ideas and the discourses, tools, and practices in which they are embedded articulate a vision of authentic politics as collective, grassroots power guided by the shared experience of suffering and protected from any association with wealth illegitimately gained through exploitation—it is a vision of politics as autonomous and self-directing, free from traces of instrumentalism, hegemony, or market influence.

I. **The Resource-Autonomy Contradiction, Cooptation, and Participatory Grantmaking**

Fear of coopting movements for social change looms large over progressive third sector organizations in the United States today. In the 50 or so years since 'social movements' emerged as a name for virtuous forms of collective political mobilization (previously the term denoted crowds, panics, and irrationality), a range of commentators have critiqued elite efforts to engage

grassroots movements. Both developments are a response to the fight for civil rights. On the one hand, widespread mid-century activism forced sociologists throughout the 1970s to positively reevaluate social movements as a form of collective behavior, describing them as rational and justified, and setting the stage for growing adoption of social movement rhetoric in the 21st century. At the same time, critical scholars and activists increasingly came to identify elite involvement with civil rights activism as having had a moderating effect on that movement, naming this dynamic the "capture," "cooptation," or "channeling" of movements.[2]

Megan Ming Francis, for example, chronicles how the NAACP, which in the early 20th century was a leading organization confronting racial violence, especially lynching, shifted its focus after 1930 to desegregating education. The shift came when a "severely under-funded" NAACP, struggling to win over big donors for this anti-lynching work, accepted its biggest donation to date from the Garland Fund, which tied its support to education-related rather than racial violence-related civil rights issues.[3] Karen Ferguson shows how four decades later, in the mid-1960s, the Ford Foundation began financing urban economic development, black studies programs at universities, multicultural school curricula, and African American arts and cultural initiatives, in the name of fostering "the creation of a new black leadership class that could be integrated into its elite model of American pluralism."[4] And Erica Kohl-Arenas reveals how the farmworker movement lead by Cesar Chavez to combat migrant poverty in California's Central Valley throughout the 20th century started as a community- and labor-driven effort to challenge structural conditions but morphed, in part through the influence of progressive grantmakers including the Rosenberg, Ford, and Field Foundations, into a poverty alleviation project "that exclude[d] questions regarding the structural inequality produced through industrial agriculture."[5] Protest, unionization, strikes, and syndicalist efforts to achieve radical social change were replaced by professionalized institutions promoting self-help programs focused on civic participation and community empowerment that ultimately "attract[ed] attention to the weaknesses and responsibilities of the poor and divert[ed] attention away from the capitalist processes that create poverty."[6]

Critics of progressive philanthropy often describe the dynamics on display in these examples through the Gramscian category of hegemony.[7] For Gramsci, elite interests are maintained not only through the force of political and juridical power, but also through cultural hegemony—the naturalizing as common sense of, and eliciting of popular consent for, partial

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[2] See Haines, "Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights"; Jenkins and Eckert, "Channeling Black Insurgency." McCarthy puts forward a more ambivalent view regarding the cooptation of environmental movements by philanthropic actors, see "Environmental Justice Grantmaking."

[3] Francis, "The Price of Civil Rights," 276-279.

[4] Ferguson, *Top Down*, 5-11. The foundation sought to manage the "challenge that the black freedom struggle presented to the nation's dominant ideas, practices, and institutions," by bankrolling and promoting "a balkanizing ethic for the black urban poor that emphasized the need for the continuing isolation of minority communities so that they could experience a cultural revitalization" and the "social development" necessary for their "eventual assimilation into the mainstream American political economy."

[5] Kohl-Arenas, *The Self-Help Myth*, 7.

[6] Kohl-Arenas, *The Self-Help Myth*, 25. This continues today: see for example the range of grants available by such major foundations as Mellon for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

[7] See Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*. For articulations of Gramsci's thinking as a resource for analyzing foundations, see Fisher, "The Role of Philanthropic Foundations in the Reproduction and Production of Hegemony"; Arnove, "Introduction" to *Philanthropy and Cultural Imperialism*, 2-3; Karl and Katz, "Foundations and Ruling Class Elites," 1-5; Roelofs, *Foundations and Public Policy*, 1-3; Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*, 10-23; Kohl-Arenas, *The Self-Help Myth*, 10-11, and Kohl-Arenas, "Critical Issues in Philanthropy."

and particular worldviews that sediment the status quo. In this framework, liberal foundations that work on social change divert radical energies by offering resources (with strings) to otherwise "restless and cheeky activists and intellectuals," turning them into "researchers, managers, lobbyists, and litigators"; focus on ameliorating some of capitalism's ills rather than challenging its legitimacy; offer grants to the most professionalized, reform-oriented organizations within a movement to encourage technical, expert-led solutions to social problems rather than conflictual ones; and promote "fragmentation, even rivalry" amongst organizations working on similar issues by making them vie for funding.[8] Cooptation, as these practices show, involves the "formalized inclusion of challengers into the authority system that they are challenging."[9] That authority system is called different things, but a popular label today is the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC), "the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements, since about the mid-1970s."[10] As the previous chapter showed, the NPIC flourished as part of the neoliberalization of the third sector in the 1980s and 1990s. The Gramscian critique of progressive philanthropy argues that movement cooptation is a key mechanism through which activists are tamed and integrated into the NPIC.

While the cooptation critique has become a prominent argument aimed at philanthropic foundations from the left, what has gone unremarked is the extent to which these criticisms have entered the progressive third sector's sphere of concern and rhetoric. Consider this passage from a report released in 2021 by the California-based Firelight Foundation, which works on the rights of children and youth in southern and eastern Africa:

> Funders and INGOs risk co-opting CBOs [Community-Based Organizations] by using them to implement their own external (often Global North) agendas. This risks instrumentalizing and even compromising CBOs' capacities to respond effectively to community priorities and their relationships of trust and collaboration with community members and local government stakeholders.[11]

When the external funder *uses* the community-based organization, the passage argues, we are in the orbit of an instrumentalization that compromises what makes CBOs valuable and effective in the first place, which is their local relationships. The instrumental reason of the Global North, whose experts draw up models by which locals are tasked with implementing the plans of the external actor, is doomed to fail because it compromises the capacity of the local actor to leverage their trust—orchestrating the conduct of authentic political actors renders their conduct inauthentic, and thus impotent. Across hundreds of reports, a picture emerges of grassroots organizations as possessing a powerful yet profoundly fragile capacity to effect authentic social change. This is the capacity that progressive funders believe must be protected from themselves.

While recognizing cooptation or instrumentalization as a problem central to their effectiveness and legitimacy as a progressive force in the world, funders simultaneously insist

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[8] Roelofs, "Liberal Foundations," 62, 70-72, 79.

[9] Coy, "Co-optation," 280.

[10] Rodriguez, "The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," 21-22. Michelle Oyakawa's study of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative identifies a tension between the populist political logic of social movement organizations and the technocratic political logic of the NPIC, especially funders ("Building a Movement in the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," 20-27).

[11] Firelight Foundation, "Community-Driven Systems Change," 18.

that movements have material needs.[12] As the President and CEO of a major Seattle-based foundation explained at a recent event on the NPIC, "I don't think philanthropy is necessary, but social movement leaders do need resources; I don't want to act like that's not true."[13] The Firelight Foundation report notes that it is insufficient resourcing in the first place that produces reliance on donors, thus making "CBOs susceptible to donor agendas, demands, and shifting priorities."[14] Stephanie Guilloud and William Cordery, employees of Project South, an Atlanta-based organization working to cultivate strong social movements in southern states, agree:

> If we change our 'product' to meet foundation mandates, our organizations might receive additional funding and fiscal security. But more often than not, we have also compromised our vision and betrayed the communities that built us to address specific needs, concerns, and perspectives.

But, they add, "we still need money. How are we going to get it?"[15] As these statements show, progressive third sector discourses on social movements limn the contours of a contradiction: grassroots organizations and movements need resources to avoid over-reliance on and therefore possible cooptation by foundations—as we saw in the case of the severely under-funded NAACP's turn to the Garland Fund—but the significant resources needed to avoid such over-reliance overwhelmingly come from foundations or donations by high-net worth individuals. There is an apparent disagreement between the need for resources and the valuing of autonomy.

A range of solutions have been proposed in response to this contradiction, all of which are different kinds of resourcing generated from and by the movement or affected community: giving circles, crowdfunding, membership fees, small income-generating projects like holding events or selling a service or product.[16] However, not only do these kinds of community-based fundraising initiatives often fail to generate fiscal security and thus autonomy,[17] they also leave progressive funders wondering where they and the capital they control fits into the social change project. This problem has led to several questions that preoccupy progressive third sector actors today: If foundations, even progressive ones, are inescapably part of an elite, Western, hegemonic system, how can they transfer their abundant resources to social movements without coopting them? How can institutions representative of the NPIC keep distance from grassroots activists while still providing support? Or as one report puts it, can "tax sheltered wealth…also help transform the systems that disproportionately oppress and burden Black, Indigenous and communities of color[?]"[18] The specter of cooptation thus heightens and spotlights this contradiction, while the contradiction makes cooptation seem less a possible risk than an inevitable outcome of elite involvement.

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[12] This reflects the widespread diffusion of the Resource Mobilization Theory's understanding of social movements, which centers the question of resources in its analysis of movements (outlined in Chapter 1), into professional third sector discourses.

[13] Speaker at "Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," a webinar hosted by Wellspring on July 22, 2021.

[14] Firelight Foundation, "Community-Driven Systems Change," 3.

[15] Guilloud and Cordery, "Fundraising is not a dirty word," 109. On the NGO selling a 'product' to donors dynamic, see Krause, *The Good Project*.

[16] A number of these options are highlighted in the contributions to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*.

[17] Catherine Corrigall-Brown notes that resource mobilization theory tends to assume that funding from members and constituents will be too little to sustain a movement precisely because movement participants tend to be underprivileged, but also that there is disagreement on this point. See "Funding for Social Movements," 331-332.

[18] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy: Strategies for Impactful Participatory Grantmaking," 3.

As we will see, this problem has been a profound "incitement to discourse" for progressive third sector professionals and institutions, whose ambivalence towards holding power and wealth has propelled a "discursive ferment" keen to name, detail, and communicate their self-described problematic subject position—to turn power and wealth into discourse about what it means to possess them.[19] The discourse they have produced, and that is the subject of this chapter, takes the rational form of "analysis, stocktaking, classification, and specification": power and wealth must not be merely condemned as immoral, but rather managed and regulated, "taken charge of by analytical discourses."[20]

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Participatory grantmaking offers one kind of answer to the resource-autonomy contradiction and the problem of cooptation, and an increasingly popular one: in 2018 it was named "Most Promising Sector Reform Effort" by *Inside Philanthropy*,[21] and major organizations including the Ford Foundation and MacArthur Foundation have called for its adoption and developed pilot programs of their own.[22] It is routinely listed as a key trend in the field, especially in North America and Europe.[23] An active Participatory Grantmaking Community, now with over 1400 members across 73 countries, was established in March 2020 to build a network of practitioners and to share best practices.[24] This community, further, draws on the wider participation industry that has emerged in recent decades, including an evolving suite of technologies designed to facilitate participatory processes.[25] Participatory grantmaking, in short, has become a "prominent strategy gaining traction in the sector."[26] The popularity of participatory grantmaking among major foundations is significant in part because foundations, which are growing rapidly and increasingly engaged with social change projects, have an outsized influence on best practices in the third sector as a whole.[27]

Participatory grantmaking is defined as a practice that "cedes decision-making power about funding—including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions—to the very communities that funders aim to serve."[28] A participatory grantmaking process, for example,

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[19] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 18, 20. "The Incitement to Discourse" is the title of the book's first chapter. Whereas for Foucault it is the prohibition on speaking about sex and desire that incites discourses concerning sex, for progressive third sector actors it is the—real, expected, or performed—aversion to desiring or holding power or wealth that incites discourses concerning power and wealth. Like in the Christian pastoral, there appears for these third sector actors a "fundamental duty the task of passing everything having to do with" their power and wealth "through the endless mill of speech" (21).

[20] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 24.

[21] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, xix.

[22] See Cardona, "Has the time come for participatory grant making?"; Banks, "A Work in Progress: Participatory Grantmaking in the Arts"; and Pitkin, "Moving the Rooms of Power."

[23] Delphine Moralis, the Chief Executive of the Philanthropy Europe Association, for example, names participatory grantmaking as part of the future of grantmaking. See McQueen, "Alliance digital event."

[24] For more on the PGM community, see https://www.participatorygrantmaking.org/about.

[25] See, for example, People Powered's "Guide and Ratings for Digital Participation Platforms," launched in February 2022. On the paradoxical way in which "authentic political experiences" promised by the "pure civic settings" of participatory processes are "carefully crafted" by an industry of expert "engagement professionals," see Lee, *Do-It-Yourself Democracy*.

[26] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 27.

[27] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 17-18. Foundations have proliferated in the past decades, from around 1000 in the 1960s to over 86,000 today; they inject over $76 billion into the nonprofit sector (22).

[28] GrantCraft, "Deciding Together: Shifting Power and Resources Through Participatory Grantmaking," 7.

might convene stakeholders in a community to identify grantmaking priorities for the foundation, and then ask known community leaders to form the panel that will review applications and make final grant decisions, sometimes with approval of the foundation's board.[29] In addition to modern day philanthropy's own participatory predecessors—such as mutual aid and tithing—Cynthia Gibson identifies a number of fields with deep participatory roots that inspire and ground contemporary participatory grantmaking: community organizing, deliberative democracy, community development, and more recently participatory innovations in public health, public journalism, and higher education.[30] The most significant antecedent to this practice, however, are the 'alternative foundations' established in the 1970s, such as Boston's Haymarket People's Fund and San Francisco's Vanguard Public Foundation. These public and community foundations, brought together as a network by The Funding Exchange in 1979, focused on advancing social justice causes and modelled a more inclusive approach that brought activists and community members to the decision-making table.[31] Throughout the 1980s-2000s the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and other larger, private foundations also periodically partnered with community foundations to bring local voices into the grantmaking process.[32]

Gibson notes that the alternative foundations that originated this practice adopted "the participatory values embedded in the era's social justice zeitgeist," namely *participatory democracy*.[33] A theory and practice popular throughout the 1960s and 1970s, participatory democracy promised to expand the remit of political participation and thereby empower citizens, democratize both the private and public spheres, and address inequalities that hamper democratic life.[34] It is worth dwelling on this theory because it is routinely invoked to provide theoretical depth to contemporary participatory grantmaking. Works like Carole Pateman's *Participation and Democratic Theory*, published in 1970, responded to the widespread appearance of 'participation talk' in political discourse. Pateman observed that this sudden interest in participation was striking from the standpoint of democratic theory, which afforded only a "minimal role" to participation or emphasized "the dangers inherent in wide popular participation in politics," associating it with the mass participation of mid-20th century totalitarian regimes.[35] It was in that context that Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1943) set the terms for democratic theory for the next quarter century. For Schumpeter, it was not popular participation but "the competition by potential decision makers for the people's vote" that defined democracy; citizen participation should be limited to casting votes.[36] Political scientists writing in the 1950s and 1960s tended to support Schumpeter's claims, reflecting the pervasive fear of totalitarianism in their argument that the appropriate level of participation is one that maintains the stability of the democratic system.[37] Participation for

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[29] For a number of detailed examples, see the documents collected for GrantCraft's "Participatory Grantmaking Mechanics" series: https://learningforfunders.candid.org/content/takeaways/mechanics-of-participatory-grantmaking/.

[30] Gibson, "The Historical Case or Participatory Grantmaking."

[31] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 29. For a history of The Funding Exchange, see Lurie, *Change, Not Charity*. For a detailed history and analysis of the Haymarket People's Fund, see Ostrander, *Money for Change*.

[32] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 29.

[33] For the ascent of participation discourses, see Baiocchi and Ganuza, *Popular Democracy*, and chapter one in this dissertation. Other terms include participatory ethnography, participatory budgeting, participatory design (the list goes on).

[34] Hilmer, "The State of *Participatory* Democratic Theory," 48.

[35] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 1-2.

[36] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 4-5.

[37] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 7.

most 20th century democratic theorists thus functioned to protect the individual from over-zealous leaders, who could be removed from power through elections.[38]

Pateman challenges this elite account of democracy by reading three modern political thinkers—Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, and G.D.H. Cole—to unearth a more robust account of participation's role in democratic life. Drawing on these thinkers as well as contemporary empirical studies of workplace participation, Pateman argues that properly participatory theories of democracy are grounded in participation's "educative function." People are "socialized" to participate at higher levels of the democratic system by practicing participation in other spheres of life, such as and especially the workplace. For a polity to be truly democratic, it requires a "participatory society," one where "all political systems have been democratized and socialization through participation can take place in all areas."[39] In this account, democracy is less the purview of elite actors held accountable to the masses through elections and more the right of every citizen exercised across multiple spheres of life, including the home and workplace, and through which the competency and will to take an active role in collective self-government would be developed.

Pateman presents participatory democracy as a mode of political life that takes democracy back from elites and returns it to everyday citizens. Given this, one might assume that participatory grantmaking, which has been described as "a return to democracy's roots," an experiment with "philanthropic populism,"[40] and as counteracting the "undemocratic nature" of foundations,[41] would track closely with the logic behind participatory democracy. I have offered Pateman's account of this logic to show what does and does not carry over to participatory grantmaking. As a recent report by Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy: Strategies for Impactful Participatory Grantmaking" (2021), explains:

> The theory of change behind participatory grantmaking is that by decentering the traditional decision makers (wealth holders, trustees, program officers, etc.) in charitable grantmaking and redistributing that power and authority to community leaders and/or subject matter experts, that the community governance structure will achieve greater impact through their grantmaking based on their proximity to directly impacted communities and their understanding of the systemic challenges affecting underserved populations.[42]

While the primary power of and justification for participatory democracy is its promise to build the democratic capacity of citizens—its educative function—the central argument of participatory grantmaking hinges on the practice's promise to mobilize the knowledge and capacity that citizens already possess in order to achieve greater impact. The effect of the decision-making process on socializing individuals into a democratic ethos is replaced by an emphasis on the effectiveness of the decision that is arrived at to ameliorate some social ill. Redistributing power to the community is then justified on the grounds of efficacy (greater proximity of the decision maker to the social ill will result in greater impact) rather than on the

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[38] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 14. We can see that participation in this itinerary already points to an authenticity or purity to be protected from political elites out of step with the general populace. [TK add some bibliography on Pateman and reception]

[39] Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 42-43.

[40] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, xviii.

[41] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 26.

[42] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 4.

idea that actively involving people in the project of collective self-government is a good in itself (democracy is a taught, learned, and practiced good). As will become clearer over the course of the chapter, the disciplinary power implied by participatory democracy's educative function—which seeks to alter the behavior of a population by instilling in them a desire for and ability to engage in democratic life—is something to which progressive third sector professionals advocating for participatory grantmaking remain resistant because of their inclination to recognize and respect the inherent knowledge that grassroots political actors are said to always-already possess.

This difference between educating citizens and arriving at effective decisions by leveraging citizen knowledge is most forcefully produced through the emphasis in participatory grantmaking on the importance of proximity. Thus "Powershift Philanthropy" insists that the proximity of those making funding decisions to the issue being addressed is key to the "democratization of power."[43] Advocates are careful to draw a line between *participatory philanthropy*—defined as any number of mechanisms for increasing grantee involvement in the funding process—and *participatory grantmaking*, which refers more narrowly to grantee control over the decision about how grant money is allocated. The field currently follows the lead of Cynthia Gibson's research, which points to four kinds of participatory activities that connect grantees and grantmakers:[44]
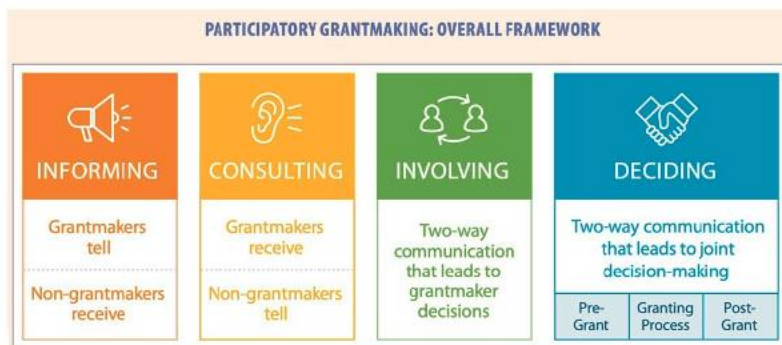
Fig. 1. Cynthia Gibson's influential typology of participatory forms in organized philanthropy.

While Gibson insists that this is a descriptive account of the practice and its range, others make more prescriptive declarations. Consider two recent statements:

> Creating processes that only solicit input and feedback from the community are not transformative and therefore not participatory grantmaking. If a foundation-initiated process does not engage community members as active decision makers in the grantmaking strategy, process or final grant award decisions, then the foundation should reconsider whether the project is truly participatory grantmaking.[45]

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[43] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 5.

[44] Gibson's research has been extremely influential amongst practitioners and is considered by many to be the "seminal research on the topic" (Husted, "Foundations for Change?" 27).

[45] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 17.

Participatory funding is the process of shifting decision-making power over grantmaking or investing to the very communities most affected by them. It's a structural fix to the broken power dynamics in traditional funding—a way to change philanthropy and impact investing from closed, opaque and expert-driven to open, transparent and community-driven.[46]

While Gibson's fourth category, 'Deciding', stresses two-way communication and joint decision-making, most participatory grantmaking proponents assert that truly shifting power will mean giving up decision-making authority entirely to the community. Kelly M. Husted, author of one of the few academic studies on the practice, defines participatory grantmaking as "external stakeholders—with lower positions of power relative to foundations—having decision-making authority over a foundation's grantmaking processes and grant funding allocations," and notes that, "key to this definition…is that external stakeholders with lower positional power are not merely consulted or involved in decisions but that they have decision-making authority."[47] The "Powershift Philanthropy" report's assessment of the participatory grantmaking initiative of the Environmental Justice Resourcing Collaborative, a $50 million program of the Kataly Foundation, describes it as working "in the spirit of the 'defer to' approach" in which nine women of color leaders "were given full control and authority to determine how to resource environmental justice organizations, at what amount and through whatever process they deemed appropriate."[48]

As these reports insist, true power-shifting involves changing who decides where the money goes. But as the remainder of the chapter will show, to make participatory grantmaking sound plausible and effective requires at least two further moves. The first is a theory of power that explains how power can shift from one group (the funder) to another (the grantee or community). The second is a conception of wealth that allows it to be redeployed in non-hegemonic ways as a neutral resource.

II.   #ShiftThePower: Expertise, Experience, and the Politics of Knowledge

Participatory grantmaking is one of the practices championed by the #ShiftThePower campaign, a movement within the third sector seeking "reform of the top-down system of international development and philanthropy."[49] The hashtag was introduced in 2016 by the Global Fund for Community Foundations to promote their Global Summit on Community Philanthropy, a space to convene the grassroots grantmakers, community foundations, and women's and environmental funds often overlooked in mainstream philanthropy. The goal was to use advocacy around community philanthropy as a way into a larger conversation about *power*, which has become the cornerstone of progressive philanthropy's rhetorical edifice over the past decade. Specifically, the ambition was to both shift power to people-led initiatives, and to recognize the power—the "knowledge, skills, networks"—that those people already held.[50]

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[46] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 50.
[47] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 28.
[48] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 11. For more on the initiative see: https://kataly.medium.com/environmental-justice-resourcing-collective-c418096d9615.
[49] "Who Are We?," https://shiftthepower.org/about-us/.
[50] https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/what-we-stand-for/shiftthepower/.

Today #ShiftThePower is a widely circulated hashtag invoked to signify work contributing to this philanthropic and development sector reform movement, and has a loose organizational existence in the form of a website that officially lists as members several major regional philanthropic professional networks, groups such as CIVICUS, and the Participatory Grantmaking Community already mentioned.

#ShiftThePower has also released a "Manifesto for Change."[51] The manifesto argues for prioritizing the values of equality, democracy, sustainability, and solidarity; casting off frameworks like international development that are "defined by money and power" and addicted to quick solutions; replacing "capacity building" by external actors with efforts that "unlock the inherent power of communities" such as community organizing and movement building; ensuring that "external funding recognizes, respects and builds on local resources and assets"; moving past "money as the central driver of change" and instead valuing "non-financial assets and resources" like knowledge and trust; and through all this, achieving a future "that is negotiated, participatory, and widely owned and which is developed through values and processes based on movement generosity rather than the success or failure of one organization over others." Even major government development agencies controlling billions of dollars invoke this framework; the project lead for USAID's New Partnership Initiative recently said that localization, a key term for the Initiative, "is more than making more awards to local actors. It's about shifting the power inside the agency."[52]

The reports, webinars, op-eds, and manifestos on the need to shift the power and that point to participatory grantmaking as a mechanism for doing so rarely offer theoretical elaboration on *how* this will work in practice, despite the fact that 'mapping power' has become something of a cottage industry in the progressive third sector. If two decades ago Kim Fellner, director of the National Organizers Alliance, could state unequivocally that "civil society without power analysis is the opiate of the funding class," today power analysis is all the rage among just this class.[53] Consultants are enlisted, reports published, models developed, and webinars convened all in the name of 'mapping power in the sector'. And yet, the definition of power remains unclear. The power held by funders is most frequently associated with control over resources, while the 'inherent power of communities' appears to invoke a set of capacities or attributes such as knowledges and skills, access to networks and movements, and other non-financial local 'resources and assets' like trust (recall the Firelight Foundation's argument that the capacity of community-based organizations to effect change is rooted in the trust they accrue within communities).

It is important that the power attributed to elites is something transferable (control over wealth, decision-making) while the power attributed to grassroots actors is an ambiguously non-transferable inherent *capacity or ability* (knowledge, skill, trust). Reconstructed from these statements, the logic of shifting the power looks like this: In the typical grantmaker-grantee relationship, the grantmaker possesses the capital, reviews information about a social problem provided by in-house experts or external consultants, and decides which grantees to support. The grantmaker holds capital-power, knowledge-power, and decision-power. Arguments for participatory grantmaking hinge on the assertion that the power of decision should reside with those who have the most immediate, authentic experience of the problem at hand; decision-

[51] https://shiftthepower.org/more-than-a-hashtag/manifesto-for-change/.
[52] For more on USAIDs New Partnership Initiative, see https://www.usaid.gov/npi. For a critique of localization pointing out it's depoliticizing potential, see Mohan and Stokke, "The Politics of Localization."
[53] Faber and McCarthy, "Introduction," 9.

power must be ceded to the grantee, or a representative of the community affected by the social problem, now understood to be the rightful bearer of knowledge relevant to identifying the most effective solution to that problem.

Whereas in typical grantmaking all three kinds of power reside with the grantmaker, in participatory grantmaking the worldview is different: capital-power resides at first with the grantmaker, knowledge-power resides *always and only* with the grantee or affected community, and decision-power is something transferable. No longer does the right to decide belong to those with capital (because it is their money), but to those with knowledge (because they know what to do with it). Through this change in understanding about who deserves decision-power, the elite foundation-employed expert or consultant is rendered superfluous: the only solution worth funding is one accessible only to those with experience of the specific harm or problem. The assumption is that true knowledge comes from experience of a harm because social reality is too complex to be effectively captured by those who possess second-hand knowledge or whose relation to knowledge is mediated by bureaucratic or institutional structures, or the ideological blinders of a hegemonic subject position.

The problem with this account is that it describes the destination without explaining how to get there. The elephant in the room is the fact that, in the context of private philanthropy, the power to decide can always be shifted back to those who control the capital. It is not lost on advocates that most participatory grantmaking models require "funders and donors to opt-in to funding in such a way…[F]oundations can still decide not to participate in this model of fundraising. The power dynamics do not ultimately shift until a funder has agreed to participate in this project."[54] This is one of the reasons why Pateman's account of participatory democracy doesn't articulate smoothly with participatory grantmaking. In Pateman's account, participation at different levels endows citizens with experience that then helps them more fully engage in democratic processes of collective self-government and the forms of power that attend such processes. It is an account in which the location of power remains stable (democratic political processes) and those excluded are invested, through education, with greater access to it. Arguments for participatory grantmaking, differently, conceptualize the practice as a means by which to shift power in philanthropy from foundation professionals to affected communities— removing the power of the hegemonic elite and relocating it to those on the margins of society. But it is hard to argue that power has really been shifted in any substantive way if the power of decision is delegated to grantees at the pleasure of the grantor.

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The difference between the theory of participatory democracy and the logic of participatory grantmaking elaborated above directs us towards the location and definition of knowledge as central to the project of philanthropic reformers. It is on the grounds of *knowledge*, not the principles of participatory democracy, that power is to be shifted in the sector. Advocates for participatory grantmaking, I argue, are advancing a wider conceptual argument about the knowledge required to solve social problems. Whether or not a foundation opts-in to this funding model, they will have to contend with the shifting conceptualization of social change circulating in progressive third sector spaces. According to that conceptualization, the complexity and contingency that mark social reality are such that elite, top-down, bureaucratic, expert-led social change projects *lack the capacity* to effectively use capital to advance their institution's goals.

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[54] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 8.

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The knowledge about cause and effect in the context of complex social interactions is characterized in this model as privileged knowledge inaccessible to the typical decision-makers in foundations; without this privileged knowledge, it is difficult for such elite, capital-possessing actors and their institutions to make effective grant allocation choices *or*, crucially, to instrumentalize, influence, channel, moderate, or otherwise coopt the selected grassroots organizations. The capacity to know, and thus to be able to act on that knowledge (to exercise the power to decide), permanently belongs to the disaffected.

While advocates of participatory grantmaking often lead with an ethical argument—people today are "demanding more accountability and transparency from established institutions" and so democratizing philanthropy is a good in itself[55]—they spend most of their time elaborating the greater efficacy of the new practice.[56] On top of being "the right thing to do," participatory grantmaking has the potential to "improve funding decisions and outcomes."[57] The first argument is alone insufficient, because the power imbalances in the third sector are "so entrenched that dislodging them will require much more than just abstract appeals to democracy"—appeals will also need to be made to outcomes and to the idea that "public challenges are too complex for experts or institutions alone to resolve."[58] Such public challenges routinely stymie today's institutional and billionaire philanthropy, which is described as "paternalistic," "ambitious," "top-down," "elite," and infused with market logics that encourage an unnuanced, "dry, dispassionate, technocratic approach to fixing complex and messy human problems."[59]

This second argument about efficacy is rooted in an *epistemological* claim: lived experience trumps expert knowledge; experience *is* expertise. Redefining the locus of knowledge in this way is the essential conceptual move in efforts to 'shift the power' of institutionalized philanthropy, and it is everywhere in the rhetoric of participatory grantmaking. Cynthia Gibson says that public challenges "require partnerships with people who can bring their lived experience to bear in making important decisions about their lives, communities, and futures."[60] Jennifer and Peter Buffett of the NoVo Foundation insist that "we find expertise and solutions…close to the ground, close to experience. The communities who have direct experience of an issue are by far the best experts on it."[61] Some organizations have developed whole programs on this premise: in 2018 the UK's National Lottery Community Fund started a Leaders with Lived Experience Pilot Programme to rectify the fact that "historically lived experience has been marginalized, with professional and learnt experience dominating civil and wider society."[62] The authors of *Letting Go* agree: "The social sector thinks about 'expertise' in a limited way," tending to "place high value on what we'll call white-collar expertise, the kind that comes with a diploma and fancy title."[63] They suggest that "there is significant quantitative

[55] Gibson, "The Historical Case for Participatory Grantmaking."

[56] As the authors of *Letting Go* argue, there is an 'inside argument' and 'outside argument' for participatory grantmaking: the first "focuses on efficacy and outcomes" and hinges on the idea that "shifting decision-making power will result in better decisions" (63) while the second "focuses on the moral dimensions of participatory decision-making," specifically tying "participatory funding to broader movements for justice and equity" (64).

[57] Gibson, "The Historical Case for Participatory Grantmaking."

[58] Gibson, "The Historical Case for Participatory Grantmaking."

[59] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 6-12.

[60] Gibson, "The Historical Case for Participatory Grantmaking."

[61] Buffett and Buffett, "Forward" to *Decolonizing Wealth*, xii.

[62] Paterson, "Leaders with Lived Experience Pilot Programme."

[63] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 64.

evidence that bringing in the perspective of people with lived experience leads to better and more informed decisions," pointing to participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as an example.[64] Appeals to experience are consistently juxtaposed with professional expertise as the latter's authentic, truer, more nuanced other, capable of appreciating the complexity of social problems.

These terms form the rhetorical terrain on which the progressive third sector's politics of knowledge is played out today, and they respond to a history of mobilizing knowledge that has been a defining feature of institutionalized philanthropy in the United States since its inception in the early 20th century. As Ellen Condliffe Lagemann shows, the Carnegie Corporation, one of the most influential Gilded Age philanthropic institutions, was a central actor in the emerging politics of knowledge at that time, as different kinds of knowledge became increasingly essential to the economic and administrative activities of a large state developing at the end of the 19th century. In the move from industrial state to postindustrial state, "knowledge joined land and capital as a critical national resource."[65] This politics of knowledge revolved around the questions of which fields would become authoritative and associated with policy-relevant expertise, which professional groups "would become the key knowledge-producing elites," who could gain access to these professions, and how those experts would control the communication and circulation of their expert knowledge among the wider citizenry.[66] Condliffe demonstrates that the Carnegie Corporation's "self-imposed mandate to define, develop, and distribute knowledge was, in a sense, a franchise to govern."[67] Thus in its early years the Corporation gave large institution-building grants to "establish centers of public policy expertise."[68] Following the ideas of uplift popular among early 20th century American liberals, the policies adopted largely involved disseminating the great books, fine arts, and overall sensibilities of the elites to the masses[69]—thus Carnegie's passion for building public libraries. But this public element was outweighed by the way the Corporation's advancement of highly specialized knowledge actively discouraged the public from participating in policy formulation.[70] It is not difficult to see how the politics of knowledge found in early foundation history confirms the claims of Gramscian critics about the hegemony of professional philanthropy, education being one of the main institutional axes of cultural imperialism. Even contemporary political theorists purportedly worried about philanthropy's undemocratic nature tend to isolate knowledge production as its remaining legitimating feature. Rob Reich's *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy Is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better* (2019) seeks to redeem foundations against their critics on the grounds of what he calls a discovery argument:

> Because of their size and longevity, foundations can operate on a different and longer time horizon than can businesses in the marketplace and elected officials in public institutions, taking risks in social policy experimentation and innovation that we should not routinely expect to see in commercial firms or state agencies.[71]

[64] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 65.
[65] Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 4.
[66] Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 5.
[67] Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 6.
[68] Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 7.
[69] Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 7.
[70] Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge*, 11.
[71] Reich, *Just Giving*, 152-153.

Foundations are a democratic society's "risk capital," serving to "stimulate innovation" in social policies that can then 'audition' before a democratic public.[72] Reich's work attempts to retain foundations' historic claim to policy expertise while reformulating it in a more democratic register.

While the foundations underwrote the development of entire disciplines, breakthrough medical research, and the research university throughout the twentieth century, they have also come under fire for their self-appointed role as public policy knowledge-bank. Linsey McGoey's exposé on the Gates Foundation's dominance of the public health sector is representative of an increasingly prominent argument along these lines. McGoey excoriates the foundation's 'high modernist'—and largely failed—schemes for large-scale improvement of global health outcomes, invoking James C. Scott's critique of central planning. Failing to embrace local knowledge, she points out, leads to pseudo-scientific, "purposefully myopic strategies" that inevitably fail.[73] Bruce Sievers, also drawing on Scott, writes that the problem with philanthropy's obsession with technical knowledge

> lies in its assumption that the epistemology of philanthropy should aspire to the classical notion of *episteme* (certain theoretical knowledge), which is applied to reality through *techne* (technical intervention), as in the methods of natural science, rather than to the use of *mētis* (practical, local knowledge), which emerges from practical experience and involves the exercise of judgment rather than calculation.[74]

Dwelling on these distinctions helps illuminate what, exactly, appeals to experience in the third sector are doing. According to Scott, *techne* is knowledge that "can be expressed precisely and comprehensively in the form of hard-and-fast rules, principles, and propositions," is often "based on logical deduction from self-evident first principles," and is universal.[75] *Mētis*, on the other hand, represents "practical skills and acquired intelligence" used to respond to a shifting "natural and human environment"—like piloting a ship, shearing a sheep, or engaging in diplomacy.[76] These activities involve adapting to unpredictable circumstances and "making the best out of limited resources," which requires experimentation and practice.[77] *Mētis* is more about rules of thumb than codified and communicated rules, and it "resists simplification into deductive principles" found in books which cannot be applied across "complex and nonrepeatable" environments.[78] It is a *local* kind of knowledge "most valuable in settings that are mutable, indeterminant (some facts are unknown), and particular."[79] The experience of a ship pilot on a particular river will always be "locally superior" to a pilot with general knowledge of navigation or rivers.[80]

Given the complexity of the social problems foundations seek to tackle, insist these critics, *mētis* fits the bill much more than *episteme* or *techne*. Community organizing in particular, says Sievers, is one of those local, changing, complex activities where *mētis* trumps

[72] Reich, *Just Giving*, 159-164.
[73] McGoey, *No Such Thing As a Free Gift*, 240.
[74] Sievers, *Civil Society, Philanthropy, and the Fate of the Commons*, 124.
[75] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 319-320.
[76] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 313, 315.
[77] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 315.
[78] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 316.
[79] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 316.
[80] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 317.

the kind of top-down, expert knowledge that progressive foundations came to rely on and champion throughout the 20th century because it has to contend with the inherent "randomness in human affairs."[81] In organizing, intuition proves more valuable than scalability or replicability—the advantages of *techne*.[82] *Mētis's* specific power is rooted in the "close and astute observation of the environment" by people who have a "direct stake in the results of close observation"; the marginal status of these people, which motivates their observations, experimentation, and immersion in what they observe; and their access, by virtue of membership in the community, to "a living, oral reference library for observation, practices, and experiments."[83] The "large repertoire of moves," "visual judgements," "sense of touch," "discriminating gestalt for assessing the work," and "range of accurate intuitions born of experience" that the skilled worker develops,[84] according to Scott, is exactly what advocates of participatory grantmaking think 'Leaders with Lived Experience' will bring to the philanthropic sector—they are the necessary means "for countering top-down solutions to societal challenges."[85]

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Invocations of experience over against technical knowledge wielded by elites has long been part of the resister's toolbox. As Craig Ireland argues, by the 1970s the language of experience was being widely deployed in the new social movements as "the pure ground of knowledge, the basis of an essentialized standpoint of critical awareness."[86] Ireland traces this investment in "the antihegemonic potential of experience" back to E.P. Thompson and the "culturalist current" in British Marxism. The challenge to the development of group consciousness and therefore agency posed by structuralism's disarticulation of experience and knowledge led these British Marxists to describe experience "as that which, by virtue of its prediscursive immediacy, radically demarcates itself from and therefore evades discursive or ideological mediation and determination"[87]:

> Just as for Thompson the immediacy of experience, that 'raw material' that consciousness elaborates in 'class ways' within a local culture, needs only to be inserted within a counterhistory in order for class consciousness to arise and agency to materialize, likewise certain feminist and subaltern endeavors call for a politics of experience…Much rides on experience, in other words, and because it is perceived as a potential fissure in an otherwise unassailable hegemonic order, it is imperative that it not be distorted by dominant ideological mediation.[88]

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[81] Sievers, *Civil Society, Philanthropy, and the Fate of the Commons*, 125.

[82] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 327, 323.

[83] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 324.

[84] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 329.

[85] Husted, "Foundations for Change?," 137.

[86] Ireland, *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience*, 1, 6; in the passage he is quoting Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Public Sphere," 468n64. But for a critique of Ireland's broader argument about the possibility of subaltern appeals to experience leading to "convulsive tribalism" or "biologism" (7) see Mah, "The Predicament of Experience." Sandra Harding discusses this same subject in terms of the rise of standpoint theory, which "revitalizes [the] central positivist assumptions in ways useful for the new social justice movements" (see "Philosophy and Standpoint Theory," 347).

[87] Ireland, *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience*, 11.

[88] Ireland, *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience*, 9.

Experience is important to theories invested in subaltern agency "because of its assumed unmediated proximity with materiality."[89]

But what happens when such experience-talk is deployed by those not party to the experiences in question, those who insist on the impossibility of their sharing in these experiences? What is distinctive in the case of third sector professionals is that these claims to the insight of the experienced and the power of their *mētis* are made by the bearers of the technical knowledge. This unusual reversal in the site and subject of articulation is what provides the conditions of possibility for the argument that giving up (or claiming to give up) *techne* and elevate *mētis* offers an answer to the problem of cooptation. Progressive elites grappling with their hegemonic status are distinctly motivated to articulate a space or form of subaltern agency untouchable by their own forms of power. The inability to access non-elite experience expressed by progressive elites is thus not like the 'crisis' or 'destruction' or 'fracturing' of experience in the modern world described by Benjamin, Adorno, or Agamben, or the challenge posed to the comprehensibility of unmediated experience by poststructuralists at the end of the 20th century.[90] In fact, if Joan Scott's influential "The Evidence of Experience" argued that historians who used experience as evidence inadvertently essentialize a pre-discursive unitary subject who does the experiencing, thereby failing to account for "the impersonal processes that construct the subject in the first place,"[91] progressive third sector actors elevate 'Leaders with Lived Experience' precisely because of their greater proximity to the impersonal processes acting on them; essentializing the experiencing subject is central to their effort to figure a subaltern subject whose agency (rooted in their knowledge) is otherwise inaccessible, unconquerable, and permanent.[92] It is against this idea that Scott militates, insisting that nothing, including experience, can escape linguistic mediation. But progressive third sector discourses have missed the linguistic turn; disarticulating knowledge and experience cannot fly in this world or it would risk introducing mediation and therefore opening the doors to cooptation.[93] Experience is evidence of not just superior knowledge, for third sector elite, but of the very existence of an essentialized grassroots actor to whom power can be shifted. Projecting unmediated experience onto this actor positions them as a non-replicable resource for solving intractable social problems, underwriting the argument for deferring decisions to them.

While McGoey and Sievers are perceptive in recognizing the value of James C. Scott's work for analyzing the third sector's politics of knowledge (especially given the shared history of high modernist social planning, development, and philanthropy in the 20th century[94]), what they miss is the anarchic impulse behind his investment in *mētis*, which figures local knowledge as non-instrumentalizable, and therefore the strangeness of the fact that the progressive edge of the sector in the 21st century has become so deeply involved in articulating the value of *mētis* and

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[89] Ireland, *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience*, 13.

[90] For a discussion of these lines of thought see Jay, *Songs of Experience*, chapters 6, 8, and 9.

[91] Jay's gloss of Scott, *Songs of Experience*, 3.

[92] As Martin Jay points out, 'experience' has often been a word gesturing "towards precisely that which exceeds concepts and even language itself. It is frequently employed as a marker for what is so ineffable and individual (or specific to a particular group) that it cannot be rendered in conventionally communicative terms to those who lack it…experience is often taken to be a non-fungible commodity" (*Songs of Experience*, 5-6).

[93] The kind of experience invoked in this rhetoric appears much more akin to *Erlebnis*, pre-reflective or revelatory experience, than to *Erfahrung*, more gradual experience accumulated through experimentation, in part because the latter's relation to mediation—the protocols of an experiment can be replicated, and the ensuing experience accumulated, by any subject—makes it subject to instrumentalization.

[94] On this see Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development*.

experience over *techne*. As Scott shows, the threatening thing about *mētis* is that, "because it is dispersed and relatively autonomous, [it] is all but unappropriable"[95] by the state or other wielders of *techne*. Because practitioners of *mētis* do not intend "to contribute to a wider body of knowledge" but rather to solve an immediate problem,[96] they tend to use vernacular measures that provide a "local, practical index," but which vary from place to place, ensuring "that *mētis* would be confusing, incoherent, and unassimilable for purposes of statecraft."[97] This is why the elimination of *mētis* is a precondition "of administrative order and fiscal appropriation and…of worker discipline and profit."[98] Powerful organizations from universities to the World Bank to city planners and corporations "have, to a considerable degree, made their successful institutional way in the world by the systematic denigration" of *mētis,* a central move in the "political struggle for institutional hegemony by experts and their institutions."[99] If *mētis* understood as such becomes the order of knowledge accepted by third sector organizations as central to progressive social change—as participatory grantmaking proponents argue it should—it holds out the hope of neutralizing the ability of elite, philanthropic institutions to wield knowledge-power as they have in the past, offering one solution to the problem of cooptation that so haunts progressive funders.

The campaign to #ShiftThePower in the third sector turns out to be a campaign to develop a script through which elites in the sector can narrate their lack of access to knowledge-power and locate that power as residing in the dispossessed. There remain tensions in this project. For example, in order to ensure that the knowledge born of experience is non-instrumentalizable, progressive funders, through this discourse, set the very terms by which knowledge has validity; they determine the criteria—grassroots, experiential, unmediated—by which knowledge is deemed valuable. #ShiftThePower campaigners simultaneously claim an inability to know 'the truth' specifically while reserving the right to define it generally. These funders also assume the "identity-politics belief" that "shared group experiences [lead] inexorably to a political position."[100] Finally, the very hashtag #ShiftThePower reveals their assumption that part of that subaltern political position would involve the pursuit of the same kind of power wielded by elites, rather than the eradication or transformation of such power itself; the language of shifting merely flips rather than rewrites the script. Thus while participatory grantmakers are in theory opposed to mediating grassroots politics, they nonetheless pre-define true knowledge as rooted in experience, this shared experience as the only grounds for authentic political action, and this political action as tied to the pursuit of elite power.

Because progressive foundations retain a mandate to fund certain causes—that is, to interact with organizations addressing such causes—their politics of knowledge leads them to the ideal of non-instrumental relationality; the task before them is to develop mechanisms whereby their capital can be transferred to marginalized communities and movements without instrumentalizing them. The #ShiftThePower campaign invests hope in participatory grantmaking because it is premised on the idea that the only grantmaking decisions that will be effective and have impact—and that are therefore justifiable to boards and investors—are those

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[95] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 335.
[96] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 324.
[97] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 323.
[98] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 335-336.
[99] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 332, 311.
[100] Jay, *Songs of Experience*, 177. See also McNay, *The Misguided Search for the Political*.

made by the individuals who have experience-based-knowledge, knowledge inaccessible to elite foundation staff. This politics and rhetoric of knowledge are thus the grounds upon which the power of decision is to be shifted. If foundation professionals are not making the decision about grants, they are not at risk of instrumentalizing the beneficiaries of those decisions, though they can still be said to be supporting them—to be in relation with the agents of authentic social change.

III.   Liberating Capital

The reconceptualization of knowledge-as-experience at the heart of participatory grantmaking goes some way towards addressing the problem of cooptation. However, several mechanisms of cooptation appear to operate regardless of who is making a funding decision. What happens, for instance, when those who experience poverty or some other form of social marginalization come to control wealth through projects such as participatory grantmaking? There still remains, in other words, the problem of the power of capital itself, the lure of which, according to the cooptation critique, draws activists towards more institutional formations and into competition with one another. As a leading participatory grantmaking advocate in the UK explains,

> There's some really interesting stuff around trauma and money…and like actually how do you give communities money without triggering loads of trauma…[I]s it fair to give somebody who's lived in poverty their entire life 100 million pounds, and say just spend it?...Funders talk about money like its Monopoly money…When you do participatory grantmaking, you'll get to a point in the decision, where often the community go "I don't want to do this, I don't want to make the call, I don't want to make the decision, this is really difficult and actually I don't like it." And we say go on go on go on, you've got the power now.[101]

Capital is routinely positioned as inherently toxic in participatory grantmaking discourse, and proximity to it comes with consequences. For instance, when the organization Right to the City (RTTC) developed a participatory regranting process led by a Resource Sharing Committee made up of members of RTTC's network (it operates in 45 cities across 26 US states), some participants "were nervous and hesitant about having to make grantmaking decisions and potentially tell an applicant 'No' and end up mirroring the same behavior and power dynamics of a foundation."[102] In both these cases there is discomfort in occupying the subject-position of grantmaker because of the toxic power relations it structures. Being a gatekeeper for capital inescapably aligns one with the elite power in need of being shifted. The anxiety evident in these activists' experience of participatory grantmaking begs the question: if you are swapping out the elite for the disaffected, isn't this just a changing of the guard, an inversion rather than a dismantling of the power structure?

Curiously, Justice Funders identified the RTTC process as a successful instance of participatory grantmaking that helped shift power and resources to grassroots organizations, despite the hesitation of the participants. I will argue in this section that, in their effort to position

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[101] Interview 16.
[102] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 10.

participatory grantmaking as a solution to the problem of movement cooptation, advocates of the practice make a second conceptual move: the transformation of toxic *capital* into a neutral *resource*. We've seen how in participatory grantmaking knowledge-power and decision-power jointly move to those with lived experience; now, capital-power joins these powers on the side of the disaffected community, but only after detoxification—after it is liberated from the control of the elite. How can participatory grantmaking strip capital-power of its hegemonic influences and reformulate it as a resource wielded unproblematically by grassroots activists? To answer this question, I turn to the writings of third sector thought-leader Edgar Villanueva.

It is hard to overstate Villanueva's influence in progressive foundation circles since the publication of his 2018 book *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance* (now available in a second edition). In the intervening years, Villanueva has established the "Decolonizing Wealth Project" (2018), which supports investments in racial healing and social movements, launched the "Liberated Capital" fund (September 2019) to support Indigenous and people-of-color-led social change work, released *Money As Medicine: A Guided Journal for Reflection and Action* (2020), consulted for Fortune 500 companies and major foundations, joined a number of boards (Mother Jones and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation), and delivered keynote addresses at countless conferences on shifting the power in philanthropy.
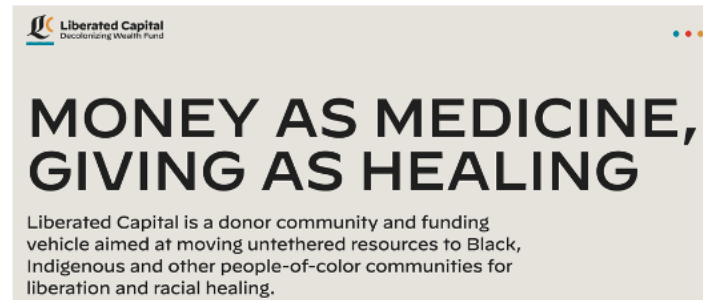
Fig. 2. Screenshot from the Liberated Capital website's homepage.

Across and through these activities, Villanueva weaves the languages of colonial trauma, reparations, social movements, healing, Indigenous wisdom, decolonization, and Christian ethics into a conceptualization of progressive philanthropy packaged as self-help for elites and as a path towards inclusion and advancement for the marginalized. This conceptualization is rooted in several interlocking claims. First, regardless of our particular identities, we are all infected with the "colonizer virus," which "urges us to divide, control, and exploit," especially when it comes to our wealth.[103] Those who center capitalism or neoliberalism in their analysis of philanthropy are "obscuring the real root of the problem," which is racism, white supremacy, and colonialism.[104] Second, those "forced to the margins are the very ones who harbor the best solutions for healing, progress, and peace, by virtue of our outsider perspectives and resilience. When we reclaim our share of resources, when we recover our places at the table and the drawing board, we can design our healing."[105] This is the valorization of experience discussed in

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[103] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 1.
[104] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 6.
[105] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 6.

the previous section.[106] Third, and most crucially, money can be used as medicine. Medicine in Native traditions, Villanueva says, "is a way of achieving balance," and so can be anything from a place to a dream to a word or an experience with a friend, so long as that thing is "filled with or granted a kind of mystical or spiritual power."[107] Anyone can use medicine, not just a healer, and in fact, "you don't choose the medicine…it chooses you."[108] Villanueva goes on:

> It has taken me a long, long time (patience is a virtue in Indian country) to accept that the medicine that has chosen me is money. Because, I mean, money? Come on. Money corrupts. Money is dirty, even filthy. Money is the root of all evil, doesn't the Bible say that?
>
> But what is money but a way to measure value, to facilitate exchange? And what is exchange but a type of relationship between people? Money is a proxy for the sweat we spent on growing food, sewing clothes, assembling electronics, coding apps, creating entertainment, researching and developing innovations, etc. It's just a stand-in for the materials we used, the services granted, the responsibility shouldered. Money is a tool to reflect the obligations people develop to each other as they interact. It's 'the measure of one's trust in other human beings,' as anthropologist David Graeber writes in his comprehensive book *Debt*.
>
> Materially, it's a bit of nickel, zinc, copper. It's a little linen, mostly cotton, some ink. It's basically Kleenex adorned with dead presidents. Actually, today mostly it's a series of zeros and ones. Bytes, data on screens. Imaginary. Harmless.
>
> And in fact, the Bible doesn't say money's the root of all evil. It says the *love* of money is the root of all evil—in other words, when we let it be more important than life, relationships, and humanity.
>
> I'm not saying there aren't problems with money when it's hoarded, controlled, used to divide people, to oppress and dominate. But that's not the money's fault. Inherently it's value-neutral. Humans have used money wrongfully. We've made money more important than human life. We've allowed it to divide us. That *is* a sin. We forget that we humans made money up out of thin air, as a concept, a tool for a complex society, a place-holder for aspects of human relations. We forget that we gave money its meaning and its power.
>
> Money is like water. Water can be a precious life-giving resource. But what happens when water is dammed, or when a water cannon is fired on protesters in subzero temperatures? Money should be a tool of love, to facilitate relationships, to help us thrive, rather than to hurt and divide us. If it's used for sacred, life-giving, restorative purposes, it can be medicine.
>
> Money, used as medicine, can help us decolonize.[109]

Throughout this passage, Villanueva labors to disenchant money in one way—to neutralize the taint it has accrued through its long, sordid association with wealthy people who have used it to

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[106] Elsewhere he recommends: "we need at least half of the people who make decisions about where money goes—at least fifty percent of staff, fifty percent of advisors, fifty percent of board members—to have intimate, authentic knowledge of the issues and communities involved" (Villanueva, "Forward," to *Letting Go*, xii).
[107] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 7.
[108] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 7.
[109] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 7-9.

divide and dominate—and reenchant it in another by investing it instead with a new kind of 'mystical or spiritual power,' the capacity to connect and heal. This latter capacity emerges when money is used by those 'forced to the margins' to advance 'healing, progress, and peace.' The root of the philanthropic sector's problems is not money—which is neutral—but the colonial and racist views of those who have historically exploited others for and with capital. In this account, it is *who you are*, much more so than *what you do*, that determines whether you can relate to money as a kind of capital-power that you perversely love, or as something neutral that can be made into a 'precious life-giving resource.' What is 'money' or 'wealth' when the possessing subject is the elite philanthropist becomes 'untethered resources' when moved to people-of-color communities (*Fig. 2*).

How is this 'untethering' of resources going to happen? Following from his analysis, Villanueva suggests that to "decolonize the institutions and processes around money" we need to change the people controlling the money, so that the wisdom of the margins can direct these resources towards healing.[110] So far we are in the territory of the #ShiftThePower campaign, which focuses on what the grantee has to offer—their special knowledge. But Villanueva's main tactic focuses on the funder. Creating the conditions for this shift of control involves soul-searching by the individuals and institutions currently in power, undertaken through seven steps: grieving, apologizing, listening, relating, representing, investing, and repairing (see figure 3). These steps are linked with corresponding activities in Villanueva's *Money As Medicine: A Guided Journal for Reflection and Action*. While the journal is for everyone, "if you are a philanthropist, an investor, a celebrity, a community leader, or a funds manager, someone who works in a foundation or a bank, you have a special responsibility to explore your relationship to money."[111] His project is asking: what does it mean to inhabit the subject-position of a problem while understanding yourself as part of the solution?[112]
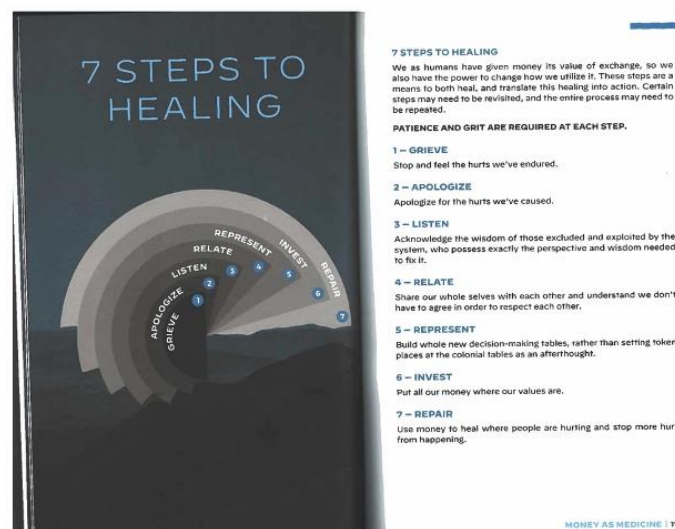
Fig. 3. Villanueva's 7 Steps to Healing, from *Money as Medicine*, pgs. 17.

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[110] Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth*, 9.

[111] Villanueva, *Money as Medicine*, 3.

[112] This formulation draws on Lisa Stevenson's description of Inuit people in norther Canada "becoming intelligible through inhabiting the 'subject position' of a 'problem'" (referring to the 'Indian problem'). However, rather than being "interpellated as a problem" by others, progressive foundation workers actively seek and describe at length how they occupy such a position. See Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 160.

The reader is asked to reflect on a series of questions to help guide them through the seven steps:

- How do you think the history of your people shapes your relationship to wealth?
- What attitudes and beliefs about money did you learn or absorb from your family?
- How has your organization harmed people and communities in accumulating wealth?
- To whom do I need to apologize for harm I have caused in order to advance my own interests?
- How do people in the communities that my organization serves feel about engaging with our organization? What symbolic, social, cultural, geographical, or physical barriers to access do they experience?[113]

Decolonizing wealth, the reader is told, will involve "[n]aming and redistributing the power you have acquired by your proximity to wealth."[114] At the same time, the reader is warned to avoid self-righteousness and the white savior complex, and to instead cultivate humility.[115] To decolonize wealth, those who currently possess it must, through self-reflection and historical reckoning, understand themselves to be beneficiaries of colonialism and racism, and recognize their unhealthy and unjust relationship to capital; this will help them to relinquish control over money so that individuals from marginalized backgrounds, who might have internalized the 'colonizer virus' but whose experiences of oppression nonetheless render them outsiders to the harmful system, can redeploy the capital as a resource that facilitates connection, relation, and belonging—that is, as medicine.
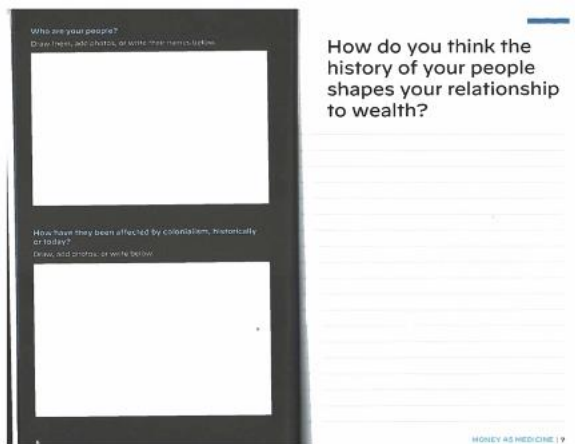
Fig. 4. Opening question from *Money as Medicine*.
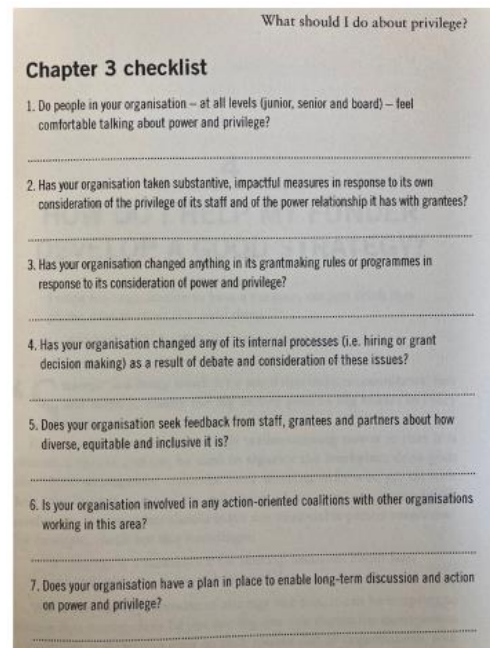
Fig. 5. A similar questionnaire from *Modern Grantmaking: A Guide for Funders Who Believe Better is Possible.*

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[113] Villanueva, *Money as Medicine*, 7, 20, 29, 34, 71. This is a non-exhaustive list of the questions.
[114] Villanueva, *Money as Medicine*, 11.
[115] Villanueva, *Money as Medicine*, 106.

Villanueva's guided journal is a self-help book for progressive elites.[116] The self-help genre, Heidi Marie Rimke explains, is an "individualized voluntary enterprise" to "alter, reform or transform the self, or some 'intrinsic' aspect of it," in the hopes of achieving "self-liberation and self-enlightenment" through the help of an external authority; guided by this external authority, one learns "to become an expert in some aspect of one's selfhood."[117] Self-help projects usually begin by insisting that the self-helper be honest with herself:

> The requirement to confess the truth about one's self is typically presented as an integral practice for self-diagnosis…Self-assessment scales, questionnaires and surveys located in self-help textbooks are meant to be scored in such a way that the 'good' (conscientious) person will/must present her/himself honestly.[118]

In the case of Villanueva's self-help guide, the confession being elicited has to do with the effects of wealth on the worldview of the privileged, much as the usurer was directed towards confessor manuals in the 12th and 13th centuries. The parallel is fitting in part because Villanueva invokes love of money as a sin, tapping into a Christian theological and moral tradition on the spiritual value of poverty.[119] In this tradition, usury signified "the unlawful surplus, the illegitimate excess" that is "a sin against *justice*," according to Aquinas.[120] Usury is in fact also "a sin *against nature*" because "it is against nature for money loaned to give birth to more money"; money, invented to facilitate exchanges and transactions, is "intrinsically unproductive," it should not multiply of its own accord.[121] The usurer makes money multiply by selling time—"the time that elapses between the moment he lends the money and the moment he is repaid" with interest—and time belongs to God.[122] Selling someone else's property is theft, and so usury is stealing from God. Centuries later, Villanueva invokes a similar critique of the philanthropic elite, those who love the benefits of their privileged control of someone else's property, the unearned wealth held by foundations, wealth maintained through investment income. Love of money and love of privilege are sinful.

As Rimke explains, this confessional moment of honesty with and about oneself involves a construction of a self through the mastery of a discourse; "self-disclosure actually becomes a constructed and tailored narrativization of the self."[123] The self 'scripted' through the third sector elite self-help exercises takes the form of the beneficiary—a figure, according to Bruce Robbins, who has appeared throughout the history of humanitarianism as a counterpart of the sympathetic

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[116] It is far from the only one. The following analysis also applies to texts like Karen Pittleman's *Classified: How To Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use It For Social Change* (2005), written for Resource Generation, and Chuck Collins and Pam Rogers' *Robin Hood Was Right: A Guide to Giving Your Money For Social Change* (originally published in 1977 and revised and reissued in 2000).

[117] Rimke, "Governing Citizens Through Self-Help Literature," 62. Rimke's Foucauldian account of the genre focuses on its role in promoting a concept of the self as responsible, autonomous, self-regulating, and open to the governmental techniques of advanced liberal democratic states (63). While this argument is interesting, more relevant here is her account of how self-help works not through a negative prohibition, but "by way of positive, productive application: the self-helper must be skilled in his or her own subjection" (63).

[118] Rimke, "Governing Citizens Through Self-Help Literature," 67.

[119] See Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*.

[120] Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life*, 26-27.

[121] Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life*, 29.

[122] Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life*, 39.

[123] Rimke, "Governing Citizens Through Self-Help Literature," 70.

but "detached, impartial spectator."[124] A beneficiary in this strand of humanitarian discourse recognizes that their fate "is causally linked, however obscurely, with the fates of distant and sometimes suffering others," a recognition that appeals to something "stronger than fairness or empathy."[125] The word *beneficiary* doesn't imply that you are being recompensed for a service or as part of an exchange, but has an amoral connotation: "you are rewarded by an impersonal structure, legal or bureaucratic, that doesn't need or want to know anything about you except that you happen to be in the right place at the right time."[126] Villanueva's self-help guide and others like it invite progressive third sector elites to recognize and name themselves as beneficiaries of an unjust system, and to come to terms with a "pained perception of a causal relationship between her or his advantages and someone else's suffering."[127]

Mastery of the discourse of the beneficiary is demonstrated in several ways, but perhaps most of all through professions of humility.[128] Humility indexes the triumph of the beneficiary's power of self-mastery over their unearned power of privilege. Performing humility in the form of publicly recognizing one's privilege and the limits of one's experiential knowledge—through land acknowledgements, personal histories, and power analyses—is the order of the day among progressive third sector professionals. If self-help is about enlightenment, in this case, one is to become enlightened as to the limitations of one's insight and knowledge. The proper endpoint is the assumption of humility—a kind of willful disempowerment. Elite subjects feel the need to be simultaneously (dis)empowered by technologies of the self. Power is complexly mobilized here. The self-help genre understands power to be "an inherent property to being" and the "site of all self-control," thus assuming that power is internal "and available for possession"; "the more power we have, the more strength we possess."[129] In describing "the self as a unified centre of personal agency which can act upon itself, others and the world," self-help exercises present "the individual as the sole ontological pivot of experience."[130] Thus while the power of a 'Leader with Lived Experience' is said to come from their unique knowledge about the world as we saw above (a capacity to learn from their unmediated experience), the beneficiary's power comes from knowledge about oneself and the humility to which it leads, which in turn allows them to cede power—and money—to those who can wield it to the greatest effect for all.

Third sector elites eschew what they figure as transferable power (material resources and decision-making) and instead embrace an internal kind of power-as-self-possession, while simultaneously figuring subaltern power as a kind of inherent capacity to acquire knowledge (through experience) of *the world*. If funders turn to the discourse of experience to carve out a space of agency from which the marginalized can challenge hegemonic elites, the self-help discourse discussed here offers these same funders an account of their own agency as the capacity for self-mastery; those with privilege are invited to produce and share with the world knowledge of their self, for the sake of their self, while the underprivileged are tasked with leveraging their uncommunicable knowledge of the world for the sake of the world. The question of agency is crucial to Robbins' account of the beneficiary. Robbins describes this figure as

[124] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 5.
[125] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 3.
[126] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 5.
[127] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 7, 9.
[128] As an example, see the chapter "The Ownership of Selflessness: Giving with Humility" in Ford Foundation president Darren Walker's *From Generosity to Justice* (2023).
[129] Rimke, "Governing Citizens Through Self-Help Literature," 64.
[130] Rimke, "Governing Citizens Through Self-Help Literature," 64.

embodying a viewpoint that is not quite humanitarian and not quite political,[131] but maintains that "the process of global democratization…cannot afford to do without the input of those who are empowered (that is, who *are* beneficiaries) and yet who also dissent from and even denounce the system that empowers them."[132] He understands the ambition of the discourse of the beneficiary to be the invention of "a politics in a zone where many observers judge politics properly speaking to be nonexistent or even inconceivable."[133] His effort to provide a history of this "concern with causal linkages between the lucky and the unlucky" hopes to demonstrate that "concern for global justice is in fact anchored in ordinary moral intuitions."[134] Robbins' premise is that "bourgeois guilt is not uninteresting."[135]

While the goal of unearthing a tradition of more political humanitarian discourse is laudable, the fact that Villanueva's work has found such an eager audience among third sector professionals precisely because it promises to shift power in the sector while centering the agency of elites in efforts to do so, offers a cautionary tale. When the ball is placed in the court of the foundation elite, which Villanueva's self-help project and the discourse of the beneficiary encourage, the elite's response has been to turn inwards not outwards; their task has become to liberate themselves from their love of capital—embracing humility—in order for capital to be liberated. Instead of being asked to give up their job or status, foundation elite are invited to perform a public exercise in self-fashioning; they are encouraged to inhabit a tragic subject position—the compromised but well-meaning wealth holder determined to make amends for the harm they have done through their proximity to capital.[136] Robbins is right that the discourse of the beneficiary emerges from "a shared structural contradiction":

> the contradictory situation of someone denouncing a system that he finds intolerable but to which he nevertheless continues to belong, from which he continues to derive certain benefits and privileges, from which he may have no possibility of making a clean break—and which he can only denounce to others who continue to belong to it.[137]

But his hope that this figure might be politically mobilized doesn't contend with the fact that, in practice, the suggestion that redistributing one's power will follow ineluctably from naming it has been a profound incitement to discourse among progressive elites, inviting them to perform elaborate articulations of their problematic subject positions and structural role in harmful power relations—but little else. For third sector elites, reflexive self-critique in the form of impersonal or dispassionate assessments of one's own complicity in harmful systems is central to their moral self-cultivation, their "heroic self-overcoming" in the form of willed and reasoned detachment

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[131] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 6.

[132] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 10.

[133] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 10.

[134] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 25.

[135] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 41. He goes on to say that this is because it "seems both careless and complacent…to put one's faith in the prospect that significant change in the world's distribution of resources can ultimately come only from the pressure of those who are not included in the beneficiary's 'we'" (43).

[136] As will be further elaborated in Chapter 4, the tragic self-scripting here isn't enabling of political action, as it is in David Scott's formulation of anticolonialism's tragedy in *Omens of Adversity* (pages 62-65), but rather leads to an endless rumination about what it means to inhabit a contradiction. On the latter, see Jeanne Morefield's chapter on the tragic self-positioning of contemporary liberal imperialists like Michael Ignatieff in *Empires Without Imperialism* (201-231).

[137] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 49.

from their wealth.[138] They are left with action-as-speech, while the grantee or activist is left with a mandate to act upon their uncommunicable-knowledge of what is to be done. The beneficiary's opportunity to mobilize in a political direction quickly slips into "the cocktail of irony, self-conscious marginality, and ethical hyperscrupulousness that we tend to choose for ourselves without even consulting the menu."[139]

All of this focus on the self of the privileged, elite funder, I want to suggest, serves another purpose: it projects what is problematic about capital onto the person of those who have experience of wealth, thus expiating wealth itself. The corruption of the capital is displaced to the (speaking) subject, who can then undertake the process of confession. Money is neutral—it is itself, says Villanueva, "Harmless." Hegemony attaches not to wealth, but to the experience of wealth; those with a different lived experience can relate to wealth differently, as a resource, as 'medicine.' It is possible, Villanueva suggests, to control significant resources non-hegemonically.

IV.   *Techne* 2.0: Technalized Mētis

Through this self-fashioning, progressive third sector actors begin the work of reformulating their professional mission as that of supporting the use of resources by historically marginalized communities to heal *everyone* of their collective traumas. It is from this new position in the professional social change field that elite actors rearticulate their relation to knowledge, in the form of a higher-order or once-removed *techne*. The full-throated endorsement of *mētis* by participatory grantmakers raises the question of what is to be done with the *techne* accrued by grantmakers over decades. That *mētis* is "*partisan* knowledge"[140] is essential to its usefulness in shifting power from one constituency to another. But does this leave the bearers of *techne* out of the social change equation altogether? What happens to expertise as we've known it? Progressive third sector professionals are aware of this problem. The authors of *Letting Go* quickly reassure their readers: "Remember that there is a role for experts and professionals, as partners and facilitators."[141] Funders will no longer be "givers and deciders" but "supporters and connectors."[142] Others seek to weave the two kinds of knowledge together into a single process. Josh Lerner of People Powered, a Global Hub for Participatory Democracy, argues that "when institutions combine their technical expertise with…lived community expertise, money is more likely to go to the greatest needs."[143] Cynthia Gibson believes that

> achieving sustained impact requires mobilizing both the grassroots and 'grasstops' (influentials, issue experts, those with formal authority, etc.) and offering opportunities for everyone to get involved in problem solving and action. Some foundations, especially community- and place-based institutions, are facilitating this kind of bifurcated outreach

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[138] In striking ways these third sector elites mirror the Victorian intellectuals analyzed by Amanda Anderson in *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment*. Anderson draws out the ambivalent relationship these Victorians had to detachment and distance in an Enlightenment modernity that simultaneously valorized the objective fact of science and threatened to unmoor the individual from grounded experience.

[139] Robbins, *The Beneficiary*, 37.

[140] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 318.

[141] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 146.

[142] Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 69.

[143] Cited in Wrobel and Massey, *Letting Go*, 67.

by seeding and supporting bottom-up problem-solving efforts and helping to connect them with top-down expertise and resources. Foundations are also providing convening space and resources for these efforts.[144]

Justice Funders, whose statement on participatory grantmaking was discussed at the beginning of the chapter, articulates a similar vision, insisting on the need to

> invest in the movement infrastructure and capacity development that supports communities in not only governing resources like land and capital, but to also have the technical skills, platforms and processes to implement those decisions made by the community. Redistributing land, wealth and power in an effective and transformative way also requires philanthropy to share access to the knowledge, networks, skills and expertise that communities have not had access to in the past in order to establish the decolonized and democratized infrastructure to support their movements.[145]

As these statements show, progressive social change philanthropists work to develop and maintain an opposition between technical, expert knowledge and grassroots solutions while harmonizing them within a conceptualization of social change that has room for both—and therefore for themselves. Implied here is the idea that only those with lived experience know what to do (what decisions to make), though they don't always have the capacity or resources to do it or to do it on the necessary scale. The new role of philanthropic elite as 'connector / amplifier' (rather than 'representer') or as 'movement infrastructure support' further invites the development of a new field of *techne*, this time aimed at helping local actors instrumentalize their own *mētis*-born-insights—a kind of *technalized mētis*. The will to replicate, scale, and utilize knowledge remains, but the mechanism has changed. Expert knowledge about the proper solution to social problems is replaced with expert knowledge on facilitation, amplification, connection, and synergy. While in participatory grantmaking discourse "expertise" is downplayed *vis-a-vis* local knowledge born of experience, funders simultaneously seek now to actively develop *techne* for supporting, incubating, promoting, or strengthening the *mētis-informed action* of movements or communities. In other words, protecting the autonomy of social movement actors has led progressive foundation staff to devote considerable energy to developing mechanisms through which to support social movements as a *form*—encourage the emergence, development, and success of progressive movements—without dictating their *content*—tactics, membership, values. This has involved shifting the focus of their technical expertise, so that they are not producing knowledge about a social ill and its solution, but about the environment (infrastructural, legal, political, economic) in which communities can most effectively analyze the problem, generate a solution, and implement it.

Participatory grantmaking is only one among several philanthropic tools designed to navigate the problem of cooptation by producing distance between the holders of capital and authentic political action. Several other trends in the field pursue something similar:

- *Monitoring and evaluation*: Innovations in the field of monitoring and evaluation are advancing the idea that foundations that support social movements cannot expect to quantify the achievements of movements in the same way as they would a typical

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[144] Gibson, "Participatory Grantmaking: Has Its Time Come?" 9.
[145] Justice Funders, "Powershift Philanthropy," 13-14.

development project, for instance, or a nonprofit that provides services; instead, foundations should let movements decide on their own criteria for success.

- *Fiscal sponsorship and intermediaries*: These increasingly popular organizations seek to mediate between donors and grassroots organizations by administering their grants (usually for a percentage of the award), accounting for the fact that many smaller organizations lack the administrative or professional capacity to handle foundation bureaucracy. "Grassroots-Centric Intermediaries" are regranting organizations that distribute a foundation's award among grassroots groups in a particular place or issue area.
- *Alignment:* Progressive advocates in the field stress the importance of aligning foundation goals, investments, and internal operations with the goals and values of the movements they support. Coopting a movement to achieve your own goals appears less possible if your goals as a funder are the same as those of the movement you support.
- *Social change ecosystem framework:* Social movement funders have spent resources mapping what they call the 'social change ecosystem', which understands social change to emerge from a range of interconnected but differentiated activities—protest, community organizing, advocacy, government lobbying, legal challenges, service provision, etc. The framework allows more moderate organizations to conceptually link their funding of local services to the more radical goals of a movement without supporting the movement directly. (This last trend will be discussed at length in Chapter 3).

These conceptual technologies share a common logic: they aim to avoid (or to be able to claim that they are avoiding) instrumentalizing social movements, even as they are used to materially support them. Each wants to create space between the holders of ill-begotten wealth and authentic political actors seeking to rectify social problems. The tools of *technalized mētis* are designed to *translate* the experience-born knowledge of the subaltern into grant decisions and program designs without presuming to communicate the subaltern knowledge or worldview itself to elite actors; they are tools meant to capture and act on the conclusion of a story that elite actors claim to have no right to hear. The fantasy of *technalized mētis* is that this version of translation or capture can exist outside of mediation, and therefore cooptation.

Conclusion

Dylan Rodriguez, one of the most forceful critics of the nonprofit industrial complex and its cooptation of social movements, notes that the third sector works not just by siphoning off compliant people from movements or encouraging them through the incentive of wealth to moderate their goals, but rather by exerting "a certain kind of control over people's imagination"—it is an infrastructure of control over how people "come to know social change and it's limits."[146] This chapter has tried to show that the conceptualization of social change currently put forth by progressive philanthropic foundations through the practice of participatory grantmaking is one in which authentic political action leading to structural change is purged of any association with capital, paradoxically, *by* the holders of capital in civil society.[147]

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[146] Dylan Rodriguez, speaking at "Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex" on July 22, 2021.
[147] In this respect, the logic of participatory grantmaking tracks with what Roberto Esposito describes in *Immunitas* the logic of immunization, "a positive functionalization of the negative" (12). Immunization involves a "particular

Supporting this ideal of authentic, autonomous political action requires progressive elites in the sector to formulate 1) a kind of non-instrumental relationality—a way of relating to something without acting on it and that instead facilitates, from a distance, the object's efforts to harness its inherent capacities, and 2) a form of non-hegemonic control over resources—a conceptualization of wealth that delinks it from the violences of accumulation.

Where does this fantasy of non-instrumentality leave us? This partitioning has its own logic and consequences. First, movements, the local, or the community are figured as possessing something ineffable, inaccessible to bureaucratic, expert-trained eyes—you gain the knowledge of how to use money effectively for good by historically not having it, and those with experience of money don't have the experience needed to do good with it. The marginalized are framed as the bearers of privileged knowledge that must be earned through suffering (experience) rather than instrumental reason (expertise). Social movement actors are understood to be *rational* and *insightful* though not necessarily *legible* to outsiders. This is crucial if movements are to be positioned as something that can never truly be instrumentalized or coopted by foundations, but which can still be supported by them.

Second, this fantasy of non-instrumentality supports a dream of an authentic, pure politics as a salve for the devastation wrought (and left unaddressed) by the market and state. The ideal progressive foundations are advancing is a vision whereby they are handmaids to an emerging autonomous political space purified of the influence of state and market—an idealized conception of civil society. In this formulation, foundations, which represent the state-sanctioned privatization of wealth, seem to be irrelevant to progressive politics unless they can somehow support this activist class in acting on their privileged knowledge. Key to such a task is converting their capital into a 'resource,' which involves removing their power (as hegemonic class) over it through a claim to epistemological humility and performative renunciation of unearned privilege. At the same time, this ideal of autonomy means that, to the extent that social movements are imagined as having to somehow be 'outside' of neoliberalism, they are set up to fail in their status as social movements.

Third, we find in this discourse a suggestion that what is an epistemological divide (one side having privileged knowledge the other cannot access) is at the same time an ontological divide: experience bespeaks a kind of ontological distinction that cannot be overcome through the communication of knowledge. There is an essentialism worked out through this discourse, a homology "between one's structural position, one's socioeconomic interests, one's propensity for certain types of experiences, and certain forms of consciousness or awareness."[148] This is an important step because it justifies why money would be a 'resource' in the hands of those without experience of it. Across this discourse, one's relation to or experience of wealth is a fundamental aspect of their being. Addressing the contradiction of being in a system that you oppose here takes the form of ceding control of the problem to those not perceived to be in the contradiction. Constructing difference along these idiosyncratic axes is central to conceiving of a kind of power and resource that will not coopt movements. The discourses that imagine an ideal form of political action as autonomous from the economic sphere simultaneously assume that

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persistence of the negative in the form of its containment": "Evil must be thwarted, but not by keeping it at a distance from one's borders; rather, it is included inside them. The dialectical figure that thus emerges is that of exclusionary inclusion or exclusion by inclusion" (11, 8). Social movement funders—and more generally what I'll call 'movement liberals' in later chapters—tend to imagine themselves as strengthening civil society by placing "inside it that [which] subtly contradicts it" (8), namely capital, given that civil society is supposedly the force that opposes the encroachment of market (and state) power.

[148] Ireland, *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience*, 15.

that political subject's non-relation to wealth has been determining of their being, a foundational experience. What are the implications of this binary, with each term conceptualized as exclusive of the other, for thinking the horizon of social, political, and economic change? What is lost from the repertoires of social change when experience is described as always already untranslatable? And where else in the annals of liberal projects have we seen similar appeals to incommensurability and difference?[149]

Finally, if this essentializing distinction between elite and grassroots actor is meant to avoid the former coopting the later by producing distance between them, as the next chapter will show, it leaves open the door, or perhaps requires, an act of assimilation, so that both actors can be participants in a reconstructed liberal social change project of an oppositional civil society.

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[149] I'm thinking here of Karuna Mantena's work on liberal imperialism's use of 'culture' to justify a turn to indirect rule in India in the mid-19th century. There are several intriguing parallels between that case and what is presented in this chapter. See Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.

Chapter 3

The Ecosystem Metaphorics of Movement Liberalism

> "We use the metaphor of ecology because, in any dynamic ecosystem, many different organisms live together in a productive synergy. Each species has its own role in the environment, and each maintains complex relationships with other organisms. In a healthy ecosystem, species sustain each other and diversity flourishes."[1]
>
> — Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements"

> "The social movement ecosystem idea is about naming ourselves as protagonists."
>
> — Foundation CEO[2]

Starting in the early 2000s, as shown in Chapter 1, progressive US-based social change funders began to talk about supporting grassroots social movements instead of larger, more established NGOs: Black Lives Matter, not the ACLU; 'the women's rights movement', not Amnesty International. Chapter 2 argued that the risk of coopting movements soon became central to progressive third sector thought and practice. To avoid cooptation, social change funders have turned to, among other tools, participatory grantmaking, which aims to #ShiftThePower from elite to grassroots actors by assigning privileged, experience-based knowledge (*mētis*) to the later and technical, expertise-based knowledge (*techne*) to the former. Elites articulate their own complicity with state, market, and bureaucratic structures of power so that the capital they control can be imagined as a neutral resource available to "leaders with lived experience," who decide where money should be allocated using their superior knowledge of social ills.

Given this privileged positioning of grassroots knowledge, what role is left for progressive elites and their institutions? While the last chapter identified the ways third sector elites cultivate distance between themselves and what they conceive of as more authentic political actors, this chapter looks at how elites also articulate proximity to them. This proximity is imagined and represented through the idea of the "social change ecosystem." While 'systems thinking' and 'systems change' have circulated in third sector discourses since the early 2000s, the metaphor of the ecosystem has gained traction as a tool for articulating the role of elites in social change since the mid-2010s. The social change ecosystem refers to the interrelation of differentiated movement tactics including mass protest, community organizing, personal transformation, government lobbying, litigation, service provision, and advocacy. It is a conceptual metaphor describing an ideal, a framework to guide sector reform, and a practical tool for mapping relationships. Ecology, Erich Hörl argues, is emerging as "a new historical

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[1] Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements," 12.
[2] Interview #14.

semantics": "There seems to be hardly any area that cannot be considered the object of an ecology and thus open to an ecological reformulation."[3] Here, I focus on how third sector professionals such as foundation staff use this ecological semantics to imagine relationships of solidarity between different political actors, in particular grassroots activists and progressive elites.[4]

The solidarity relationship with grassroots actors that third sector elites' figure through the social change ecosystem is a key imaginative construct of what Scott L. Cummings calls *movement liberalism*. Cummings argues that interest in social movements has risen in prominence among American legal scholars in recent years as a response to critics of legal liberalism in the decades after *Brown v. Board of Education*. These critics pointed to the problems of *countermajoritarianism* (courts contradicting legislative bodies representing the majority) and *professionalism* (activist lawyers coopting the causes of their constituencies).[5] Some argue that legal liberalism undercut itself by provoking a conservative backlash—that the rise of legal liberalism led to the decline of political liberalism.[6] Their question has become: "how to harness law as a force for progressive social change…while still maintaining a distinction between law and politics?"[7] Cummings argues that, starting in the early 2000s, social movements have offered legal scholars an answer to this question. Movements solve the countermajoritarianism problem for judges because movements "create new norms, reshape politics, and shift public opinion," allowing courts to take on the role of merely "confirming an already developed social consensus rather than shaping a new one."[8] Lawyers respond to the professionalism problem by framing themselves as lagging behind rather than leading the charge, merely representing movements "in a conventional lawyer-client relationship."[9] In both instances "law is viewed as deeply constrained," securing the gains of political mobilization rather than leading it.[10] Legal actors can claim that the law is "neutral vis-à-vis politics, while remaining ready to affirm progressive causes on the basis of objective changes in public opinion."[11] Cummings argues that movement liberalism allows legal scholars to reassert "a politically productive relationship between courts, lawyers, and social change from the bottom up," thereby "redeem[ing] progressive politics without compromising law."[12]

The account of progressive politics advanced by movement liberalism, however, is a much wider phenomenon, holding out a redemptive promise not just to legal scholars, but to elites across the development, human rights, and philanthropic sectors. Like the legal theorists Cummings analyzes, professional social change organizations are grappling with how to constrain their own power and agency without compromising their legitimacy as contributors to progressive change. And like Cummings' legal scholars, they began turning to social movements in the early 2000s, energetically reformulating their theories of change using the political

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[3] Hörl, "Introduction to General Ecology," 1.

[4] Here I am drawing in part on sociologist Francesca Polletta's *Inventing the Ties That Bind: Imagined Relationships in Moral and Political Life*, which explores "efforts to craft solidary relationships in civic life" (24).

[5] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 361-362. On legal liberalism see Kalman, *The Strange Career of Legal Liberalism*.

[6] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 362.

[7] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 361.

[8] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 362, 363.

[9] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 363.

[10] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 363.

[11] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 385.

[12] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 364.

grammar of movement liberalism to challenge the specter of cooptation, imbrication with states and capital, and technocratic ethos that haunt professionalized progressive organizations today.

This chapter hinges on the premise that attending to the ecological semantics that many civil society elites deploy can help us draw out key features and consequences of movement liberalism. It proceeds in four parts. The first introduces the social change ecosystem framework as developed by the influential Ayni Institute and presented to progressive funders as a grantmaking tool in venues like the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. The second section traces this ecosystem framework to a branch of organizational theory in the 1970s called organizational ecology, which started to cross-pollinate with the sociology of social movements in the 1990s. I show how conflict between different organizational forms evolves from being a natural feature of the ecosystem in the organizational literature to being a problem to be redressed when the ecosystem idea enters the discourses of progressive social change funders in the 2000s. If in the previous chapter cooptation is the problem progressive elites need to solve, in this chapter that problem is competition.

Part three shows how the conflict and competition inherent in organizational ecology is replaced by a cooperationist theory of ecosystem dynamics in the third sector mobilizations of the concept that harkens back to the holism and functionalism of 19th and 20th century organicism. The function that third sector elites assign themselves is to regulate the different parts of the ecosystem in order to avoid competition between them and to ensure the stability and harmony of the organic whole. To avoid the degree of control that such regulation implies (which would once more risk cooptation), progressive foundations invoke social movement actors as the vital element at the center of the larger progressive social change organism, providing its direction (telos) and ideological cohesion (unity). As the fourth part of the chapter shows, the task for progressive elites like philanthropic professionals and movement law scholars then becomes the identification of this vital element and the representation of their functional relationship to it—in the process articulating the category of the authentic political actor within the grammar of movement liberalism.

Following Donna Haraway's observation that "a metaphor is the vital spirit of a paradigm (or perhaps its basic organizing relation),"[13] the chapter takes seriously the search by third sector professionals for a metaphor capable of securing their place alongside progressive movements. The burden placed on metaphor is to settle the question of what force drives and directs progressive politics so that elites—lawyers, philanthropists, human rights professionals—can cultivate a relationship of deference to it. The ecosystem metaphor is thus central to what I am describing as the assimilation of movements to civil society.

I.   **An Ecology of Change**

While the social change ecosystem concept is used across the third sector,[14] the chapter focuses on the version popularized by the Ayni Institute—a self-described "social movement

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[13] Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields*, 9.

[14] See, for examples, Mack et. al., "Evaluating Ecosystem Investments"; Akondi Foundation, "Ecosystem Grantmaking"; Bloom and Dees, "Cultivate your Ecosystem"; WINGS, "Acting Together to Life Up Philanthropy: WINGS Guidance on How to Build a Supportive Ecosystem"; AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem"; Nangle and Kearney, "To Shift Power, Fund Entire Ecosystems." In the human rights literature, this view is expressed by Rodríguez-Garavito, who claims that the human rights movement "is shifting toward the structure and logic of an ecosystem. As in ecosystems, the field's robustness will depend on the collaboration and

incubator and training institute"[15]—through their Momentum Training program, started in 2014 by Carlos Saavedra and Paul Engler. Paul and his brother Mark Engler's 2016 book, *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt is Shaping the Twenty-First Century*, provides the conceptual scaffolding for the ecology of change framework taught in Momentum trainings. Their intellectual project is to move past the disagreements between three social change traditions—mass protest, community organizing, and alternative communities—by reframing them as complimentary methodologies.

In the chapter "Structure and Movement," the Engler's argue that "two schools stand at opposite poles of thinking about how grassroots forces can promote social change."[16] The first tradition is community organizing, and its method is structure. Its leading figure, Saul Alinsky, founder of the Industrial Areas Foundation, was "a guru in the art of the slow, incremental building of community groups," focusing on "person-by-person recruitment, careful leadership development, and the creation of stable institutional bodies that could leverage the power of their members over time."[17] The second tradition is momentum-based movements, and its method is mass protest. The authors pick sociologist Frances Fox Piven as its champion, a "leading defender of unruly broad-based disobedience, undertaken outside the confines of any formal organization." Disruptive protests occur suddenly, attract and politicize new participants, and unnerve elites by changing the political landscape.[18] The Englers then add a third tradition to the mix, prefigurative politics, which refers to the creation of alternative institutions—co-ops, radical bookstores, encampments, community kitchens—that "are critical in laying the groundwork for future revolts."[19] The term 'prefigurative politics' emerged from an analysis of the New Left movements of the 1960s that embodied participatory democracy and rejected both political parties and conventional organizing as overly invested in influencing the mainstream.[20]

The final chapter of *This Is an Uprising*, "The Ecology of Change," proposes an "integrated approach"[21] that synthesizes these traditions through the ecosystem metaphor. Successful efforts to create change, they write:

> contain actors who can play distinct roles, the relative importance of which fluctuate based on what stage of its life span a movement is in….[They] tend to see themselves as part of an ecology that is made healthier when different traditions each contribute: mass

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complementarity among different forms of organization and diverse strategies" (see "The Future of Human Rights: From Gatekeeping to Symbiosis," 501). For ecosystems thinking in the development and social enterprise sectors, see Warnecke and Balzac-Arroyo, "Community, Capabilities, and the Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystem"; Lyons and Roundy, "Building our Understanding of Social Entrepreneurship Ecosystems," and their edited issue of *Community* on the topic (volume 54, issue 3); and Diaz Gonzalez and Dentchev, "Ecosystems in Support of Social Entrepreneurs: A Literature Review."

[15] Ayni, "Funding Social Movements," 5.

[16] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 31. Another account of this divide is in Chetkovich and Kunreuther, *From the Ground Up*; the authors focus mostly on social change organizations that operate independently of movements.

[17] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 32. See Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) and *Rules for Radicals* (1971).

[18] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 32. See Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements* (1978). Arlene Stein notes that "the revival of Alinsky-style organizations in the 1970s and 1980s often defined itself against the social movements of the previous decade…which it tended to view as promoting collective identity formation over the achievement of strategic goals" ("Between Organization and Movement," 94).

[19] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 271.

[20] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 272-273.

[21] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 277.

mobilizations alter the terms of political debate and create new possibilities for progress; structure-based organizing helps take advantage of this potential and protects against efforts to roll back advances; and countercultural communities preserve progressive values, nurturing dissidents who go on to initiate the next waves of revolt.[22]

This descriptive account of successful movements undergirds a prescriptive argument for a harmonious, progressive civil society. Though there have often been "rifts" between the different methods, the Engler's insist that their actual (though frequently unrecognized) complementarity points to the importance of creating "a movement ecosystem that allows diverse approaches to promoting change to flourish."[23] While Momentum trainings are geared towards activists, in the summer of 2018 the ecosystem framework was introduced to funders through an influential Ayni report, "Funding Social Movements: How Mass Protest Makes an Impact,"[24] and a series of articles in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* by Chloe Cockburn, Paul Engler, and Carlos Saavedra. In these pieces, the framework crafters added a role for philanthropic elite within the social change ecosystem.

Cockburn's article, "Philanthropists Must Invest in an Ecology of Change," makes the case to philanthropists for thinking ecologically about social transformation.[25] She breaks down the ecology into three component parts: *personal transformation* (changing people one at a time, through things like leadership development), *alternatives* (developing experimental institutions like urban farms, credit unions, or co-ops), and *changing dominant institutions* (reforming governments and corporations by altering laws, narratives, and priorities). Cockburn divides this last component, of most interest to funders, into *mass mobilization* (which shifts public opinion and narratives), *structure organizing* (which builds a membership base to make demands to decisionmakers), and *inside game* (which leverages elite access or expert knowledge).
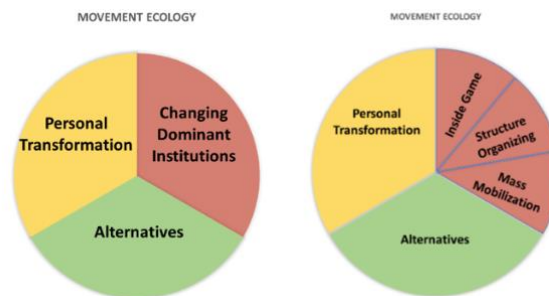
Fig. 6. Cockburn's movement ecology breakdown in the *SSIR*.

As Cockburn notes, these different pieces are frequently in tension—"inside-game people are 'sell-outs,' for example, or personal-transformation people are 'navel gazers'"—inviting fracturing and inhibiting collaboration. Movement actors often fail to see that "each wedge needs the others to win." The ecosystem framework is valuable, she argues, because it helps funders *map* the social change landscape to see where their money can "plug in"; *diagnose* whether

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[22] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 253-254. An example of an organization that recognized this need to avoid competition can be found in Michelle Oyakawa's study of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. See Oyakawa, "Building a Movement in the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," 19.
[23] Engler and Engler, *This Is an Uprising*, 33, 261-262.
[24] Ayni, "Funding Social Movements."
[25] Cockburn, "Philanthropists Must Invest in an Ecology of Change."

conflict within the ecology is a matter of personality or of incompatible theories of change; *strategize* the relationship between the inside-game and outside-game; and *collaborate* with different movement actors through the common language of the ecosystem to amplify impact. In other words, Cockburn argues for the value of the ecosystem framework as a tool for collecting information from a range of progressive actors and strategies that can be fed back into funder decision making processes—a kind of feedback loop.

Engler's article models this mapping function by pointing out that, within the ecosystem, protest movements have been radically underfunded compared to other tactics.[26] He makes the case for funding mass mobilizations by distinguishing their value from litigation:

> Although the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools came down in 1954, that ruling by itself did not ensure justice. In fact, the court's decision actually engendered more racist backlash in the South…It was only with intensified social movement activity—[the Montgomery Bus Boycott, lunch counter sit-ins, Freedom Rides, and the Birmingham and Selma campaigns]—that politicians were decisively moved to take the necessary steps to dismantle the legal and political foundations of segregation.

While law formed the foundations of segregation *and* produced a backlash by moving prematurely to dismantle them, mass mobilization, Engler argues, "dramatically changed the terms of Kennedy's political calculus" by shifting public opinion. The same held for the movement for marriage equality, which became an achievable goal when the public was engaged through slogans like 'Love is Love'. Here, different tactics appear to work at cross purposes rather than complementarily, with legal change failing in comparison with mass mobilization. The lesson, however, turns out to be one of timing and sequence: in a neat encapsulation of movement liberalism's reversal of legal liberalism, Engler writes that, "[w]hen a social movement wins the battle of public opinion, courts and legislatures will follow." The task of funders, then, is to correct the "strategic imbalance" that prioritizes inside game tactics over mass protests because, seen from an ecological perspective, inside game wins like passing laws "are merely the endgame of a longer process of creating change" that "finalize" or "harvest" the victories already won by shifting culture and opinion. Each player in the ecosystem has a specific function to perform in order to make the whole work.

In the final article of the series, Saavedra turns to the question of *how* to fund protest movements.[27] The first step requires that funders become familiar with "the cycles and dynamics of movement growth" so that they can assess "what movements need and at what time." The social movement lifecycle provides a way to make such an assessment:

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[26] Engler, "Protest Movements Need the Funding They Deserve."
[27] Saavedra, "Five Ways Funders Can Support Social Movements."
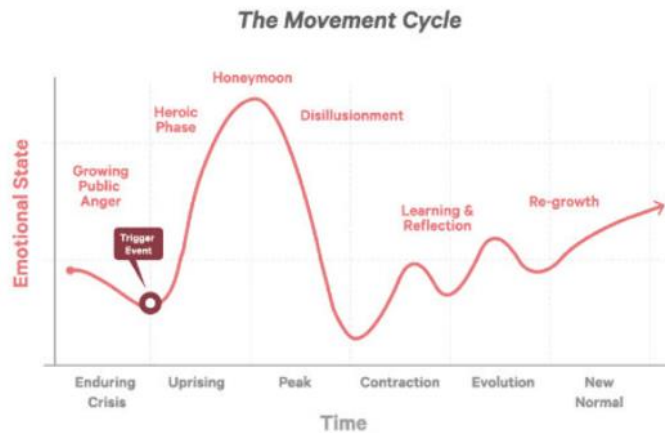
The Movement Cycle

Based on a chart by Movement NetLab

The emotional state of participants fluctuates as social movements cycle through different phases. (Based on a chart by Movement NetLabs)

Fig. 7. Saavedra's movement cycle, borrowed from Movement NetLabs.

Saavedra notes that established organizations, which have staffs, budgets, and institutional access, "rarely drive the outbreaks surrounding trigger events." Because the leaders of trigger events tend to come from "outside established organizations and may have little experience with leading movements at mass scale," during such an event donors should fund trainings on how to "make the most of a social movement upheaval" and "small stipends to sustain 'anchor volunteers'." After a trigger event, funders should turn their attention to supporting the 'absorption' of volunteers or protestors into "structures of sustained training and engagement, so that when the next wave comes, those same people can continue to expand movement participation." Finally, funders can support the escalation towards the next trigger event by being the venture capitalists of protest, investing in "movement entrepreneurs" like the early Occupy Wall Street participants.[28]

Phase of the movement cycle	Primary resource needs
During trigger events	1) Training 2) Volunteer support
As trigger events wind down	3) Absorption 4) Infrastructure to sustain volunteers
Planning for the next trigger event	5) Funding for future escalation

Figure 8. Resourcing needs across movement cycle according to Saavedra.

Continuing the natural metaphor, Saavedra notes that movements routinely—indeed, naturally—die and are reborn: funders must therefore "understand that the process of preparation, absorption, and escalation for new waves of activity is a natural cycle that movements repeat until they capture widespread public support and win their demands." Saavendra thus models for funders the kind of knowledge they will need to produce about the social change ecosystem's grassroots actors in order to correct for its imbalances and maintain its health.

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[28] Ayni's "Seasons of Leadership" training is an example one effort to support movement entrepreneurs: https://aynischool.com/spring-training-semester/.

The Ayni Institute's "Funding Social Movements" report covers the same ground as these articles in detail over 118 pages, providing an overview of how funders can fulfill their role as re-balancers of the ecosystem. Its main message to funders: "In a healthy movement ecology, organizations with different theories of change recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses, and they work together to produce large-scale social change."[29] The report is rooted in interviews with social movement practitioners and presents "synthesized lessons from social movement theory, civil resistance, and the histories of dozens of domestic and international movements from across the 20th and 21st centuries."[30] As will be discussed in greater detail below, the authors recognize that their model bears a resemblance to the business world's adoption of ecological language and thought—where competitive advantage, survival of the fittest, and niche creation have gained purchase—but insist that progressive social change ecosystems are characterized instead by collaboration, complementarity, and collective impact.[31]

Ayni's social change ecology is just one influential example of a broader trend towards thinking of progressive social change in (eco)systems terms over the past decade. Julie Battilana and Marrisa Kimsey's 2017 *SSIR* article "Should You Agitate, Innovate, or Orchestrate?" adopts a tripart division:

> An **agitator** brings the grievances of specific individuals or groups to the forefront of public awareness. An **innovator** creates an actionable solution to address these grievances. And an **orchestrator** coordinates action across groups, organizations, and sectors to scale the proposed solution. Any pathway to social change requires all three. Agitation without innovation means complaints without ways forward, and innovation without orchestration means ideas without impact.[32]

Their "framework for understanding the roles you can play in a movement for social change" combines insights from organizational theory (specifically organizational institutionalism), social movement studies, and management studies. Several organizations have also used the language of "multi-stakeholder collaboration" to describe the growing injunction to think systematically about how different actors contribute to social change.[33] As Anna Hirsch-Holland, a director at The Partnering Initiative, writes, "philanthropy is uniquely positioned to promote and scale effective partnerships – able to draw on flexible funding and innovative finance models, as well as technical expertise, reputation and influence, and diverse cross-sectoral networks."[34] Foundations can adopt different partnership strategies: trusted partner engaging in long-term core support and offering expertise and platforms for influence; connector supporting collaboration between grantees; supporter of multi-stakeholder partnerships among different kinds of actors

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[29] Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements," 12.

[30] Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements," 6.

[31] Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements," 12.

[32] Battilana and Kimsey, "Should You Agitate, Innovate, or Orchestrate?" Related is Jacob Harold's *The Toolbox: Strategies for Crafting Social Impact* (2023), which lists as tools: storytelling, mathematical modeling, behavioral economics, design thinking, community organizing, game theory, markets, complex systems, and institutions. Harold argues that "agents of change need a toolbox strategy" that draws on these different tools rather than doubling down on any single one: "a social change agent doesn't have to pick one single tool to solve one problem. Instead, the essence of toolbox strategy is multiplicity...Our complex world asks us to go beyond our single hammer, and it is possible to do so" (13-15).

[33] See also Jacobs, "Collaboration — one of the fastest moving trends in philanthropy."

[34] Hirsch-Holland, "From rhetoric to reality: practicing partnership in philanthropy."

with shared goals; or systems leader contributing to the infrastructure needed to sustain multi-stakeholder partnerships including technical expertise, convening, funding, etc. Other organizations explicitly link the language of multi-stakeholder partnerships to the ecosystem framework. Co-Impact, a philanthropic collaborative working on systems change and gender justice in the Global South, wrote in their 2021 handbook:

> We support systems change through a program partner-centered approach to grantmaking. Using a rigorous sourcing process, our team identifies and supports a portfolio of bold and promising initiatives poised to catalyze systems change at scale, driven by organizations rooted in the Global South and dedicated to advancing intersectional gender justice. In our second fund that is under development, the Gender Fund, we expect to take a broader "ecosystem approach" that includes support for feminist activists, think-tanks, researchers, movement builders, and advocates for women's leadership. This approach is designed to support organizations that can help shift systems in ways that enable historically excluded constituencies to shift prevailing norms and practices, advise on alternatives, develop innovations, hold institutions accountable, and envisage more inclusive forms of governance. Large scale systemic change requires strategic coherence.[35]

Co-Impact defines 'Ecosystem Approach' as "undertaking a funding approach which recognizes that there is no single, silver-bullet approach to systems change and solving gender inequalities, and that it takes the collective action of multiple, diverse actors."[36] To change harmful 'systems', the Co-Impact handbook suggests, requires adopting a systems approach.

The ecosystem metaphor has also been used to describe how different kinds of funders can collaborate with each other to resource movements. In March 2014 at the Global Salzburg Seminar, Michael Edwards proposed that civil society leaders think of funding in terms of an ecosystem. Edwards, a vocal critic of philanthrocapitalism, arrived at his "funding ecosystem" model to counteract the "funding monoculture" that has thrown social change efforts "out of balance."[37] Like Edgar Villanueva, whose Liberated Capital project was discussed in Chapter 2, Edwards describes money as "rarely a problem in and of itself – it is simply a currency for transactions"—though, also like Villanueva, Edwards thinks that attachment to money has "a psychic and emotional effect" that distorts the holder's sense of the social good.[38] The "money problem" has led to a funding system that is patchy, fragmented, unreliable, and "shot through by power dynamics between patrons and their clients."[39] Rather than looking to the market for solutions—the monoculture we're heading towards—Edwards recommends "an ecosystem of different revenue-generating options matched to the diversity of needs that social change requires."[40] He turns to "systems thinking" to develop his ecosystem, because it "emphasizes the inter-dependence and complementary nature of all the different components," in turn challenging

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[35] Co-Impact, "Handbook," 9.
[36] Co-Impact, "Handbook," 6.
[37] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 11-12. A few years prior, in 2011, Edwards described civil society more generally as an ecosystem, see "Introduction: Civil Society and the Geometry of Human Relations," 7-8.
[38] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 9, 10.
[39] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 10.
[40] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 12.

the constraining, market-based idea that "the best groups will surface if they are forced to compete with one-another."[41] While market thinking "feeds the myth of competition,"

> A much better analogy is to the ecosystem, which *contains* some market elements but is not *dominated* or *defined* by them. Of course, ecosystems are not always peaceful and harmonious, but they always return to some sense of balance when they are healthy. Systems thinking shows why the increasing dominance of a small selection of funding models is bad for social change—because, as in any real ecosystem, homogeneity erodes the strength that comes from inter-dependence and diversity.[42]

Because social change can also be thought of as an ecosystem—containing a range of institutions, practices, and ideas, as the Engler's would agree—"one would need to direct resources to a wide array of processes and groups, each of which requires a particular form of financing designed to fit their qualities and characteristics, timescales for delivery or completion, and demands for democracy, decision-making and accountability."[43] The question then becomes one of "matching the two ecosystems together."[44] Funders can bring this about, says Edwards, by "building capacities for systems thinking," especially the capacity "to map and analyze the ecosystems of funding and social change,"[45] much as Cockburn recommends.

Fig. 9. Graphic representation of Edwards' funding ecosystem from the Global Salzburg Seminar, March 2014.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) cites Edwards' work to introduce their effort to map the feminist movement funding ecosystem in their report, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem" (2019). Like Edwards, who argues that mapping allows funders to "find and fix any gaps, distortions and disconnections" in the ecosystem,[46] AWID describes their report as "an attempt to help reveal where power sits and point to how we can all use our positions to shift the power dynamics toward a balanced ecosystem to support real feminist social change."[47] To this end, AWID assesses the different actors in the funding ecosystem and

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[41] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 12.
[42] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 12.
[43] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 13.
[44] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 14.
[45] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 16.
[46] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 17.
[47] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 10.

offers prescriptions meant to right the ship. NGOs are tasked with taking "honest stock of where they sit in the ecosystem and how they can shift power to center movements," including avoiding entering into competition for funding with them.[48] Citing Villanueva's *Decolonizing Wealth*, the report suggests that foundations need to "unpack where power is held or hoarded," appoint board members or staff from the movements they support, "align investment practices and institutional policies with grantmaking goals and values," and to "get honest about philanthropic wealth" and its problems.[49] For activists, they recommend "see[ing] yourself as an active agent in the ecosystem," "call[ing] out contradictions in the resourcing ecosystem," and "practice[ing] solidarity rather than competition in your own resourcing," among other things.[50] The report also recommends participatory grantmaking as one practice that contributes to creating a more balanced funding ecosystem, where power has been shifted to movements.[51] Figures 5 and 6 show how AWID graphically represents the transition from an unbalanced to a balanced feminist funding ecosystem.

Across these examples, the idea of an (eco)system is made to do a lot of work. There are ecosystems of progressive change agents, ecosystems of funders who collaborate to support those change agents, harmful systems in society that need to be changed, and a general endorsement of the systems-thinking required to make sense of and intervene in an interconnected and complex world. Thus (eco)systems thinking, these reports suggest, allows funders to visualize a unified progressive movement, identify imbalances within it, and correct for them through more responsive, informed funding; collect information through modelling to inform decisions and coordinate action; occupy positions such as orchestrator, systems leader, information hub, harmony-creator; and distinguish themselves from businesses by defining health as balance and harmony rather than as competition. At the same time, these reports and projects insist that funders need to cede power, honestly assess the problems of holding wealth, and recognize and value different actors within the ecosystem. According to the Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support's new Philanthropy's Transformation Initiative, "Philanthropic actors need to make two shifts: become humbler and more aware of their limitations as individual players, and at the same time become more ambitious collectively, as enablers."[52] Understanding how the recognition of differences leads to harmony rather than conflict, or how gathering mapping an ecosystem can facilitate humility and deference rather than control, requires a closer look at the evolution of (eco)systems thinking in the professional civil society sector.

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[48] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 31.
[49] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 33.
[50] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 45.
[51] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 42.
[52] WINGS, "Philanthropy's Transformation Initiative," 2. See for more on this, WINGS, "The Philanthropy Transformation Initiative Report."
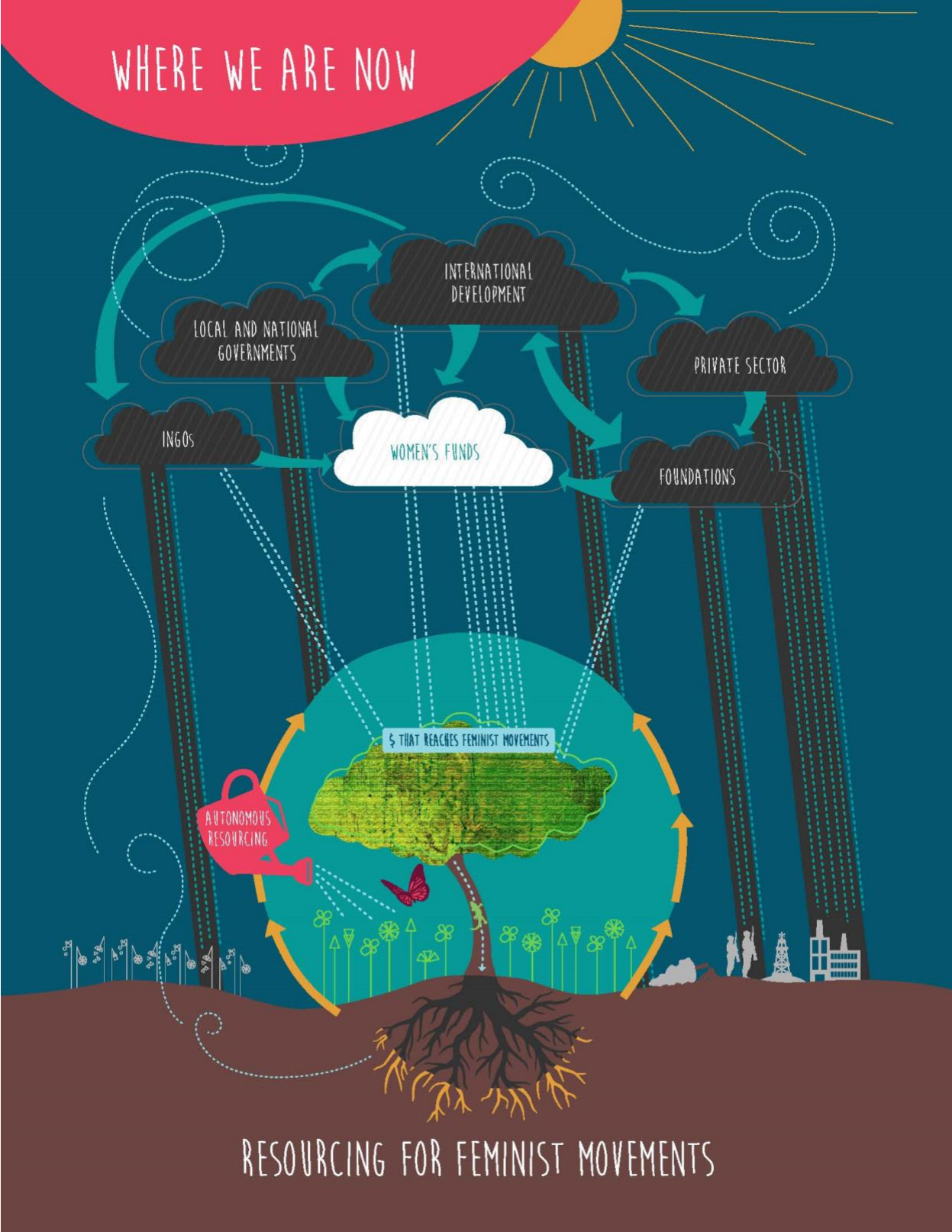
Fig. 10. Current, unbalanced feminist movement funding ecosystem, according to AWID in 2019.
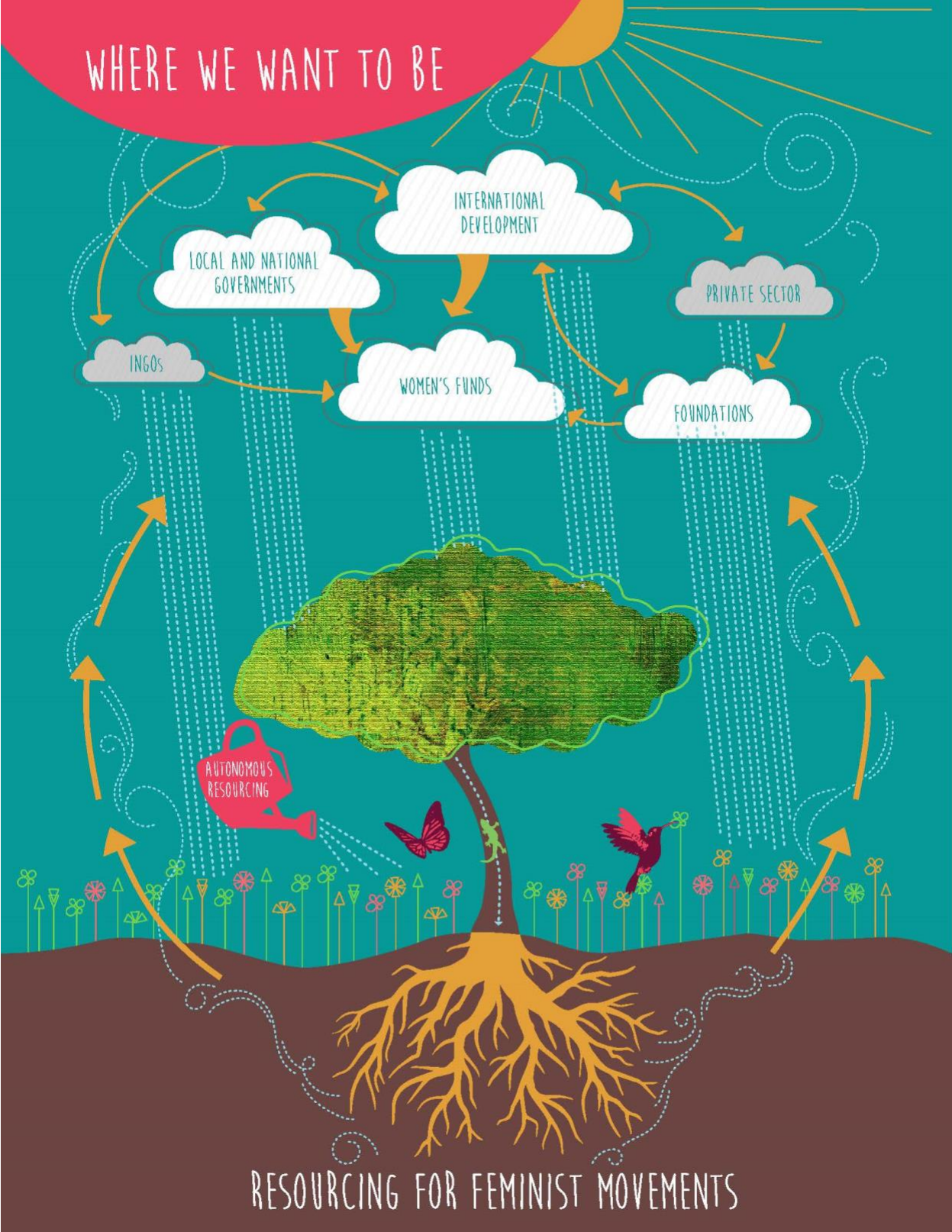
Fig. 11. Ideal, balanced feminist movement funding ecosystem, according to AWID in 2019.

II.   (Eco)Systems Thinking and the Problem of Competition

The ecosystem imaginary has spread rapidly across the third sector, with the 2022 PEXforum (a convening of over 70 philanthropy networks) adopting the theme, "Driving (eco)systems change: Exploring the transformative power of collaboration in philanthropy."[53] The reference in the PEXforum title to ecosystems *and* systems change is important: both figure prominently in professional civil society discourse, and in fact emerged out of the same mid-20th century intellectual currents.[54] However, as I show in this section, untwining their semantic entailments is essential for identifying the unacknowledged organicism at the root of movement liberalism's political imaginary.

While first coined in 1935 by Arthur Tansley, *ecosystem* began to be used widely in the 1950s following the pathbreaking work of, amongst others, the bio ecologist G. Evelyn Hutchinson.[55] Yet before the term was in use, ecologists were working on the questions ecosystem thinking sought to answer later in the century: "How should one define stability, diversity, regulation, and organization? What did these concepts mean in natural systems, and what did they mean in human-dominated systems?"[56] As these questions suggest, in the first half of the twentieth century ecology rested at the border of the biological and social sciences, with ecologists aiming to study animal and plant societies to "bring biological understanding to problems confronting human society in what seemed to be an acutely troubled time."[57] As Gregg Mitman shows, while the ideological right used biological concepts like Social Darwinism to violent political ends (the eugenics movement, and the atrocities of Nazi Germany, to start), progressive biologists also "utilized their science and its cultural authority in similar fashion to achieve their own political ends."[58] These embryologists, ecologists, and physiologists on the ideological left contributed the insights of their science to the larger conversation among intellectuals "concerning international peace and democratic order during the period of and between the First and Second World Wars."[59]

An illustrative figure is Warder Clyde Allee, a liberal pacificist who's exposure to a tradition of antiwar biology that recast Herbert Spencer's social evolutionism in a progressive mold led him to embark "on a research program that melded ecological science and politics into a cooperative world."[60] Through his research on aggregation, "Allee believed he had found experimental evidence opposing the doctrine of war and, also, the cornerstone to a theory of sociality centered not on the family but on the association of individuals for cooperative purposes found in the most primitive forms of life."[61] Having experienced the horrors of war, scientists like Allee refuted the Hobbesian war of all against all in favor of a vision of social progress that was "not the result of biotic struggle but was created by the association of animals in their

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[53] See the write-up about the forum by Alliance magazine, "PEXforum 2022: Driving (eco)systems change."
[54] For examples of this kind of systems thinking, see Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Results*, and more recently, Badgett, "Systems Change: Making the Aspirational Actionable." Systems thinking in the third sector was popularized in large part by the work of Donella H. Meadows, see *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*.
[55] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 184-186.
[56] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 220.
[57] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 1.
[58] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 2.
[59] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 3.
[60] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 4.
[61] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 4.

struggle with the abiotic environment."[62] By the 1930s, a group of animal ecologists at the University of Chicago coalesced around "a vision of a cooperative world in which individual freedom and social control functioned to ensure a stable social order."[63] Harmony was not only possible, but natural.

This organicist ecological thinking, popular in the first half of the 20th century, understood the relationship between different species to mirror the workings of a complex organism, characterized by "unity," "interdependence of its parts," and development over time.[64] Ecologists who thought along these lines often deployed the superorganism metaphor, which takes "the individual organism as a model of functional integration or cooperation of parts and extend that model to describe and explore social groups of individuals."[65] Natural selection, in this view, guided species to adapt in ways that maintained the community as a whole; each species served a specific function towards the end of balance—like a body's organs evolving to produce a well-functioning individual.[66] What would later be called ecosystems are, in this view, more than the sum of their parts—they are a whole characterized by functional unity directed towards the goal of cooperation.

But towards mid-century, this cooperationist ecology and the superorganism metaphor came under attack as "totalitarianist biology" that subordinated the individual to the group:

> In the Cold War period, as the specter of totalitarianism in the Soviet Union was increasingly seen as a threat to democracy, the meanings and appeal of cooperation and community took on more ominous tones. As historian Richard Peels has suggested, where the 'search for community' and the 'need for collective action' had 'captured the imagination of the Left in the 1930s,' the 'search for identity' and resistance to 'the pressures of conformity' became dominant motifs of American liberalism in the 1950s. Community was transformed into conformity, something to be resisted at all costs. The economy of nature was shifting with the changing direction of American liberalism in the 1950s: nature was competitive and the individual was the primary locus of evolutionary change.[67]

A more restrained, cold war liberalism made the idealistic organicism of the interwar biologists less appealing. As Evelyn Fox Keller argues, during the 1960s there is a shift in ecological theory from community selection to genetic selection; by the end of the 1970s, "it was generally agreed that competition theory had come to dominate theoretical ecology."[68] Theories predicated on the possibility of harmony, mutualism, and cooperation were dismissed as romantic, and "competition came to be seen as the preserving force of a pluralistic democracy."[69]

As faith in collective political solutions dwindled, technological solutions to both environmental and social problems gained traction, reflecting the technological optimism and high modernist sensibility that emerged in the 1950s. After WWII, ecologists came to be seen

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[62] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 4.
[63] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 5.
[64] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 220.
[65] Mitchell, "The Superorganism Metaphor," 231.
[66] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 221.
[67] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 6.
[68] Keller, "Demarcating Public from Private Values in Evolutionary Discourse," 202.
[69] Keller, "Demarcating Public from Private Values in Evolutionary Discourse," 205; Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 8.

less as 'social healers' and more as 'environmental engineers'[70]; new researchers, many funded by the Atomic Energy Commission after 1954, used modelling to make predictions that would help them "assess and control the impact of industrialized societies on the environment,"[71] including radioactive contamination.[72] Hunter Heyck identifies the apogee of the "age of system" as between 1955 and 1970, a time when high modern social science flourished, "framing all subjects of study as complex, hierarchic systems defined more by their structures than by their components."[73] Between 1920 and 1970, responding to the rise over the previous five decades of "large-scale organizations and bureaucratic hierarchies in business and government," fields across the social and natural sciences "reconceptualized [their] central object of study as a system defined and given structure by a set of processes, mechanisms, or relationships."[74] Economists started talking about "the economy," anthropologists defined cultures as structured systems, sociologists thought in terms of social structures, political scientists saw the state schematically as an arrangement of institutions.[75] As the world appeared to become increasingly complex, these disciplines worked to develop "rigorous formal language for the description and analysis of the behavior of such systems over time."[76] Systems thinking drew together several ideas: behavioral-functional analysis, structural-relational properties, communications and control systems that maintain coordination, equilibrium, holism, formal or instrumental reason, modeling, and procedural logic.[77] The ideal product of high modern social science "was a model of a system's structure, functions, and relations," and the modelling of systems was taught to a generation of social scientists, policymakers, textbook writers, and business school attendees.[78]

The organicist, perfectionist ideal of earlier ecologists was replaced by the "technocratic optimism" of scientists like Eugene Odum, a student of Hutchinson, and his brother H.T. Odum, who began their research during this age of systems.[79] In the late 1940s, Hutchinson presented a paper titled "Circular Causal Systems in Ecology" at a symposium on teleological mechanisms, a topic that pointed to the emerging interest in what would come to be called cybernetics, "the study of systems in which there were feedback mechanisms that regulated or stabilized the system."[80] (Norbert Wiener, considered the father of cybernetics, also presented at the conference). Cybernetics "involved extending and exploring analogies between living systems and machines, with the result that the living system was analyzed as though it was machinelike. These living machines appeared to act purposefully as a result of the various feedback mechanisms that governed their operation."[81] Hutchinson's proposition that "groups of organisms are systems having feedback loops that ensure self-regulation and persistence" became systems ecology in the hands of his cybernetics-influenced student H.T. Odum, who

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[70] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 7.
[71] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 7.
[72] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 192.
[73] Heyck, *Age of System*, 1.
[74] Heyck, *Age of System*, 5.
[75] Heyck, *Age of System*, 6-7.
[76] Heyck, *Age of System*, 9.
[77] Heyck, *Age of System*, 10-11.
[78] Heyck, *Age of System*, 36, 21, 2.
[79] Mitman, *The State of Nature*, 7. And Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism."
[80] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 186.
[81] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 186. For a detailed history of cybernetics, and the Macy Conferences, see Kline, *The Cybernetics Moment*.

popularized the ecosystem concept in the 1950s.[82] The idea that "[h]umans were not just components of ecosystems" but also their designers and managers reflected the prevailing scientific optimism of the time, and the newly emerging *systems ecology* combined biology and engineering in the name of "learning to design and control ecosystems."[83] A (eco)system's stability was not a product of a divinely-ordained harmony as the vitalists of an earlier era in biology believed, but of feedback mechanisms that tended towards homeostasis; competition, in this view, is one way an ecosystem stabilizes itself, not a problem to be solved.

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The ecosystem concept begins to be used to describe the relationships between different kinds of *organizations* in the 1970s, when it is picked up by sociologists working largely on businesses. Responding to early 20th century organizational thought's pragmatic focus on the best way to manage workers, scholars in the second half of the century emphasized the complexity, uncertainty, and interdependence of organizational environments.[84] In the 1960s, population ecology came to dominate the ecological sciences as questions of "what characterized a stable population, community, or ecosystem" came to the fore; population ecologists "studied predator-prey and host-parasite relationships and competition within and between species, trying to understand how these population interactions affected the structure of communities."[85] In the late 1970s, organizational demographers began researching how people or groups relate within organizations (*internal organizational demography*) and how organizations relate to each other. The latter research stream, *organizational ecology*, borrowed "models from biological evolution, human ecology, and human demography" to explain industry dynamics.[86] Early researchers, drawing on the work of Hutchinson, explained the diversity of organizational forms, and their "founding, failure, and change," in terms of the size and nature of the population of each form

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[82] See Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism, H.T. Odum, and the Partial Transformation of Ecological Metaphor after World War II," 217; and Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 189.

[83] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 218.

[84] Haveman and Wetts, "Organizational Theory," 8. Emerging in the early- to mid-20th century, organizational theory applied insights from classical social theory (mainly Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Simmel) to the workplace. Early schools of organizational thought included scientific management, which, influenced by Frederick Taylor, aimed to increase productivity through the specialization and formalization of tasks, and the human relations school, which tried to ameliorate the "boredom, low morale, absenteeism, conflict, and turnover" created by scientific management through the recognition of human needs (6-7), reflecting the rising power of labor and increasing market complexity in the 1930s. In 1938, for instance, Chester Barnard suggested that "organizations are cooperative systems, not the products of mechanical engineering"—a perspective that, alongside "the specter of labor unrest and the Great Depression," paved the way for the human relations movement to flourish after WWII (Perrow, "The Short and Glorious History," 3-4). Later in the 20th century, contingency theories arose as a reaction to the scientific management and human relations schools' pragmatic focus on the best way to manage workers, instead asserting that "organizational design choices are contingent on environmental conditions," (Haveman and Wetts, "Organizational Theory," 8). In the 1970s, demographic, relational, and cultural perspectives emerged to further nuance the contingency perspective (Haveman and Wetts, "Contemporary Organizational Theory," 1.). See also Haveman, *The Power of Organizations*, and for 19th century roots of organizational thinking, see Sheldon Wolin's chapter, "The Age of Organization and the Sublimation of Politics" in *Politics and Vision*, 315-389.

[85] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 219.

[86] Haveman and Wetts, "Contemporary Organizational Theory," 5. According to Acs, Stam, Audretsch, and O'Connor, the field of Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (EE) that led to the more recent Social Entrepreneurial Ecosystems field (SEE) can be traced back to management strategy literature (related to industrial organization literature) and regional development literature, both of which "share common roots in ecological systems thinking" ("The Lineages of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Approach," 2).

(the environment), and the age and characteristics of the individual organizations (the organism).[87] Organizational ecologists found, for example, that:

1. As a population of organizations increases, so does the legitimacy of that form, which increases rates of emergence, and competition between individual organizations, which increases the rate of failure;
2. Organizations tend to change slowly, if at all; when they do, it is through selection instead of adaptation;
3. "[O]rganizations are sorted…into categories of forms that delimit what [they] should (not) be and do, based on observers' understandings"; they are penalized when they fail to fit into a category.[88]

Ecologists thus recognized conflict within the ecosystem for identity and resources (carving out niches, for example) as well as strategic alliances and mutuality (such as co-creating legitimacy or partitioning resources). What is clear, however, is that both conflict and cooperation emerge out of self-interest: the quest for organizational maintenance—in order, primarily, to make profits—means that a healthy ecosystem requires the failure of some organizations so that others can succeed, driving innovation.[89] Organizational ecology was, in this respect, in line with the consensus in favour of competition theory among theoretical ecologists by the end of the 1970s, as Keller noted. In both, competition, diversity, and stability were conceptually entwined.

This naturalized competition, however, begins to be downplayed—and indeed replaced with cooperation, synergy, and coordination—when ecosystem thinking is applied to progressive social change efforts. Starting in the 1990s, organizational ecology and the study of social movements experienced an "immensely productive cross-fertilization."[90] Political sociologists

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[87] Hannan, Pólos, and Carroll, *Logics of Organization Theory*, 18, and Haveman and Wetts, "Contemporary Organizational Theory," 6. Key works include Hannan and Freeman "The Population Ecology of Organizations" (1977) and *Organizational Ecology* (1989), Carroll and Hannan, *The Demography of Corporations and Industries* (2000), and Hannan Polos, and Carroll, *Logics of Organizational Theory* (2007). For background on Hutchinson's contributions to ecological thinking, see Kingsland, *Modeling Nature*, especially chapter 8.

[88] Haveman and Wetts, "Contemporary Organizational Theory," 6, 11-12.

[89] On an ecosystem approach to social entrepreneurship, see Bloom and Dees, "Cultivate your Ecosystem"—their research was supported by the Skoll and Kellogg Foundations, and they cite, among others, Hannan and Freeman's *Organizational Ecology*.

[90] Walker, "Organizational Theory in Political Sociology," 2. See also Swaminathan and Wade's (2001) effort to "highlight the utility of applying ideas and findings from social movement theory and research to the study of the evolution of new organizational forms" (287). And see, generally, on organizational theory and the study of social movements, Davis, McAdam, Scott, and Zald, *Social Movements and Organization Theory*. Weber and King note that prior to the 1970s organization theory and social movement theory were "different species" with "little cross-fertilization," due to their distinct intellectual lineages, objects of study, and mechanisms for change (see "Social Movement Theory and Organization Studies," 490). See also Edelman, Leachman, and McAdam, "On Law, Organizations, and Social Movements," 660-66. The study of social movements was primed to receive the insights of organizational ecology research in the 1990s because of the profound influence of resource mobilization theory (RMT) on the field since the 1970s, which, like resource dependence theory in organizational studies, "made plain the need for social movements to build organizations as vehicles for coordinating contributions of time, money, and effort by activist constituents" (Walker, "Organizational Theory in Political Sociology," 6). It took until the 1990s for the cross-pollination to really take place because right when RMT—and its attention to organizations—was emerging in social movement theory, organizational theory was turning its attention to inter-organizational dynamics of fields, networks, and populations (see Weber and King, "Social Movement Theory," 492). If the RMT and political process models in social movement studies emphasized social, political, and economic contexts as offering opportunities for or constraints on activism, ecological approaches added organizational forms and

showed how *political organizations*, not just businesses, "must compete for resources…to survive and fight for advantages in the political realm."[91] For example, when there is competition among activist groups, they tend to specialize in particular tactics and narrow their goals (i.e. look for niches).[92] Conversely, refusing categorization or "spanning categorical boundaries," organizational ecologists showed, affects the recruitment, choice of tactics, and the perceived authenticity of a movement organization.[93] Organizational theory thus led social movement studies away from caricatures of formal organizations as a moderating tool of elites,[94] and towards recognizing tactical plurality and organizational diversity as important for "movement stability and innovation."[95] Far from being irrational or spontaneous, successful social movements were shown to exhibit a "diversity of ways of organizing" that "make activism attractive to different potential activists."[96] Like in biological ecosystems, diversity equals health.

But the organizational ecology literature also recognizes competition amongst organizations for resources as a *problem* for maintaining this healthy diversity. On the one hand, movement success is influenced by preexisting networks or infrastructures, which help with acquiring resources, recruiting participants, gaining institutional support, and facilitating mobilizations.[97] Thus there is a correlation between the density of movement organizations (the infrastructure) and the emergence of new movements—this is what contemporary funders are channeling when they talk about creating 'enabling environments' for movements.[98] On the other hand, ecologists find that new actors tend to model themselves on organizations with already established identities, and that existing dominant organizational forms often coopt the goals of emerging forms.[99] Further, new organizations work collectively to increase the legitimacy of their niche, but once legitimacy has been achieved, begin to compete for resources—there is a tendency to move from cooperation to competition.[100] Scholars of organization-environment relations thus recognize both that "social movement trajectories are influenced by a variety of organizational forms that activists establish and maintain," and that "such diversity is itself delimited by competitive and institutional pressures."[101] Organizational diversity is important for

dynamics, and the composition of organizational populations, to the mix (Minkoff, "Population Ecology and Social Movements," 1-2).

[91] Walker, "Organizational Theory in Political Sociology," 4.

[92] Walker, "Organizational Theory in Political Sociology," 5. For arguments that synergies between diverse tactics do exist and strengthen movements, see Johnson, Agnone, and McCarthy, "Movement Organizations, Synergistic Tactics and Environmental Policy" (2010) and Bugden, "Does Climate Protest Work? Partisanship, Protest, and Sentiment Pools" (2020).

[93] Walker, "Organizational Theory in Political Sociology," 5. On authenticity see Walker and Stepick, "Valuing the Cause."

[94] Clemens and Minkoff, "Beyond the Iron Law," 167. Clemens and Minkoff note that at the same time that Piven and Cloward were arguing "that formal organization suppressed the capacity for disruption that threatens elites and extracts concessions" (which was appealing to New Left values), resource mobilization models foregrounded organizations "as the critical element distinguishing ineffective grievances from potentially consequential protest." Thus at this time, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, "the result was a choice between the thin and homogenized sense of organization within resource mobilization research and the distrust of organization that stemmed from an emphasis on disruption and spontaneity" (155).

[95] Clemens and Minkoff, "Beyond the Iron Law," 156.

[96] Clemens and Minkoff, "Beyond the Iron Law," 157.

[97] Swaminathan and Wade, "Social Movement Theory and the Evolution of New Organizational Forms," 292-302.

[98] Swaminathan and Wade, "Social Movement Theory," 290-291.

[99] Swaminathan and Wade, "Social Movement Theory," 302, 306.

[100] Swaminathan and Wade, "Social Movement Theory," 308-309.

[101] Clemens and Minkoff, "Beyond the Iron Law," 163.

the stability and maintenance of movements, but competition between and tendencies within organizations work against that diversity.

Empirical studies indeed find that 1) organizations that accrue legitimacy and resources dominate the social movement sector and establish "the modal forms of organization," that 2) "processes of [organizational] adaptation and selection tend to favor older, more professional, and reform-oriented movement organizations," and that 3) this makes it "difficult for younger, smaller, and more decentralized organizations," who are more willing to initiate protests, "to establish a viable national presence."[102] Research on foundation funding for the civil rights and women's rights movements, for example, shows that foundations are more likely to give money to professionalized organizations with paid staff and to those that avoid community organizing.[103] A study of Chicago's LGBT movement showed that organizations that used litigation had greater access to money and therefore independence than other organizations, allowing them "in effect, to set the movement's agenda."[104] And Benjamin Márquez's work on the Ford Foundation-funded Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) shows that MALDEF lawyers, far from deferring to Latino activists, "take the lead in identifying problems, contacting organizations, and formulating plans," ultimately making choices "guided by the intentions of funders who offer and grant money for specific projects."[105] For example, Ford has funded organizations working on Latino issues that promote "participation, public affairs, leadership development, public education, advocacy and litigation, and economic self-sufficiency."[106] Citing organizational ecology literature, Márquez notes that the less confrontational groups like MALDEF have crowded out other forms of organizing[107]: "In a political culture of competing voices and visions for the future, this influx of resources conferred significant advantages to organizations operating within existing institutions of law, civil society, and the market as appropriate vehicles to realize social change."[108] Concurring with Ferguson's work on Ford's civil rights funding, Márquez argues that the Foundation has sought "to socialize a generation of realistic, pragmatic, and policy-oriented activists by giving them expertise, scientific knowledge, and access to institutions and resources."[109]

III.   The Promise of Harmony

The "processes of selection and reproduction" illustrated across these examples, argue social movement scholars, consolidate a less confrontational, more homogenous, organizational base.[110] In other words, the conceptual triplet of competition-diversity-stability falters under the scrutiny of scholars studying progressive social change. The organizational ecology literature

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[102] Clemens and Minkoff, "Beyond the Iron Law," 163-164.

[103] Minkoff and Agnone, "Consolidating Social Change," 363-366.

[104] Findings of Levitsky's study as referenced in Edelman, Leachman, and McAdam, "On Law, Organizations, and Social Movements," 666.

[105] Márquez, *The Politics of Patronage*, 6.

[106] Márquez, *The Politics of Patronage*, 6-7. These organizations include "the National Council of La Raza, the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, the Mexican American Unity Council (MUAC), Chicanos Por La Causa, the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, the Midwest Voter Registration Education Project, and the National Puerto Rican Voter Participation Project" (6-7).

[107] Márquez, *The Politics of Patronage*, 7.

[108] Márquez, *The Politics of Patronage*, 9.

[109] Márquez, *The Politics of Patronage*, 11.

[110] Minkoff and Agnone, "Consolidating Social Change," 352.

thus limns the contours of a problem when applied to movements: how to maintain the diversity of social change ecosystems in the face of their tendency towards isomorphism?

This is precisely the problem that the Ayni Institute's report on social movement funding seeks to address. Consider the report's articulation of the ecology framework:

> In the for-profit world, businesses must think not only about their operations, but how their competitors are behaving. Understanding how multiple companies interact within a particular niche market has consequences for the strategic choices of each individual enterprise. The same holds true in the nonprofit and social change worlds. Understanding how multiple approaches to social change co-exist and interact within a particular issue group, such as criminal justice reform or LGBTQ rights, can have implications for an individual organization. The difference is that, instead of studying the market in order to gain competitive edge, social change organizations might look outwards to their field in order to find opportunities for collaboration and complementary action that will amplify the collective impact of multiple groups.
>
> Through our study of social movements internationally, as well as our experience training activists in the U.S., we have come to recognize the importance of mapping the full field of change agents working on a given issue. The Ayni Institute has developed a framework for thinking about the relationships between groups promoting change around a given issue. We call this framework social movement ecology.
>
> We use the metaphor of ecology because, in any dynamic ecosystem, many different organisms live together in a productive synergy. Each species has its own role in the environment, and each maintains complex relationships with other organisms. In a healthy ecosystem, species sustain each other and diversity flourishes.
>
> Analogously, successful social movements throughout history have included groups with different approaches to change working in synergy. Understanding where an organization fits into a movement ecology—and explicitly naming the theory of change that guides its work—can not only help the leadership of the organization create greater alignment internally, but it also has the potential to facilitate broader collaboration across groups pursuing different approaches. In a healthy movement ecology, organizations with different theories of change recognize each other's strengths and weaknesses, and they work together to produce large-scale social change.[111]

Against the competitive advantage associated with the corporate world in the first paragraph, the authors name collaboration, complementary action, collective impact, productive synergy, and alignment, as well as the importance of diversity.[112] The alternative to competition, in this

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[111] Ayni Institute, "Funding Social Movements," 12.

[112] In a footnote, the report suggest that the business world has undergone a *parallel* adoption of ecosystem thinking, implicitly downplaying any relation of influence. The text reads, "Over the past several decades, the nonprofit and philanthropic world has come to embrace the importance of what is commonly called theory of change. An organization or individual's theory of change is their conceptualization of how and why social change happens" (11). The footnote to this paragraph reads: "Business professionals have also created similar frameworks to adapt to increasingly complex market conditions. One key concept that has developed is understanding the importance of a business strategically orienting to fill a specific purpose or niche, as elucidated in Jim Collins' 'hedgehog concept'" (11, ft. 6). In the section of Collins' *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap…and Others Don't* (2001) that the report invokes, Collins cites Isaiah Berlin's "The Hedgehog and the Fox" essay as his inspiration, arguing that good businesses are run by hedgehog thinkers, who "simplify a complex world into a single organizing

account, is "fit," and organizations that might operate under very different ideologies and use different tools—legal advocates and protestors, for example—are brought together under the generic term "change agents." The generic "change agent" subordinates the tool (law, services, organizing, protest) to an unspecified goal, "change." Differences between these tools and actors are then attributed to differences in "theories of change," each of which have strengths and weaknesses.[113] This strengths vs. weaknesses heuristic elides an alternative vocabulary that would assess the different *interests* of actors and their tools or the structural *contradictions* between them. What is assumed in this move is that the vested interests of the different change agents *can be aligned*—that change can ultimately look the same for each agent even if pursued in diverse ways (recall that the AWID report cited above asked activists to "call out contradictions in the resourcing ecosystem" so that they can be resolved). "Alignment" and "synergy" are terms that recast difference and diversity as complementarity.[114]

The Ayni report asks foundations to resist their own moderating, homogenizing influence by mapping the ecosystem, identifying imbalances, and funding accordingly to neutralize the competition for resources. This call has been echoed by other commentators and practitioners within the field. Consider the following three statements from a professor of management studies (Ebrahim), executive director of a global philanthropic support organization (Bellegy), and two social movement scholars (Minkoff and Agnone):

> I argue that funders are much better positioned than their investees to achieving social impacts at a system level. Because they support and oversee many, sometimes hundreds, of nonprofits and social enterprises that typically act independently of one another, funders are poised to connect and leverage the combined impact of that work. Few funders have risen to this strategic challenge, but they are uniquely situated in the organizational ecosystem to do so.
> — Alnoor Ebrahim, *Measuring Social Change: Performance and Accountability in a Complex World* (2019), 7-8

> While welfare states are withdrawing globally, exposing further the most vulnerable communities, and while the limits of the private sector in building inclusive and sustainable societies have become obvious, acts of generosity and engagement from

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idea" (91) and have piercing clarity about their passion, strengths, and profitability, whereas fox thinkers are instead "scattered, diffused, and inconsistent" (92). A few years after *Good to Great*, Collins put out a companion volume called *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* (2005), which acknowledges that good thinking in business doesn't necessarily translate to nonprofit organizations. Here, he says that, because profitability is not the point, a good nonprofit hedgehog thinker should gain clarity on their passion, strengths (what they are best at), and what drives their resource engine, defined as "time, money, and brand" (18-19). In other words, finding a niche remains the goal, but the drive for profit—which implies competition—is replaced by more generic drive for 'resources', similar to the way philanthropic 'capital' in participatory grantmaking discourse discussed in chapter 2 is redescribed as 'resources' when in the hands of leaders with lived experience.

[113] For theories of change, Ayni references the report by New Philanthropy Capital's Angela Kail and Tris Lumley, "Theory of change: The beginning of making a difference," from April 2012. Kail and Lumley note that theories of change originated in the logic models of evaluation planning that community development charities used to plan complex interventions (3). They also make the same point as the Ayni report: developing a theory of change can help an organization collaborate with other, different organizations working towards similar goals (11-12).

[114] As Allen notes, for holistic biologists, "complex systems (even relatively simple ones) show emergent properties that are the product of the individual parts plus their interactions (what we call today synergistic effects are an example of emergent properties)." See "Mechanism, Organicism, and Vitalism," 62.

institutions, individuals and communities, under the collective head of philanthropy have become incredibly important. Yet to play their role in bringing about change, these actors must face hard questions about their own models, effectiveness and impact. They must also be stimulated, challenged and catalysed. Just like any living organism, these players are part of an ecosystem that enables them not only to survive but to prosper, that supports them, serves them, and allows them to achieve their goals…or not. It takes a strong, diverse and interconnected ecosystem for them to do this, to achieve impact at a bigger scale, to inform their decisions and avoid duplication, to train their professionals, to build bridges and foster collaboration with peers and with other sectors, to push others to give and give better… WINGS which provides a global platform for these enablers and developers is uniquely positioned to see the important contribution they are making to philanthropy and giving on all continents, and the growing diversity of ways in which they are making it. We are also uniquely positioned to see how much work is required to build robust support ecosystems, especially where they are most needed.
    — Benjamin Bellegy, "From infrastructure to ecosystem" (2021), 13

[F]oundations active in this field of private, nonprofit action have the potential to serve as more effective mediators and institution builders with respect to consolidating a stable field of organizations committed to more progressive forms of political or social advocacy and activism. Whether they are willing to translate this potential into a set of stable funding priorities, however, is still an open—and critical—question.
    — Minkoff and Agnone, "Consolidating Social Change" (2010), 367

Across these passages funders are positioned as 'uniquely situated' to access and assess information about the social change ecosystem—in the language of the AWID report, the ecosystem framework "makes it possible for funders to see where they fit in the whole."[115] Bellegy, further, suggests that we should think of the field of philanthropic support organizations more expansively, from being "a static, neutral, technical 'infrastructure', to being a living, interconnected and vital 'ecosystem'." Adopting this new metaphor will also require, these passages suggest, recognizing that the social change ecosystem achieves stability through a self-regulating arrangement whereby autonomous individuals within the system—the "many, sometimes hundreds, of nonprofits and social enterprises that typically act independently of one another"—are mediated and coordinated by the funders who serve as the common node amongst them, playing the role of orchestrator, to use Battilana and Kimsey's terminology.[116] According to these passages, funders are *of* the ecosystem, and simultaneously *above* it—able to see it from 30,000 feet and assess its workings, flaws, and potential. Even in the case of AWID, which does not present philanthropic actors as the central node, they are nevertheless assigned a coordinating role insofar as they must neutralize the tendency within the ecosystem to compete for resources.

      The functional role of foundation elites in the social change ecosystem to maintain balance—to regulate and harmonize in the name of maintaining dynamic equilibrium—helps explain the appeal of the ecosystem metaphor for them. The cybernetics-inflected ecosystem concept became attractive to ecologists in the middle of the 20th century, an age of atomic science and rapid change leading to social disharmony, in part because "it implied that regulatory mechanisms operated to maintain the ecological community," and perhaps also the human

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[115] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 8.
[116] Battilana and Kimsey, "Should You Agitate, Innovate, or Orchestrate?"

community.[117] As a conceptual apparatus allowing ecologists to look at a natural system as a whole, "through a 'macroscope'," and focus on general features and dynamics without detailed knowledge of each component, the ecosystem concept allowed scientists to identify "mechanisms that existed to preserve systems and maintain their identity."[118] The main way ecosystems were regulated, they found, drawing on cybernetics, was through feedback mechanisms, which improved efficiency and helped natural systems maintain a state of dynamic equilibrium amidst disturbance.[119] Cybernetics and mathematical modeling in the 1960s and 1970s gave ecologists "an imaginative way to conceptualize the relationship between ecological stability and the diversity or complexity of the system," one finding from cybernetics being, for example, that "a system formed by more elements with greater diversity is less subject to fluctuations."[120] Other researchers generalized the insights about feedback logics from cybernetics and general systems theory and applied them to social systems.[121]

The social change ecosystem thus appears to be a self-regulating whole, *self*-regulating because the element that regulates, ensuring stability and harmony—the philanthropic professionals who coordinate and mediate—is itself a necessary part of the larger system/organism. This functionalist and organicist idea can be seen in the Ayni Institute's insistence, during a workshop on their movement ecology framework, that their research showed that organizations representing each of the different foundational theories of change—personal transformation, alternative communities and institutions, inside game advocacy, structure organizing, and mass protests—are *necessary* for a movement to thrive.[122] The workshop stressed that organizations are most effective when they focus on and perfect just one or two of these theories of change, and the importance therefore of valuing other organizations. They caution against any individual organization trying to fulfill all five roles and "become a social movement," comparing this to one individual saying they are an organization: "it's not the way it works." You "can't just rely on yourself," and so must ask: "what do we need to do well [as an organization] to fulfill our role?" It is illogical, the webinar suggested, for a single organization to be a movement, implying that a group of organizations working together to form a movement are more than the sum of their parts; they are not just added one to the other, but form a greater whole.

The social change ecosystem looks, in these visions, like a machine, reflecting the significant influence of cybernetics and systems thinking on the third sector today. It can be coordinated and regulated, and made stable, through proper communication channels. The social movement ecosystem appears strikingly in line with the project of high modern social science because its subject is "systems structured by relations, the method employed [is] behavioral-functional analysis, and the goal [is] a theoretical model, one that potentially could be made an operational guide to practical action."[123] At the same time, however, the emphasis on functionalism points also to a prevailing organismic outlook. Functionalism refers to "any

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[117] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 190-192.
[118] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 191.
[119] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 206.
[120] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 209-211, citing Margalef, "Perspectives in ecological theory."
[121] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 233.
[122] "Ayni Movement Ecology workshop," held online, October 6, 2022.
[123] Heyck, *Age of System*, 19. When asked in a recent webinar where their social change ecosystem framework came from, the Ayni Institute named Gandhi, MLK, and Joanna Macy, the latter's early academic project being to to weave together approaches to causality in Buddhism and general systems theory. See Macy, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory: The Dharma of Natural Systems* (1991).

approach that tries to assess an action or social process in terms of its consequences for the social unity deemed relevant."[124] This functionalist thinking is central to organicism because each part of the whole is necessary: "Terms such as 'adjustment,' 'adaptation,' 'integration,' and 'function' dominated the discourse of the organicist or functionalist social sciences. Cooperation among the specialized parts of the social organism was viewed as essential to the survival of the whole, which, in turn, would ensure the welfare of the parts."[125] The ecosystem metaphor proves fertile for third sector elites because, as we have seen, it helps them to imagine for themselves a regulatory function within a progressive organic whole; it combines a high modernist emphasis on analyzing and regulating systems with an earlier cooperationist sensibility that imagines and represents a non-competitive, self-regulating progressive political whole.

IV.   The Ghost in the Ecosystem? Movement Liberalism and Political Vitalism

Early systems theorists and cyberneticists believed that their idea of the feedback loop afforded individuals in a system autonomy because it primarily concerned "communication and information flow between individuals."[126] However, as we've seen, communication systems are also "command-control systems"; engineers and managers were trained in cybernetics to make systems more efficient by improving feedback amongst individuals.[127] The "macroscopic" ecology that emerged at mid-century used data to model how a system was structured and functioned and predict its behaviour, an approach that "could guide intervention into any system, whether its components were ecological, electrical, or social."[128] It stands as a reminder that "modeling is a fundamentally instrumental, technical enterprise."[129] In Jean-Luc Nancy's words, "an ecology properly understood can be nothing other than a technology."[130]

The tension in cybernetic and systems theory between individual autonomy and control of the system's dynamics in order to maintain stability and improve efficiency is apparent also in social change ecosystem discourse. The autonomy and agency of the grassroots actor is a central concern of progressive third sector elites, even as they position themselves as regulators of the ecosystem's balance. What gives funders the right to coordinate in this way, and to what ends? As shown in the previous chapter, control over grassroots actors is politically untenable for many progressive elites, raising the specter of cooptation. Consider AWID's vision of a balanced movement ecosystem:

> In a balanced feminist funding ecosystem, feminist movements—particularly in the global south—are at the center and equal partners in the political project for global gender justice. Funders themselves see and understand their role within the ecosystem and are able to pull the levers of change so that the clear majority of their funding commitments toward gender justice and women's rights are going to movements directly.

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[124] Sciortino, "Functionalism and Social Systems Theory," 106.
[125] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 235.
[126] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 239.
[127] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 239.
[128] Taylor, "Technocratic Optimism," 240.
[129] Heyck, *Age of System*, 191.
[130] Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 41, as quoted in Hörl, "Introduction to General Ecology," 1. This idea is echoed by Debora Hammond, who notes that, "from its inception, ecology has lent itself to ideologies of control, whether as an instrument of radical politics or of technocratic management" (*The Science of Synthesis*, 83).

> Relationships of power are demystified and power asymmetries identified—providing a clear picture of where movements do and do not have avenues to shape the resourcing around them. In a balanced ecosystem, this feedback loop is a transparent conversation between funders and movements, so the ecosystem can respond and adapt accordingly.[131]
>
> Instead of activists forced to compete constantly and navigate each of the discrete funding pillars and sectors, movements' needs and priorities should be positioned as the central objective, with funders as active agents in collaboratively supporting those priorities.[132]

AWID here invokes the feedback loop central to cybernetic conceptualizations of control, positioning funders as receiving the information necessary for them to "pull the levers of change." At the same time that funders are pulling levers of change, however, they are also committed to demystifying power relations so that movements can shape the resourcing around them—"the resourcing" including, in this case, funders like AWID. A balanced ecosystem is, further, one in which *movements* are "at the center and equal partners in the political project."

What does it mean for funders to both pull the levers of change and be shaped by movements, or for movements to be both an equal partner with funders and at the center of their shared political project? If systems theories like the ecosystem concept are always on some level control technologies, progressive third sector professionals find themselves burdened with the task of framing the agent in control as being the grassroots actor, *even while these professionals retain their function as regulators, coordinators, and mediators*. As the rhetorical balancing act in the AWID report between attributing agency to grassroots actors and giving elites the role of enabling that agency shows, a crucial set of questions lurk behind the use of ecosystem metaphorics: who or what is the driver of progressive social change? What animates the ecosystem? From where does it derive its direction?

I want to suggest that the ecosystem metaphor, as used by elite progressive civil society actors, invites and leaves unanswered an older philosophical question about the unity and telos of the organism or superorganism. While cybernetics and systems thinking tried to resolve this question through the idea of feedback mechanisms, it reemerges in the discourse of progressive civil society elites who are drawn to systems thinking but who cannot accept the degree of control it attributes to them, as seen in the insistent centering of "leaders with lived experience" (discussed in Chapter 2) and grassroots social movements (Chapter 1) in their theories of change over the past two decades. This problem remains unresolved in part because, as many critics of systems thinking have pointed out, "the idea of self-regulating systems seeking to maintain themselves in equilibrium assumes a coherence in the goals and aims of their constituent components that does not exist in human society."[133] Thus the philosophical concerns that motivated (eco)systems thinkers about the relation of part to whole and function to structure, the organizing principles that governed the system of such relations, and the direction of the system, remain a problem for progressive elites in the third sector today. But the way in which the problem remains, the conceptual remainder that it generates but does not acknowledge, I argue, points to a defining characteristic of movement liberalism—and it is to teasing out this feature that the chapter turns.

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[131] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 40.

[132] AWID, "Toward a Feminist Funding Ecosystem," 10.

[133] Hammond, *The Science of Synthesis*, 86.

As Donna Haraway notes, "regulation concerns direction and goals, that is, the solution to regulation involves a solution to teleology."[134] Cybernetics was enthusiastically embraced by ecologists after WWII because "it enabled scientists to reframe their discussions of teleological or goal-directed processes so that vitalistic language could be completely banished"[135]— remember that Hutchinson's early influential paper was at a symposium on teleological mechanisms, that is, the way communicative feedback loops, not an external metaphysical agent or vital substance, produced stability and direction in natural systems. Vitalist theories claim that "living organisms defy description in purely physico-chemical terms, because organisms possess some non-material, non-measurable forces or directive agents that account for their complexity."[136] A reaction to mechanism and finalism, earlier vitalisms were adopted by thinkers trying to reconcile science and religious faith, suggesting a kind of "spiritual animation amidst the workings of physical law."[137] The many versions of mind-body dualism that emerged led to Gilbert Ryle's dismissal of vitalism in *The Concept of Mind* as the "dogma of the ghost in the machine."[138] But in the 19th century a more "critical vitalism" emerged following the transition in physics from a focus on matter to a focus on energy.[139] Figures like Henri Bergson, Hans Driesch, and Friedrich Nietzsche thought less in terms of a substance, soul, or fluid, as in older "substantival" vitalisms, focusing instead "on process and dynamic impulse in the context of an ontology of energy and idea."[140] Though vitalism fell out of favour in scientific circles by the mid 19th century, one element of vitalistic thought that retained a following into the early 20th century was the "holistic or organismic movement, which focused attention on organisms, populations, and even ecosystems as 'wholes'; that is, not as machines atomized into discrete and separable components."[141]

Though the ecosystem concept emerged as part of ecology's transition from an organicist to a more systems- and cybernetics-inflected mechanistic science, I suggest that the social change ecosystem concept retains something of this earlier organicism and vitalism. For the organicism of the social change ecosystem to hold together, however, both *novelty* and *wholeness* need to be explained, and not in terms of the regulatory capabilities of elites. In the small academic literature on the social change ecosystem, this question of teleology is presented as a cut and dried analytic issue resolved through elite alignment with the progressive ideology of grassroots movements, thereby providing unity and direction for the greater whole. We can see this in the work of sociologist Benjamin S. Case. In "Social Movement Ecology and Its Implications: Unpacking the Natural Metaphor" (2017), Case traces the social change ecosystem framework to the organizational ecology literature discussed above, noting that it has "not been theorized beyond a superficial analogy" even though it has reached thousands of activists. His

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[134] Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields*, 57.
[135] Kingsland, *The Evolution of American Ecology*, 212.
[136] Allen, "Mechanism, Organicism, and Vitalism," 62.
[137] Burwick and Douglass, "Introduction," 1.
[138] Ryle as quoted in Burwick and Douglass, "Introduction," 1.
[139] Likewise, Haraway notes that a "respectable organicism" could not develop in biology "until rigid determinism broke down in physics and minds were freed to feel the strains and contradictions of naïve mechanism" (*Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields*, 25).
[140] Burwick and Douglass, "Introduction," 1.
[141] Allen, "Mechanism, Organicism, and Vitalism," 68.

critique identifies three problems. The boundary problem: how do you know which groups to include in the ecosystem, or avoid prioritizing some kinds of groups or styles of activism while failing to capture others? The agency problem: if in biological ecosystems the 'success' of an organism is defined as its ability to survive and attributed to environmental factors rather than the decisions of that organism, when extended to human organizations doesn't this analytic skew definitions of success from winning to surviving and obscure the agency of individual participants? And the interaction problem: if in nature predator-prey, parasite-host, and all other manner of conflictual relationships for resources and survival contribute to a *healthy* ecosystem, what does this mean for social change ecosystems? The ecosystem metaphor risks "validating predatory or parasitic behavior" by organizational forms claiming to be acting in the name of the health of the ecosystem. After all, questions of tactic, strategy, position, and approach are "sites of the most passionate infighting" amongst movement participants, so "how do we distinguish between groups that are damaging to the health of the entire social movement environment and those that are serving a vital function in the creation of an overall healthy movement ecology that happens to come at the cost of another organization?"[142]

Case finds a common answer to all three problems: deploying the social movement ecology framework "responsibly" requires the unifying power of a shared ideology. Attaching the framework to "an explicitly radical ideology" will provide those who use it with the guiding light necessary to assess what groups belong in the ecosystem (the boundary problem), what defines success and how groups can work towards it together (the agency problem), and how they might relate to one another non-conflictually as they acquire resources (the interaction problem).[143] He also sees in the ecosystem idea a vision of interactions between "different liberatory forces" during a struggle that might prefigure "ways groups will relate to one another in a revolutionary society."[144] For Case, too, a diversity of organizational forms is a given good, so long as they are unified by a shared ideology capable of neutralizing conflict. Here, differing interests are acknowledged, but styled as something that can be sublimated into a shared ideology.

Case's account sidesteps the obvious next question: how does this "explicitly radical ideology" emerge out of a diversity of organizational forms? Here there is a telling difference between conservative movement philanthropy and progressive movement philanthropy. The ideas of Richard Fink, arch-conservative Charles Koch's "main political lieutenant," president of the Charles G. Koch Charitable Foundation, and "a devotee of Austrian free-market theory,"[145] provides a foil to how progressive foundations think about their role in movements. In "The Structure of Social Change," Fink developed a Hayek-inspired blueprint for increasing the Koch's political power.[146] He starts by noting that "universities, think tanks, and citizen activist groups all present competing claims for being the best place to invest resources." Universities claim to provide the ideas undergirding social change, but take a long time to produce results;

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[142] Case, "Social Movement Ecology and its Implications," 82.

[143] Case, "Social Movement Ecology and its Implications," 76-77, 82.

[144] Case, "Social Movement Ecology and its Implications," 82-83.

[145] Mayer, *Dark Money*, 172.

[146] First presented at the Philanthropy Roundtable annual conference in 1995, Fink's "The Structure of Social Change" appeared in print in *Philanthropy Magazine* in 1996 with the title "From Ideas to Action: The Role of Universities, Think Tanks, and Activist Groups." See Covington, "Moving a Public Policy Agenda," 5. The rise of the Kochs is recounted in detail by Jane Mayer in *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. As the brain behind the Koch's philanthropic and political influence, Fink's articulation of the structure of social change is broadly representative of how conservative philanthropy operates today.

think tanks and policy organizations provide influentials in government and media with specific action items rather than abstract concepts, but measure their success in publicity rather than concrete successes; and citizen activist groups "produce results" by building support for specific policies and ideas, even though they tend to "lose sight of the big picture" and instead "compromise to achieve narrow goals" here and now. As Fink observes:

> Each type of institute at each stage has its strengths and weaknesses. But more importantly, we see that institutions at all stages are crucial to success. While they may compete with one another for funding and often belittle each other's roles, we view them as complementary institutions, each critical for social transformation

While this elevation of complementarity over competition might be surprising coming from a free-market devotee, Fink claims that his framework is derived from Hayek's idea of the "structure of production." According to Hayek, more consumer goods are produced when savings are reinvested in developing "producer goods." Fink uses Robinson Crusoe as an example: the stranded Crusoe "only transcends subsistence when he hoards enough food to sustain himself while he fashions a fishing net, a spear, or some other producer good that increases his production of consumer goods." In modern day economies, this involves "the discovery of knowledge and integration of diverse businesses," such that "investments in an integrated structure of production yield greater productivity over less developed or less integrated economies." "By analogy," writes Fink, "the model can illustrate how investment in the structure of production of ideas can yield greater social and economic progress when the structure is well-developed and well-integrated." Thus the stages in this structure of production are the production of the "intellectual raw materials" in universities, the molding of the ideas to fit particular contexts and problems by think tanks, and the implementation of the think tank's policy ideas by citizens groups. Fink concludes his paper: "We at the Koch Foundation find that the Structure of Social Change model helps us to understand the distinct roles of universities, think tanks, and activist groups in the transformation of ideas into action."

The parallels between Fink's vision for conservative philanthropy and the Ayni Institute's ecology of change framework are striking. Both use a strengths vs. weaknesses heuristic, downplay competition, and elevate instead a coordinated range of organizations fulfilling specific functions; or in Fink's words, "social change requires a strategy that is vertically and horizontally integrated," spanning "idea creation to policy development to education to grassroots organizations to lobbying to political action."[147] Where the two differ is the *direction* of ideas through the structure. For Fink, the "explicitly radical ideology" that Case insists must hold together the social change ecosystem comes unabashedly from the elites in his structure of social change. While conservative philanthropists sometimes rhetorically point to the grassroots origins of right-wing movements such as the Tea Party, behind closed doors they are eager to claim to one another their central role in generating such movements from above, as Fink's paper illustrates and as Jane Mayer reveals at length in *Dark Money*.[148] In other words, conservative movement philanthropy claims to *produce* the ideological homogeneity that Case argues needs to govern movement ecosystems. It is telling, in this respect, that the "multiarmed

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[147] As quoted in Mayer, *Dark Money*, 173.

[148] As Alice O'Connor writes, in the 1970s conservative activists "set out to mobilize the grass tops…in an unapologetically top-down effort to redirect philanthropic wealth to more 'pro-American'—and procapitalist—causes" ("Foundations, Social Movements, and the Contradictions of Liberal Philanthropy," 342).

assembly line" from university to think tank to citizen group that is a hallmark of the Koch's philanthropic enterprise has, according to Mayer, been dubbed "the Kochtopus," a single brain controlling many outshoots.[149]

Despite the animal analogy, Mayer generally describes the conservative movement philanthropy of the Kochs in machinic terms, a machine being something organized by an external agent who establishes the machine-system; it is a deterministic imaginary, conceptualizing social change in terms of parts and inputs.[150] Compare this to progressive movement philanthropy, which in contradistinction to the mechanistic view contains its organizing principle within itself and is self-perpetuating, like an organism.[151] However, because the progressive movement ecosystem is plural, and the problem of conflict endemic, what emerges is the question and the necessity of replacing group interests leading to conflict with different functions within an imagined progressive whole. For both the conservative and progressive movement philanthropists, homogeneity of ideology is what allows a diversity of actors and tactics to work together non-conflictually (remember that the Ayni report refers to 'change agents' generically, subordinating the tool of change to the general direction or goal of that change). The difference is that conservatives don't feel the same need to naturalize this arrangement by claiming the ideology flows organically from within; the need for ideological coherence to emerge from an authentic grassroots political actor is part of movement liberalism. As the CEO of a major progressive US-based foundation points out, left wing elites "mimic what the right does in this country: we claim to not have power. But the right is openly ideological, they know who their enemy is. In social movement funding the opposition is a specter…[we] don't name names! There is no specific person or institution, just general ideas."[152] Put another way, while conservative foundations actively target the democratic party and its policies, progressive foundations devote their time to changing 'systems.'

Unlike conservative movement philanthropists, progressive elites are left *searching* for a unifying ideological center. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, progressive civil society elites have settled on the grassroots social movement actor as the source of the unifying and directing ideology, in part because of their belief that the engine of progressive change cannot come from a place compromised by elite interests and proximity to market and state power. The central role of social movements in producing this cohering ideology is evident, for example, in the recent work of philosopher Michele Moody-Adams. In *Making Space for Justice: Social Movements, Collective Imagination, and Political Hope*, Moody-Adams argues that social movements produce "consequential insights" for both "theoretical reflection about the nature of justice" as well as "new and ongoing movements seeking to promote justice."[153] Agreeing with sociologists Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison that movements are "forms of cognitive praxis" that produce "'socially conditioned' and locally valuable knowledge," Moody-Adams insists that, more than this, movements produce general moral knowledge about the

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[149] Mayer, *Dark Money*, 173.

[150] In the mechanistic worldview, "nature can best be understood as a mosaic of separate parts, a detailed description of which, when combined together, yields a complete description/understanding of the phenomena in question" (Allen, "Mechanism, Organicism, and Vitalism," 60-61).

[151] On mechanistic vs. organismic metaphors of political bodies, specifically nations, see Cheah, *Spectral Nationality*, 26-34.

[152] Interview #14.

[153] Moody-Adams, *Making Space for Justice*, 2.

nature of justice and democracy.[154] Through readings of historical and contemporary movements, she argues that movements use "the transformative powers of imagination" to teach us how to combine compassionate concern and robust respect—what she calls "humane regard"—and to inspire political hope.[155] Through attention to aesthetic, language, and narrative activism, she joins with Iris Young in the project of expanding what counts as "[d]emocratic political communication" to include "forms of communication that do not privilege discursive argument and 'dispassionate' reason-giving."[156] In this way, Moody-Adams offers a set of tools to help us listen to what social movements have to say and to recognize the substance of their political and moral knowledge.

The literature on movement lawyering shows us what Moody-Adams' project might look like in practice. As Amna A. Akbar, Sameer M. Ashar, and Jocelyn Simonson have recently written, movement law scholars

> start not from a discrete legal issue or doctrinal dispute, but from movements, their strategies, and their tactics. They spend time understanding the social movement ecosystem—including the range of people, organizations, and ideation embedded within it—about which they write. They recognize that social movements are engaging in deep ideation around questions of legal meaning and entitlement, citizenship and democracy.[157]

As a methodology for legal scholars, movement law involves "tak[ing] seriously the epistemological universe of today's left social movements, their imaginations, experiments, tactics, and strategies for legal and social change."[158] Consequently, it is "essential for scholars to write about movements to understand the theories of social change that they embody," including looking to the "lived experience" of movement actors.[159] Movement law scholars should consider movement actors as "organic intellectuals" who "engage in a dialectic between praxis, critique, and ideation within various collective formations."[160] Central, then, to the movement law scholarly project is "locating resistance," identifying ideas that emerge from it, and recognizing and advancing those ideas within legal scholarship.[161] The movements (or resistance) that they seek to recognize in scholarship "represent people locked out of meaningful representation in the formal channels of statecraft" and who offer "a theory of change aligned with engaging and enfranchising the grassroots."[162] Adopting a "solidaristic stance" vis-à-vis movements involves a "commitment to experimentation, transformation, and collectivity" that "displaces the legal scholar as an individual expert with just the right technocratic fix"; it requires humility and accountability, and the avoidance of "extractive dynamics."[163] The position

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[154] Moody-Adams, *Making Space for Justice*, 3-7. Part of Moody-Adams' project is to point out that, with the exception of a few thinkers including John Rawls and Iris Young, philosophers have not valued social movements as sources of inquiry "that might inform, and possibly even transform, theoretical reflection about justice itself" (19).

[155] Moody-Adams, *Making Space for Justice*, 4-5.

[156] Moody-Adams, *Making Space for Justice*, 59.

[157] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 848.

[158] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 825.

[159] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 826.

[160] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 846.

[161] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 849.

[162] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 851.

[163] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 864.

of movement law scholars "as elites within powerful institutions" requires of them "constant self-reflexivity" and "ongoing introspective and outward-looking critique."[164] Because movements "can be co-opted, contained, and channeled when they attempt to translate long-term organizing and mobilizing into policy programs," movement law scholars have the responsibility to "make good use of [their] relative privilege" by writing about movement ideation in order to "contribute to seeding policy discourse with radical aims and means."[165]

While this might at first glance appear to be a statement about the recognition and representation of grassroots ideation—which it in part is—what I want to point out is the emphasis across this genre on humility in the face of the inscrutability of lived experience, the decentering of professionalized experts and technocratic fixes, self-identification as elite, insistence on introspection, fear of cooptation, and reluctance (despite the talk of recognition and representation) to actually naming the *content* of the "deep ideation" embodied and produced by movements. While Moody-Adams does seek to offer this content, giving a name (*humane regard*) to the moral-political ideation of social movements, she insists more than once that her project approaches "the criticism and struggle carried out by social movements with robust philosophical humility."[166] As Cummings argues, "deference to client decision making and support for client empowerment are critical themes in the movement lawyering vision," such that "[m]ovement lawyers are urged to 'strive to achieve an ego-less practice'."[167]

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In making his case for thinking in terms of a funding ecosystem matched up with a social change ecosystem outlined at the beginning of the chapter, Michael Edwards suggests that, so far, donor-centric approaches to funding have focused over much on what funders think, rather than "building the independent agency of those who are working on the ground."[168] Likewise, Cummings argues that representatives of the emerging movement liberalism have "deliberately looked away from traditional institutions—courts, agencies, and legislatures—as generators of legal and social change, and instead focused on the bottom-up mobilization of less powerful groups as independent lawmaking actors."[169] What I have shown so far is that those funders who do want to help build this 'independent agency' believe that it involves a kind of self-renunciation on their part, an ego-less, interest-less, humble practice. Because of their greater institutional and economic power, if they did act on their own interests, it would quickly compromise their social movement partners. The autonomy of the latter—their 'independent agency'—must be secured because *their* interests are actually the interests of the greater progressive whole. As Edgar Villanueva argues in *Decolonizing Wealth*, if elites give up control of capital, it can be redeployed as a neutral resource by the disadvantaged *for the benefit of everyone*. Social movements are seen in the grammar of movement liberalism not as self-interested, but rather as containing the interests of the whole progressive social change

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[164] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 875. "A constant awareness of one's own positionality is necessary because scholars co-opt social movements in intended and unintended ways alike. There is always the risk that our own position as elites will distort social movement ideas toward legitimation of injustice" (879).

[165] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 882-884.

[166] Moody-Adams, *Making Space for Justice*, 3.

[167] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 389-390, citing Freeman, "Supporting Social Justice Movements," 202.

[168] Edwards, "'Beauty and the Beast,'" 10.

[169] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 382.

ecosystem. Agency in the social change ecosystem is thus distributed and differentiated; the agency to direct the whole through a unifying ideology is located in the grassroots actor, while the agency to protect the grassroot actor's agency it located in the elite actor, who neutralizes competition by subordinating individual interests to the interests of the grassroots actor, whose interests, in turn, are really the interests of the collective.

The rhetoric of the social change ecosystem thus points to the idea of the 'grassroots social movement' as a kind of political vitalism at the heart of movement liberalism, the essential element that allows disparate parts to form a non-competitive whole by providing a common direction and unity. Central to the neo-vitalisms of Kant, Bergson, and Driesch is the idea that "there exists a vital force inside the biological organism that is irreducible to matter because it is a free and undetermined agency."[170] In Bergson's vitalist thought, for example, freedom is closely tied to intuition born of experience.[171] The originality of the *élan vital* (or vital impulse) cannot be captured by the intellect, which only limits or immobilizes the experience of flux when it tries.[172] Intuition enables action, and an experience of freedom, beyond "the 'crust' of rationalization'."[173] Thus for vitalists like Bergson and Driesch, "something always escaped quantification, prediction, and control."[174] Driesch believed that central to any vitalism is the idea that "the developmental processes of the organism are not 'the result of a special *constellation of factors known already* to the sciences of the inorganic,' but are rather 'the result of an *autonomy* peculiar' to life."[175] For Driesch, that incalculable creative agency is called "entelechy," which "decides which of the many formative possibilities inside the emergent organism become actual."[176] It is "a *self-directing* activeness": "Entelechy coordinates parts on behalf of a whole in response to event and does so without following a rigid plan; it answers events innovatively and perspicuously…[Entelechy] has real efficacy: it animates, arranges, and directs the bodies of the living."[177]

Jane Bennett suggests in *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* that "what is essential to vitalism is an affirmation of free activity…vitalism recurs because it defends a world that is not predetermined but open, a land of opportunity for creativity, surprise, and choice" that is "resistant to calculation."[178] But importantly, the organism in vitalist thought is not only self-directing, but also *self-limiting*. If vitalism names one response to the question of novelty in an organism or system, it also raises the problem of self-limitation. "Driesch attributed a kind of inventiveness to the organism's (or even the organ's) responses to each uniquely configured event," writes Bennett, "but entelechy's agency does not seem to include the creation of the radically new."[179] Similarly, though Moody-Adams claims that philosophers should approach movement ideation with a profound humility (i.e. that movements might *transform* philosophy), when pressed during a public event she qualified this humility by arguing that "the real core of

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[170] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 83.
[171] Burwick and Douglass, "Introduction," 3.
[172] Burwick and Douglass, "Introduction," 4.
[173] Burwick and Douglass, "Introduction," 5.
[174] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 63.
[175] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 87, citing Driesch, *The History and Theory of Vitalism*, 1.
[176] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 72.
[177] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 73, 75.
[178] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 90. Bennett is thinking about "a vitality intrinsic to materiality as such" (xiii) and what this means for political theorizing. Differently, I am thinking of movement liberalism as being characterized by something like a vitalist political organicism.
[179] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 79.

social activism that I am describing…is not about coming up with new concepts, but new interpretations of existing concepts."[180] While moral ideas are "semantically deep," says Moody-Adams, thus providing movements room to offer new interpretations of them that we ought to take seriously, there are only a set number of such ideas in the universe.

What emerges here is in part a reaction against the land of "creativ[ity], surprise, and choice" that vitalism promises, and a return to something closer to the "nonvitalist organicism" of the early 20th century embryologists that Donna Haraway explores in *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields*, who balance novelty and wholeness through use of ideas like "hierarchy, levels, and constrained pathways of development."[181] The political novelty promised by social movements, in this reading, is always already to some extent curtailed, determined, limited, even as it remains an 'autonomous agency' directing the whole. In the discourse I've explored in this chapter, a 'healthy civil society' is the horizon that limits social movement's creative promise—a social movement that aimed to fundamentally challenge the liberal trinity of state-market-civil society would fail to register as a social movement in the movement liberal imagination. The novelty offered by movements is both their potential and their problem. While the long arch of progressive civil society and scholarly views on social movements has involved legitimating them as political on the grounds of rationality (the move from Le Bon's crowds to Moody-Adams' philosopher-movements), there remains a need to strategically understand that rationality as both inaccessible to elites—as a reason unto itself—and self-limiting; as a free, autonomous agency, and as constrained to a particular function within a whole. This vacillation on the part of movement liberals bespeaks a non-vitalist organicist drive to explain each role, to interpret and understand the movement actor, and a gesture towards a vitalist remainder, a resistance to fully capture everything about movements and their ideation, an emphasis on lived experience, deference, and humility. The tension between these two drives is also the tension between the commitment to 'movements' and 'liberalism' in movement liberalism.

Conclusion

Reading the social change ecosystem framework alongside 20th century organismic and vitalist thought helps draw out the essential problematic that elite funders face: what is the source of direction, stability, and novelty in progressive political projects, and, following from this, what is their role in such projects? Movement liberalism involves a search for political authenticity at the heart of the liberal political project; this search has, for progressive civil society organizations, settled on the idea of 'social movements', which are then invested with a kind of vitalism that propels the progressive political whole made up of parts with different functions, as if it were an organism. Documents like Ayni's "Funding Social Movements" report use ecosystem metaphorics to suggest that heterogeneous civil society actors are given form and direction by grassroots movement actors, while assigning to funders the job of maintaining and regulating that structure.

One of the problems with the ecosystem framework, however, is that it encourages third sector professionals to invest in and perform what philosopher Olúfémi O. Táíwò calls

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[180] Moody-Adams, "Celebrating Recent Work by Michele M. Moody-Adams: New Books in the Arts and Sciences," October 26, 2022, min. 44:20. https://sofheyman.org/media/videos/celebrating-recent-work-by-michele-m-moody-adams.

[181] Haraway, *Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields*, 57.

"deference epistemology," his term for the philosophical humility and constant self-reflexivity that emerges in (what I am calling) movement liberal discourses.[182] In *Elite Capture*, Táíwò offers a blistering critique of *deference politics*, "an etiquette that asks people to pass attention, resources, and initiative to those perceived as more marginalized than themselves."[183] Deference politics, which came from the standpoint epistemology of 1970s feminist circles and has spread to contemporary academic and activist communities, often takes the form of calls to listen to leaders with lived experience or to center the marginalized; in practice, this usually means "handing conversational authority and attentional goods to whoever is already in the room and appears to fit a social category associated with some form of oppression—regardless of what they have or have not actually experienced."[184] But according to Táíwò, it is not always easy to identify who should represent a particular group. Often the individual identified ends up being an elite from a marginalized group, who benefits from this deference but who might not be aligned with their community. Even if a fitting representative is identified, performances of deference direct attention away from the problem of why so few marginalized people are in the room in the first place.[185] Passing the mic to an activist at a foundation board meeting does little to challenge why there are so few people who look like them on the board itself.[186] Instead, a huge amount of energy is expelled analyzing and trying to perfect *relations* within the room: as the CEO of a major US foundation suggested, "so much of [progressive foundation] discourse is about making something transactional seem relational."[187] (Fittingly, the most read article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* in 2022 was "The Relational Work of Systems Change: Collective impact efforts must prioritize working together in more relational ways to find systemic solutions to social problems").[188] Finally, deference politics makes a virtue out of trauma and suffering, which are turned into "social credentials" rather than as "problems to deal with collectively": "Contra the old expression, pain, whether born of oppression or not, is a poor teacher. Suffering is partial, shortsighted, and self-absorbed. We shouldn't have a politics that expects different. Oppression is not a prep school."[189]

Táíwò insightfully points out what deference politics leads elites not to do—their deferrals, self-renunciation, abdication of responsibility, and antipolitical sensibility. Yet Táíwò's account fails to observe the range of activities that deference politics *invites*, the capacities elites do claim as part of paying deference. For all that these humble elites (claim to) renounce, what they retain is the ability to identify what is authentically political. This helps us understand a set of left-progressive discourses circulating today: movement lawyering, aligning foundation assets with movement values, identifying 'leaders with lived experience.' These discourses and practices are about cultivating a way of discerning authentic politics *so as to* pay deference to it. Thus deference politics invites the production of new fields of knowledge (monitoring and evaluation of ecosystems and movements), new careers (social movement consultants, racial ally trainer), and new orienting questions: what does it take to maintain the

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[182] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 107.

[183] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 12.

[184] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 70-71.

[185] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 70-72.

[186] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 78. In his words: "The facts that explain *who* ends up in *what* room shape our world much more powerfully than the squabbles for comparative prestige between people who have already made it inside."

[187] Interview #14.

[188] Milligan, Zerda, and Kania, "The Relational Work of Systems Change."

[189] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 119-120. For a theoretical elaboration of this point targeting specifically the "social weightlessness" in radical democratic theory see Lois McNay's *The Misguided Search for the Political*.

balance of the social change ecosystem? Who is an appropriate grassroots actor or community representative? How to measure the impact of different parts of the movement ecology?

The assumption at the heart of these questions and fields of knowledge is that there is a kind of pure organizational form called a social movement or grassroots activists that can be identified; implicitly, they obscure from view the real hybridity of organizational forms and kinds of political and social action. In other words, what this chapter demonstrates is that deference politics not only reveals the antipolitical mindset of elites or coopts movements, but encourages or even requires neat lines to be drawn demarcating who defers and who is deferred to. The appeal to and rise of 'systems thinking' and the ecosystem framework over the past two decades among elite social change professionals is rooted in their search for a language and science of interdependence that simultaneously sharpens and essentializes the differences between organizational types and progressive actors. Movement liberalism's political grammar thus differs from earlier moments when elites turned their eyes to social movements in its investment in an ontologizing distinction between different social change agents and organizations.

Take, for example, the difference between the cause lawyering of the civil rights movements and the kind of movement law described by Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson above. Thomas Hilbink describes a range of cause lawyering approaches during the civil rights movement: "elite/vanguard," such as the movement liberalism of the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education Fund, which saw legal change as a primary engine of social change; "proceduralist," including the lawyers from Kennedy's President's Committee, who were dedicated to maintaining the legal system, acted as mediators trying to avoid violence, and saw themselves as representing individuals rather than the movement; and "grassroots," for example the radical attorneys associated with the National Lawyers Guild, who adopted the radical democratic ethos of the movement they served.[190] On the face of it, grassroots cause lawyering, which Hilbink also calls movement law, is very much the same as Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson's account of movement law: the law is "simply another tool for achieving political goals," rather than a sacrosanct ideal; lawyers must defer to rather than try to direct the movement; and, in the words of a Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee message to its attorneys in the mid-1960s, privileged actors like lawyers should "not be misled by any advantage of education, worldly experience, legal knowledge, or even common sense, into thinking that [their] function is to tell [movement actors] what they should do."[191]

But what Hilbink emphasizes is that, despite this injunction to humility, these "lawyers were nonetheless a part of the movement. They were activists, as well."[192] In fact, and contrary to much of the literature on elite cooptation of movements, many of the lawyers who engaged with civil rights activists, even those identified with the elite/vanguard and proceduralist approaches to cause lawyering, were radicalized by the encounter, coming to see themselves "not [as] representing individuals, but rather *the movement*."[193] Some of these attorneys, having witnessed first-hand the realities of justice in the Southern states, developed a new skepticism about the value of the law in the civil rights cause and never returned to regular practice,

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[190] See Hilbink, "The Profession, the Grassroots, and the Elite." Hilbink elaborates on this tripartite division in "You Know the Type: Categories of Cause Lawyering." On the National Lawyer's Guild see Falciola, *Up Against the Law: Radical Lawyers and Social Movements, 1960s-1970s*. Ann Southworth offers an interesting anatomy of conservative movement lawyers in *Lawyers of the Right: Professionalizing the Conservative Coalition*.

[191] Hilbink, "The Profession, the Grassroots, and the Elite," 71, 73.

[192] Hilbink, "The Profession, the Grassroots, and the Elite," 73.

[193] Hilbink, "The Profession, the Grassroots, and the Elite," 74.

identifying more with the movement than with their profession. As Luca Falciola states in his history of the National Lawyer's Guild, many of these attorneys "identified with their clients" and "became deeply involved with the organization of dissent" both within and outside of court.[194] Indeed, oral histories by Guild lawyers active in the 1960s and 1970s reveal how they "revised their identity and constructed themselves as activists, with all the complexities that this process involved.[195] The movement liberalism of contemporary movement law, I want to suggest, radicalizes a kind of standpoint epistemology that makes identifying as part of a movement increasingly difficult for privileged professionals, homogenizing a very heterogeneous spectrum of professionals as privileged elites. When Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson write that movement law scholars and practitioners need to "spend time understanding the social movement ecosystem—including the range of people, organizations, and ideation embedded within it" [196]—they are inviting these professionals to undertake the mapping effort needed to identify the authentic driver of social change, rather than to imagine oneself as potentially inhabiting such a position, even if in a different way than a grassroots activist.

This conceptual partitioning also works on grassroots actors. Because the job of funders is to balance the ecosystem, and because the actor most often identified as in need of support to achieve such balance is the grassroots actor, a whole host of actors in the ecosystem are now incentivized to reinvent themselves *as social movements*. As one director of evaluation at a major women's rights organization explains:

> I strongly suspect that we are seeing the relational effects of these conversations [about movements]…even in our language as an organization, social movements, gender justice movements, [are] front and center for our new strategy. It was in our old strategy, but it is the cornerstone of the new strategy. And now, when grantees write to us, they are using that language—there is some adoption.[197]

The director of evaluation at another global human rights and development organization notes that since around 2016 they have received requests to use their movement assessment tool to assess development programs *as* social movements.[198] And a freelance non-profit consultant indicated that they have had an increase in clients asking for advice on how to integrate a movement orientation into their philanthropic approach or community investing work.[199] Evaluation technologies like AJWS's Movement Assessment Tool, the Global Fund for Women's Movement Capacity Assessment Tool, and the Innovation Network's Social Movement Learning Project all provide the criteria by which different actors can articulate their identity as a movement.

The functionalist logic of the ecosystem framework incentivizes some actors to identify as privileged elites and others to identify as grassroots activists, and both to reify these identities, in the name of the health of the larger progressive project.[200] Such a framework, however,

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[194] Falciola, *Up Against the Law*, 3.
[195] Falciola, *Up Against the Law*, 8.
[196] Akbar, Ashar, and Simonson, "Movement Law," 848.
[197] Interview #10.
[198] Interview #5.
[199] Interview #9.
[200] This distinction takes different forms. For example, in Cynthia Rayner and François Bonnici's *The Systems Work of Social Change: How to Harness Connection, Context, and Power to Cultivate Deep and Enduring Change*, the authors develop the idea of "primary actors" and "supporting actors" (xxxv).

presents political empowerment as a zero-sum game: empowering grassroots actors is linked to the "ego-les practice," in Cummings' words, of elites like lawyers and philanthropic professionals.[201] As Táíwò says, when deference becomes a habit it can "supercharge moral cowardice" and "provide social cover for the abdication of responsibility," displacing "onto individual heroes, a hero class, or a mythicized past the work that is ours to do in the present."[202] Thus for all that movement law and movement liberalism are presented as progressive politicizations of powerful institutions, we should keep in mind Cummings' argument that movement liberalism is at root about "redeem[ing] progressive politics without compromising law."[203] If the goal of progressive philanthropic and legal actors is "system's change" then, perhaps ironically, the social change ecosystem framework might in fact work *against* radicalizing—and compromising—the powerful social institutions of law and philanthropy.

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[201] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 389-390, citing Freeman, "Supporting Social Justice Movements," 202.
[202] Táíwò, *Elite Capture*, 81.
[203] Cummings, "The Social Movement Turn in Law," 364.

Chapter 4

Paracapitalist Imaginaries:
Social Movements, Civil Society, and Genres of the Political

The previous two chapters analyzed practices elite progressive civil society professionals have developed to enable solidarity relationships with grassroots actors. In this final chapter, I consider the political-theoretical consequences of such practices, understood as technologies of movement liberalism. Where does movement liberalism fit into the history of political thought? How does it function as a liberal reaction to illiberal times? And what conceptions of emancipation, progress, or agency does movement liberalism underwrite? The chapter reads the material analyzed thus far to uncover the plot of the story about social change told by elite civil society professionals through their words and actions.

The chapter proceeds in three parts. The first explores how both liberal and radical democratic theorists propose to '(re)politicize' the human rights project. It shows how a theoretical consensus around a political notion of human rights is emerging: radical democratic *and* liberal politicizations of human rights involve creating an autonomous realm of transformative agency signified by grassroots movements or civil society. This is the case despite radical democratic thinkers seeking to critique liberalism, revealing how the political grammar of liberalism shifts to accommodate its critics.

Part two draws out what is specific to movement liberalism's approach to formulating and securing this autonomous realm of political agency. The practices of movement liberal elites explored in Chapters 2 and 3 reveal a zero-sum calculus when it comes to political agency: progressive elites work to circumscribe their own agency in the name of enabling the agency of grassroots movement actors, effectively splitting the 'self' of social change. Drawing on genre theory, which is attentive to the ways genres instruct us on how to apportion truth, authority, and agency in narratives, I show how progressive third sector professionals approach their own potential for political action through the lens of tragedy, while viewing the political action of the social movement actor through the redemptive lens of romance. Movement liberals toggle between political disenchantment and political re-enchantment: a tragic outlook requiring self-containment, fear of wielding power, and humility in the face of the unknowable consequences of political action, and a romantic outlook that negates the tragic by folding it within a redemptive quest by virtuous heroes signifying wisdom and power.

What is it that is redeemed in the redemption narrative of movement liberalism? Part three of the chapter continues a line of argument advanced in Chapter 1, contending that the reason this play of political disenchantment and re-enchantment remains part of a *liberal* story is that it imagines a kind of politicization meant to secure a liberal conceptualization of civil society as a counterforce to state and market power. While Chapter 1 showed that third sector elite discourse is marked by a conceptual elision between 'social movements' and 'civil society', with each described as essential to the survival of the other, this chapter points to the consequences of figuring movements as infrastructural to liberal modernity in this way. More than rhetorical infelicity or conceptual laziness, the assimilation of movements to civil society in order for elites to support them points, rather, to the imaginative horizon of movement liberalism. Despite their penchant for the language of 'systems change' and 'transformation',

movement liberals see their task as the strengthening of radical elements within civil society to fortify it against the encroachment of state and market actors, rather than the reordering or upending of state, market, and civil society or of the idealized balance between them. Underwriting movement liberal politicizing efforts, in other words, is a *paracapitalist imaginary*: the vision of a space beside and in tension with but not existentially threatening to capitalism. The social movement is imagined by elite civil society professionals as beyond the reach or outside of capitalism in the name of enabling a harmonious rather than antagonistic relationship between state, market, and (civil) society.

The chapter's conclusion reflects on the implications of the previous three chapters for the currency of appeals to 'the political' in recent attempts to redeem human rights, development, and philanthropy. The calls by scholars to politicize liberal social change practices, I have shown in the previous chapters, were actually preempted by professionals in the third sector who have since the early 2000s made the search for the political into a technical project; rather than an abstract formulation wielded by radical democratic theorists, 'the political' is already part of a technical language of elite, progressive foundations today, a key feature of what I am calling movement liberalism. But it is a conceptualization of the political that draws on both tragic and romantic sensibilities to rhetorically sediment an essentialist conceptualization of political subjectivity. The politicization story that movement liberals tell is a dual act holding together political disenchantment and re-enchantment. It is a story that refigures what radical democrats think of as an autonomous space of the political as a specific *subject* imbued with authentic political power: it ontologizes political possibility in the being of the grassroots activist.

It should be clear by now that I am less interested in offering a *history* of movement liberalism than showing how certain impulses in liberal thought are taking on a new form, or what Raymond Williams calls "structure of feeling," that we can start to discern, name, and analyze. Williams's commitment to connecting personal experiences, historical structures and transformations, and the modes of intelligibility used to make sense of them, inspires me here. Like Williams, I am interested in the "forming and formative processes" rather than the "formed whole," which requires attention to the fissures, tensions, and multiple itineraries of intersecting discourses, and to how individual self-fashioning connects to shifting social institutions and patterns of relationships.[1] This is why "world-view" or "ideology" or "class outlook" are all too strong, suggestive of a "fixed form" rather than the "intricate forms of unevenness and confusion" that make up lived relations to emerging ideologies.[2] A structure of feeling, for Williams, instead points to "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt," as characteristic elements of consciousness and relationships. Feeling and thought are at times indistinguishable or continuous in this kind of practical consciousness, even as they can be identified as forming a structure "with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension" and with "emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics."[3] While such structures of movement liberal feeling are not "as articulate and explicit" as when formalized in institutions, they nonetheless amount to a practical consciousness that is very much lived, rather than an official consciousness that is received, fixed, and recognizable.[4] Tracking the "embryonic phase" of an emergent way of thinking about political and social action has value in part because, as Williams's notes, structures of feeling "do not have to await definition,

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[1] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 128.
[2] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 129-130.
[3] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132.
[4] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 130.

classification, or rationalization before they exert palpable pressures and set effective limits on experience and on action."[5]

The chapter turns to the tools of genre theory because genres, as structures of meaning, can help us get deeper into movement liberalism's structure of feeling, drawing out how movement liberalism is more a sensibility and a style or disposition of thought than a coherent and systematic political theory. Genres, as John Frow explains, "generate and shape knowledge of the world."[6] They are bound up with power because, more than just stylistic devices, they "create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility."[7] The worlds that genres project refer to "a relatively bounded and schematic domain of meanings, values, and affects," "settings, causality, and motivation," "accompanied by a set of instructions for handling them."[8] As a pattern of semiotic material that structures meaning and projects a world, genres offer protocols for how to interpret new information.[9] The generic cues in a Bildungsroman, for example, will constrain us to read the text for signs of development, even when these don't appear in the denotative meaning of most of the sentences in that text.[10] Understanding genre in this way, the chapter follows Hayden White's cue in *Metahistory* to locate the "prefigurative element" by which the practices and concepts of a text or discourse are "tacitly sanctioned."[11] This requires us to read for "the content of the form," as he puts it elsewhere.[12] I find genre a helpful tool for discerning the content of a "structure of feeling" because genres offer protocols for interpreting events, attributing agency, and recognizing character types that exist on the prefigurative or tacit level of feeling rather than the dogmatic level of an official political program.

Limning the contours of movement liberalism's structure of feeling will help us get to the imagination of political action at the heart of movement liberalism's practice, and, through this, put pressure on theoretical calls for politicization by drawing attention to the ontologizing assumptions underwriting them. The goal of the chapter is thus threefold. First, to provide a substantive account of movement liberalism's structure of feeling that brings together the eclectic discourses, practices, and conceptual formations tracked across the previous chapters. Second, to offer a critique of movement liberalism as secreting a paracapitalist political imaginary. And third, to demonstrate the importance of historicizing the grammar of movement liberalism. I draw in the chapter on Marxist literary scholars because their injunction to "always historicize!"[13] stands as a salutary reminder that we cannot assume for liberalism a stable political grammar. As a 'genre of the political', movement liberalism helps us to specify an emergent strain within liberalism that has a particular relationship to politicization as an aspiration and a challenge, and that renders previous critiques, such as those by radical democratic theorists, less potent. The standard refrain in the critical literature that liberalism generally (and liberal projects like human rights, development, and progressive philanthropy in particular) is depoliticizing, needs to engage more meaningfully with the movement and variation of this political genre and its own discourses on politicization and 'the political'.

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[5] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 131-132.

[6] Frow, *Genre*, 2.

[7] Frow, *Genre*, 2.

[8] Frow, *Genre*, 85-86.

[9] Frow, *Genre*, 73, 77. See also on this psychologist Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," 15.

[10] On the relation of the bildungsroman to human rights, for example, see Slaughter, *Human Rights Inc*.

[11] White, *Metahistory*, xxx.

[12] White, *The Content of the Form*. A good recent example of this practice is Elisabeth Anker's *Origies of Feeling*, which reads American political discourse through the structure of melodrama.

[13] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, ix.

I.   The Promise of Politicization

Since at least the 1960s, left political thinkers have diagnosed the deepening depoliticization of liberal democratic societies. From Jürgen Habermas to Wendy Brown, these commentators have pointed out the perils of understanding political problems as having technical solutions and denigrating the social at the expense of political participation. However, as Robin Celikates argues, in today's "radically different political constellation" the problem appears to be the obverse: "Now, instead of depoliticization, politicization or even hyperpoliticization has come to be seen as the signature of our age—variously designated as 'the age of anger,' 'the populist moment,' or the 'new authoritarianism.'"[14] Often understood as a backlash to government takeover by technocratic policy elites, such "apocalyptic and hysterical hyperpoliticization" often involves using mantras like 'taking back control' in a bid to politicize migration or other issues "that have presumably been shielded from excessive popular 'input'" by such elites.[15] The typical liberal response to the rise of antidemocratic politics across the Western world is to "[recoil] in horror at how hyperpoliticization strikes back" and to "frantically [try] to reassemble the tools of depoliticization," failing to register how, according to Brown, neoliberalism's own undoing of the demos is implicated in the rise of just this antidemocratic politics.[16] In light of this tendency, Celikates encourages scholars to "distinguish between different forms of depoliticization and repoliticziation that complicate contemporary discourses of populism," and argues that, rather than seeing right and left populist movements as posing "symmetrical threats to democracy if not suitably mediated," we should instead understand right-wing populism as a form of pseudopoliticization that is antipolitical in both content and form because it defines 'the people' through extra-political bonds that refuse and obscure the foundational plurality and instability of political communities.[17]

While Celikates asks what a left response to such right wing pseudopoliticization should look like, I want to dwell longer with conceptualizations of repoliticization that emerge from liberal or otherwise centrist responses to left and right populist energies in recognition that not all liberal responses to hyper- or pseudopoliticization have involved turning to the tools of depoliticization. Specifying movement liberalism's version of politicization—of state and international law, international institutions, civil society organizations, and society itself—requires us to give some shape to movement liberalism's structure of feeling. The debate on the future of human rights is one place to find a *range* of investments in politicization. (Re)politicizing human rights has become such a widespread critical project in part because of the historical capture of rights discourse by liberal actors since the 1970s and even more so since the 1990s, which effectively erased alternative—socialist and anticolonial—itineraries of human

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[14] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 141-142.

[15] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 142.

[16] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 142-143. See Brown, *Undoing the Demos*. Accordingly, writes Celikates, "liberalism not only fails to recognize the intimate connection between neoliberalism and the right-wing backlash, it also mischaracterizes the latter by misreading it as a form of (hyper) politicization and then turns to the pseudosolution of further depoliticization, feeding back into the vicious circle it failed to see in the first place" (143).

[17] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 143-146. A similar call to attend to the diversity of repoliticisations is made by Blühdorn and Deflorian, "Politicisation Beyond Post-Politics."

rights only now being acknowledged as central to early human rights history and practice.[18] Thus efforts to wrest a more oppositional version of human rights from the current hegemonic, depoliticizing liberal form represents a trend towards what Costas Douzinas calls "rights revisionism," which differs in its continued, though critical, investment in the potential of human rights from 19th century critics like Burke, Bentham, and Marx and their contemporary heirs who find little to be redeemed in the rights project.[19] According to the rights revisers, even if critics are correct that human rights replace collective emancipatory projects with an individualizing, legalistic form of politics that remains based on recognition by a state, still too much ground is ceded to reactionary forces when human rights are rejected wholesale as an emancipatory tool.[20]

The task of repoliticizing human rights is made more urgent and challenging by a litany of countervailing forces: rising inequality, authoritarian and populist politics, a shift to a multipolar geopolitical context, endemic violence, climate catastrophe, and proliferating misinformation enabled by new technologies. In a promotional video announcing the UN's plans to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the UDHR, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, pointed to "a triple planetary crisis" of authoritarianism, misinformation, and violence, in addition to "skyrocketing inequalities."[21] The High Commissioner's effort to "rejuvenate" the UDHR appears against the backdrop of his admission that "there is a growing disconnect between [the UDHR's human rights] standards, on the one hand, and the realities on the ground on the other." In this context of crisis, critiques of the human rights project as creating backlash effects by overreaching, representing a minimalist liberalism, as apolitical or depoliticizing, or as a partial and particular Eurocentric ideology point to the ways human rights might not be up to the task of addressing these intersecting global challenges. The idea that human rights is an insufficiently ambitious political project to meet these pressing demands is understandable: the editors of *Human Rights Futures* name as "the most ambitious proposal of all" a recent initiative recommending a World Human Rights Court that could issue binding judgements against (both state and non-state) parties to the treaty and opinions against non-parties if supported by the UNHCHR.[22] Thus at its most "aspirational," the global human rights regime desires "a world where due process and the rule of law hold superior authority to state practice."[23] This is hardly the stuff of utopian longing. It is no wonder that, as Alison Brysk puts

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[18] Slaughter, "Hijacking Human Rights." See also Goodale, *Reinventing Human Rights*; Nathans, "Soviet Rights-Talk in the Post-Stalin Era"; and Hoffmann, "Human Rights and History." Others, however, continue to argue that human rights are *essentially* liberal: see Charvet and Kaczynska-Nay, *The Liberal Project and Human Rights*.

[19] Douzinas's "rights revisionism" is cited and discussed in Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights*, 2-3. Golder notes that, if the critiques of Marx, Bentham, and Burke "worked on the level of negation and replacement, then this current wave of critique functions on the level of genealogical subversion and counter-conduct. It is concerned to stress the internal plurality and alternative possibilities of the discourse under critique" (159). On the earlier critiques, see Waldron, *'Nonsense Upon Stilts'*. For contemporary critiques in this same vein, see Brown, "The Most We Can Hope For…"; Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights*; Asad, "What Do Human Rights Do?"; McLoughlin, "Post-Marxism and the Politics of Human Rights"; and Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. The best dissection of the different traditions of rights critique is found in Lacroix and Pranchère, *Human Rights on Trial*.

[20] Zachary Manfredi, for instance, calls human rights "a strategically essential point of engagement for left political theorizing" ("Recent Histories and Uncertain Futures," 7).

[21] UNHCR, "Human Rights 75 Initiative."

[22] Hopgood, Snyder, and Vinjamuri, "Introduction: Human Rights Past, Present, and Future," 7-8.

[23] Hopgood, Snyder, and Vinjamuri, "Introduction," 7-8.

it, "human rights are poised on the knife's edge between hope and despair, beloved and beleaguered, inspiring and ignored."[24]

Left attempts at "rights revisionism" critique this depoliticizing, hegemonic liberal human rights itinerary and propose a more political human rights in its negative image. Theorists of radical democracy, sometimes called post-Marxists, for example, stake out a position between Marxist critiques and liberal endorsements of human rights by identifying the struggle over the claiming of rights and contesting the terms of belonging as being part of collective self-determination (a *symbolic dimension* tied to 'the political') as against the individualizing state-implementation of rights (the abuse of power tied to 'politics').[25] Thus Étienne Balibar talks about human rights as a 'right to politics' (not all that different from Hannah Arendt's 'right to have rights'), Claude Lefort imagines human rights as vehicles of politicization, and Jacques Rancière defends human rights as a test to the boundaries of democracy.[26] Human rights can be both used and abused for these thinkers, but they are always a political tool up for grabs; the task is to wrest human rights from the liberal framework in which they become one more vector of depoliticization.

There are a variety of ways to make this argument. Chantal Mouffe and Illan Rua Wall critique the closure that comes with consensus, cosmopolitanism, the law, and liberalism in general, framing moral unanimity as an ideological ruse.[27] While 'the juridical' is individualizing and depoliticizing, 'the political' keeps antagonism open, valuing rupture over perpetual peace.[28] Tracking how rights claims effectively challenge 'the distribution of the sensible', to use Rancière's formulation, is central to radical democratic reformulations of rights. Thus Wall's project is to bring into view a conception of human rights "more at home on the riotous streets than in courtrooms and parliaments."[29] Joe Hoover's revision draws on William Connolly and Bonnie Honig's agonistic pluralism and Dewey's pragmatism, and finds inspiration in the ways social movements use the ambiguous identity of 'humanity' to "ground a claim for meaningful inclusion in the political process" and thereby "democratize political authority and subvert existing forms of community."[30] Ben Golder's antifoundationalist revision of human rights is inspired by Foucault's effort to generate "a critical counter-conduct of rights" by expressing political claims "via the liberal idiom of rights" while "'performative[ly] undermin[ing]' them in the process."[31] According to Golder, Foucault does not offer a simple "rejection of liberalism,

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[24] Brysk, *The Future of Human Rights*, 2.

[25] See, for example, Schaap, "Human Rights and the Political Paradox." A slightly different account is offered by James D. Ingram in "'Right to Have Rights?' Three Images of the Politics of Human Rights," which organizes the field into Weberian (using power to achieve the end of implementing rights, i.e. Igantieff), Kantian (law not power must ensure rights, which are moral imperatives embodied in institutions, i.e. Habermas and Benhabib), and Arendtian (not advocacy by others, but the action of rights claimants as democratic contestation, i.e. Balibar, Lefort, and Rancière). Daniel McLoughlin's "Post-Marxism and the Politics of Human Rights" compares the post-Marxist rehabilitation of rights in Lefort and Rancière to the critiques of Badiou and Agamben and finds the former wanting.

[26] See Balibar, "On the Politics of Human Rights," Lefort "Politics and Human Rights" and more recently "International Law, Human Rights, and Politics," and Rancière, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" A good introduction to the radical democratic / post-Marxist position with chapters on each of these three thinkers is Breaugh et al., *Thinking Radical Democracy: The Return to Politics in Post-War France*. A 'political' understanding of human rights that draws on many of these figures, and especially Arendt, is found in the final chapters of Justine Lacroix and Jean-Yves Pranchère's *Human Rights on Trial*.

[27] Wall, "On a Radical Politics for Human Rights" and Mouffe, "Democracy, Human Rights and Cosmopolitanism."

[28] Wall, "On a Radical Politics for Human Rights," 117.

[29] See Wall, *Human Rights and Constituent Power*.

[30] Hoover, *Reconstructing Human Rights*, 13, 25.

[31] Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights*, 20-21.

but rather a contrary inhabiting of it, a destabilizing 'counterinvestment' which works within and against it."[32] Taken together, this cast says, in effect: yes, human rights are used to the nefarious aims that critics of liberal internationalism and imperialism or Marxist ideology critique contend, but they are also an essentially constructed, contingent, and plural language for claiming the right to political participation and therefore a tool of democratic expansion. They think that human rights *expand* or *mediate* 'the political' rather than curtail its formulations as it does in its hegemonic, liberal form.[33]

But liberals also deploy a range of politicizing techniques. Some, like Kathryn Sikkink and Hurst Hannum, respond to the worry about rights inflation and backlash by advocating for a retrenchment of the current human rights consensus (identified roughly with the 1970s) around existing rights rooted in International Human Rights Law.[34] Human rights advocacy has produced tangible results, they argue, which we risk delegitimizing if we turn the human rights project to more maximalist and ambitious goals like economic redistribution, resolving conflict, saving the environment, or regulating businesses. Thus Hannum's "radically moderate approach" is rooted in the conviction that human rights lawyers should not try to be social reformers and that human rights "do not provide a blueprint for the (re)construction of society itself."[35] These scholars insist on the law/politics distinction in order to elevate the importance of protecting human rights law over the political mobilization of human rights for partisan ends.

Jack Snyder's recent program for a revitalized human rights appears on first glance to be diametrically opposed to the positions of Hannum and Sikkink. The legalism, moralism, and universalism of current human rights advocacy, rooted in the naming and shaming practices of NGOs, presents itself as too much "above politics," according to Snyder.[36] Human rights advocates must instead recognize "the central role of political power and self-interest in advancing its cause."[37] Because liberal societies are ones in which rights thrive, the task must be to link broad-based grassroots social movements, progressive political parties, and principled human rights activists to bring about the liberal modernity in which rights can be meaningfully embedded.[38] As he formulates it: "power and politics lead, and rights follow."[39] Hannum shares Snyder's way of thinking, but inverts the dynamic, arguing that advancing human rights legal norms can enable "other socio-economic-political-moral change agents in ways that are likely to

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[32] Golder, *Foucault and the Politics of Rights*, 21.

[33] There are also postcolonial rehabilitations of human rights, which challenge the present Eurocentric human rights regime by arguing that there are multiple, rival grammars defending human dignity. Boaventura de Sousa Santos proposes a "mutually enriching" rapprochement between the human rights project and the progressive liberation theologies that have motivated mass movements in the Global South, to "deepen the counterhegemonic potential of both" (*If God Were a Human Rights Activist*, 8). Provincializing contemporary human rights institutions by pointing out alternative universalisms often involves rewriting human rights history to unearth and rejuvenate its anticolonial itineraries, or adopting what Mark Goodale calls an "ethnographic orientation" that seeks to locate "translocal common purpose" among movements that make use of human rights; he turns to the organic reformulation of rights by movements to show how they "can work as a polyvalent rationale for creative social action, resistance, and solidarity rather than as a framework for constraint" (107). See Grovogui, "Mind, body, gut!"; Slaughter, "Hijacking Human Rights"; Barreto, "Decolonial Thinking and the Quest for Decolonising Human Rights" and *Human Rights from a Third World Perspective*; and Goodale, *Reinventing Human Rights*.

[34] See Sikkink, *Evidence for Hope*, and Hannum, *Rescuing Human Rights*.

[35] Hannum, *Rescuing Human Rights*, 157-160.

[36] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 126.

[37] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 12.

[38] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 127.

[39] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 4.

respond to the needs of most people in the world."[40] In other words, when human rights lead, progressive politics follows. Sikkink largely agrees, but rejects the "sharp division between human rights institutions and human rights movements" that some critics assert. For her, social movements *created* these institutions, and progress on human rights "is greatest in those regions with strong regional human rights institutions, as well as strong social movements."[41] For all three, human rights and progressive social movements are the ingredients for a functioning liberal modernity; they differ only on questions of sequence and balance. Their stated differences—for instance that Snyder is a consequentialist whereas Sikkink thinks rights should be an end in themselves—matter little when set against their wider agreement that human rights gain either credibility or power from their relation to grassroots movements. This convergence is all the more striking because it has only been in the past two decades that human rights scholars have even begun to engage with the idea of social movements.[42]

There are also commentators who want to delink human rights from liberalism in order not to save human rights, but to save the more ambitious political energies once associated with liberalism—to politicize liberalism by recovering obscured radical orientations in its own tradition. In "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism" (2017), Samuel Moyn argues that historically human rights rose at the *expense* of the more robust, ambitious projects liberals once pursued, including the search for "good empire."[43] Indeed, over the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, liberals adopted a "sociological perspective" and believed, "above all, in history and progress," taking the form of bold civilizing and modernizing projects rather than appeals to extra-social, abstract norms like international human rights.[44] This liberal investment in progress, argues Moyn, began to wane during the Cold War, when in response to a (socialist) opponent that promised progress and social evolution liberals started to offer "a bleak view of human affairs in which the most government can achieve is to present a space for individual freedom" against the state.[45] An emerging historiography that includes Moyn's own 2022 Carlyle Lectures at Oxford University, "The Cold War and the Canon of Liberalism," and Helena Rosenblatt's *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (2018) attempts to show how today's liberal canon—focusing on Hobbes and Locke—is an invention of the Cold War that we accept at the expense of liberalism's more ambitious historical itineraries. Rosenblatt thus argues that for most of its history, liberalism "had nothing to do with the atomistic individualism we hear of today," instead linking rights to duties, rejecting self-interestedness, and promoting social justice, generosity, and civic-mindedness.[46] The new,

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[40] Hannum, *Rescuing Human Rights*, 10.

[41] Sikkink, *Evidence for Hope*, 232-233. However, see Kate Nash's argument for distinguishing between social movements and what Keck and Sikkink call transnational advocacy networks ("Human Rights, Movements, and Law"). An earlier argument for reinterpreting the evolution of human rights as being a product of social movements is found in Neil Stammers, "Social Movements and the Social Construction of Human Rights" (1999) and *Human Rights and Social Movements* (2009).

[42] Stammers, *Human Rights and Social Movements*, 2; and Nash, "Is it Social Movements that Construct Human Rights?"

[43] Moyn, "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism," 270. Moyn elsewhere states plainly that "liberal precepts are indispensable" ("Against the Enlightenment").

[44] Moyn, "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism," 265-269.

[45] Moyn, "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism," 271-272.

[46] Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, 4. In his blurb, Moyn calls Rosenblatt's book "the most acute and careful account on the theme [of liberalism] ever composed." Moyn's Carlyle Lectures are the basis for his book *Liberalism against Itself: Cold War Intellectuals and the Making of Our Times* (2023), which came out just after this dissertation was filed.

modest liberalism centered on civil and political liberties, which includes human rights, thus lost, says Moyn, "the liberal commitment to sociological progress" that defined its earlier, ambitious world-historical political projects like imperialism.[47] 'Politicizing' liberalism, in this argument, will require correcting liberalism's "imperialist mistakes," while reanimating "the best liberal aspirations the world has known," including the "dreams of progress that liberals…once entertained."[48] Moyn calls on human rights advocates to harness the more ambitious liberal tradition and pursue global freedom, but through "new and post-imperial means."[49] While in this piece Moyn suggests that such an ambitious project might require liberals to marginalize individual rights, elsewhere he uses his analysis of human rights-as-antipolitics to propose a route to their viable future, arguing like Snyder that for the idea to remain valuable today, human rights will need to become avowedly political: "we can and should risk the development of more openly partisan enterprises in international affairs."[50] Moyn's politicized human rights, much as in the radical democratic, pragmatic, and antifoundationalist accounts, are "deformalized,…not absolute metaphysical principles but contingent tools of pragmatic social organization."[51]

The effort to politicize either human rights or liberalism, as we see, can take several forms. You can strengthen and sustain existing human rights norms and institutions in a bid to secure a post-WWII version of liberal modernity for the future against the rise of illiberalism, as do Hannum, Sikkink, and Snyder. You can join Moyn and Rosenblatt and look back to ambitious liberal (imperial) projects that predate the Cold War and recast a liberalism of the future committed to achieving social freedom. Or, like the radical democrats, you can look 'down' to the practices of everyday people and their struggles for an oppositional, democratizing human rights practice.[52] Movement liberalism draws to some extent on each of these forms of politicization, but does so in a particular way.

II.   The Tragedy and Romance of Movement Liberalism: Splitting the Self of Social Change

Celikates is rightly suspicious of what he calls the 'hydraulic model of society' undergirding arguments for left populism by figures like Chantal Mouffe, "in which affective pressures that are simmering under the surface of liberal democracies get agitated by third-way postpolitics and can then be tapped into by either the Right or the Left and mobilized for a reactionary or an emancipatory project, respectively."[53] The problem with this hydraulic model is that different affects undergird reactionary and emancipatory energies. The "ressentiment,

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[47] Moyn, "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism," 273.

[48] Moyn, "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism," 280, 263, 281.

[49] Moyn, "Human Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism," 262.

[50] Moyn, "The Future of Human Rights," 61.

[51] Moyn, "The Future of Human Rights," 62. True, when this happens and human rights "descend into the world as a language of contest and struggle," the "other side will no longer be forced to defer to them as binding," but he says this is a small price to pay for retaining the idea's *political* function (63). Moyn's vision for redeeming present human rights is very close to what Hopgood recommends in *The Endtimes of Human Rights*.

[52] This move 'downward' should be distinguished from Michael Ignatieff's recent turn from his minimalist human rights program in *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (2001) to a kind of virtue ethics in his more recent *The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a divided World* (2017): ordinary virtue, he notes, is often antipolitical, which he takes to be a good thing (29). In a review of an earlier essay version of Ignatieff's new book, Moyn describes him as "play[ing] Aristotle to his own former Plato" (Moyn, "Human Rights in the Absence of Virtue," 26).

[53] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 147.

rancor, rage, [and] desire for revenge experienced by the historically dominant," who perceive a loss of entitlement or status, do not share a "political logic" with the "anger and outrage at unjust and undemocratic forms of exploitation, exclusion, and domination experienced by historically disadvantaged groups."[54] There is no one-to-one equation between the affects undergirding right and left populist energies and the forms of political mobilization they invite.

Joining this effort to disaggregate and map different forms of politicization and their consequences, this section explores the affective bases and political logics of the politicization central to the progressive, professionalized third sector political projects explored in the previous chapters. What kind of politicization do those who are often the *objects* of ressentiment or the *beneficiaries* of exclusion construct? What projects of self-fashioning does such politicization require and enable? To answer these questions, I analyze the discourses and practices discussed in the previous two chapters through the lens of genre theory. Theories of genre are one tool for identifying the "prefigurative element" that underwrites the concepts in a discourse and thereby shape an emerging structure of feeling.[55] I will argue that the story about political action that movement liberals tell takes the form of a dual act: tragedy in the form of political disenchantment for elite social change professionals, and romance in the form of politics' re-enchantment (in the eyes of the elites) by the grassroots activists these elites seek to support. The effects of reality and authority created by this interplay of tragedy and romance are central to movement liberalism's structure of feeling and shape an account of political agency as a zero-sum game: creating a space of agency for some (grassroots social movement actors) comes at the expense of exercising political agency for others (elite civil society professionals).

Liberal Tragedy

To apprehend how tragedy operates in the discourse of elites determined to politicize progressive civil society organizations, we have to first specify and map the different meanings and sensibilities of the tragic in political thought. Indeed, tragedy has played a staring but varied role in political theorizing.[56] While Plato famously associated tragedy (and democracy) with excess rather than humility, corruption of the individual and the polis, and prescribed philosophy as its antidote, Aristotle appreciated that its ability to arouse fear and pity could guide ethical reflection.[57] The genre's philosophical reputation was then further burnished by the German romantics and idealists in the 18th and 19th centuries.[58] Most influential was Hegel's dialectical approach to tragedy, which centered on the conflict between two ethically sound principles which are then reconciled in a higher rational unity. For Hegel, tragedy unites freedom and necessity, and "arouses emotions in order to purge them; problematizes ethical conflict to restore

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[54] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 147-148.

[55] White, *Metahistory*, xxx.

[56] In *The Tragedy of Political Theory* Peter Euben argues that political philosophy "emerges from a democratic political tradition significantly shaped by tragedy": for the Greeks, tragedy tempered the patriotism of the strong with a reminder of the mortality they shared with the vanquished, and provided critical distance from "the web of relations and narratives that constituted the Athenians as a people" (xi-xii). By the 5th century, going to the tragic festival was seen as a civic responsibility, like jury duty, with attendance subsidized for those of limited means (Barker and McIvor, "Tragedy and Politics," 1).

[57] Barker and McIvor, "Tragedy and Politics," 3-5. Some argue that Aristotle nonetheless subordinates tragedy to philosophy. There remains debate on and efforts to complicate the philosophy/tragedy binary in Plato and Aristotle.

[58] See Leonard, *Tragic Modernities*.

order; and questions the state to deepen its authority."[59] Resisting the reconciliation of Hegel or Plato's privileging of rationality, Nietzsche's tragedy valorizes the excess and irrationalism of the Dionysian spirit, which ennobles rather than degrades, overcoming "moral rectitude in the name of creative individual achievements."[60]

In the 20th century, political thinkers drew in different ways on the Greeks, Hegel, and Nietzsche, to articulate what David Scott calls an "adhesive intimacy" between tragedy and revolution.[61] Hannah Arendt believed that there was something essentially tragic about political action itself, given the contradiction, risk, irreversibility, contingency, and uncertainty that accompany the exercise of our freedom to act in a world of competing interests. Karl Jaspers (who in 1953 published his own *Tragedy Is Not Enough*) wrote to Arendt in May 1969 to say that he understood *On Revolution* (1963) to be fundamentally about tragedy, and Arendt agreed.[62] Political actors—especially revolutionaries—start processes that can get away from them, running counter to and frustrating the freedom they pursued by acting in the first place; the French Revolution, says Arendt, "devoured its own children." Revolutions thus heighten our awareness of the potential tragedy of all genuine political action. Writing around the same time as Arendt, Raymond Williams's *Modern Tragedy* (1966) understands tragedy as a feature of revolutionary experience, like Arendt, as well as of the social world that revolution seeks to transform; a tragic outlook, for Williams, thus simultaneously helps diagnose alienation in modernity, motivates action, and cautions responsibility.[63]

Scott draws on Arendt and Williams to think through the tragedy of revolution in a distinctly postcolonial key. While romance was "the predominant mode of emplotment of the anticolonial and radical postcolonial imaginaries," it is *tragedy* that is "especially useful in a historical conjuncture in which the triumphalist narratives of national liberation, anti-imperialism, and socialism have become exhausted, if not extinct."[64] In *Omens of Adversity* (2014), Scott analyzes the Grenada Revolution (1979-1983) to unpack Arendt's insight that tragedy is the price of our freedom, highlighting the moments of misjudgment, discomposure, misreadings of subtext, misrecognition, and "mutual unintelligibility" between the revolutionary leader Maurice Bishop and his Central Committee, setting them on a collision course.[65] Their actions and deafness towards each other reveal the one-sidedness key to tragedy: on the one hand an unwavering commitment to party procedure, and on the other an invocation of loyalty to the comrade leader who embodied the revolution. In Grenada we thus see an "entire scenario of accumulating contradiction" that ultimately lead to the tragic failure of the Revolution.[66]

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[59] Barker and McIvor, "Tragedy and Politics," 6.

[60] Barker and McIvor, "Tragedy and Politics," 7-8. However, Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian spirit is less about the *individual* than Barker and McIvor's gloss suggests.

[61] Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 35.

[62] Arese, "Tragedy, Comedy, and History in *On Revolution*," 234-235.

[63] See Leonard, *Tragic Modernities*, 38.

[64] Scott, "The Tragic Vision in Postcolonial Time," 801. The postcolonial condition helps describe a particular flavor of tragedy, in which we see a "world of endemic conflict in which the meagerness of meaning and the poverty of economic resources strip social and psychological life down to the real and metaphoric bone and so leave human action especially exposed to the vagaries of irreversible contingency" (805-806).

[65] Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 53-58.

[66] Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 42. Scott prefers Arendt to Hegel. While Hegel helpfully explores the themes of finitude, contingency, agonism, collision, and one-sidedness, he wants to manage or master tragic conflict through his dialectic, thereby foreclosing "the fuller moral implications of the tragic for human action" (45-49). It is Arendt, says Scott, who saw that "to act politically in time"—that is to act disclosively and in freedom—"is *unavoidably* to expose oneself to the potential collision of actions embodying rival ends" (37).

Alberto Toscano is critical of Scott's use of Arendt, who famously separated politics, as proper to the realm of appearance, from 'the social question'. The tragedy of revolution for Arendt is that the pursuit of freedom can lead to the sacrifice of freedom (politics) to necessity (the social), which, argues Toscano, constitutes a "melancholy anti-revolutionary contemplation of revolution's loss" that "drains it of any tragic tension or contradiction, making politics impossible by trying to keep it pure of 'the social'."[67] Toscano prefers Williams's *Modern Tragedy* as a resource with which to "rethink tragedy in a non-deflationary register as the dramatic form of political transformation."[68] But both Arendt and Williams were writing at a time when revolutionary possibility remained alive, especially in the form of anticolonialism, and so their questions pertained to the way an attunement to tragedy could help either motivate or temper radical action, which is why Toscano bristles at what he takes to be Arendt and Scott's disenchanted approaches to the tragedy of revolution. At the turn of the 21st century, however, with the fall of the USSR and the triumph of liberal modernity supposedly securing the end of history, left political theorists started to enlist tragedy mostly to critique a now seemingly hegemonic and increasingly depoliticizing liberal status quo. Radical democratic theorists advanced a critique of liberalism aimed at its impulse to resolve conflict rather than accept its tragic inevitability and permanence—a legacy of the Rawlsian liberal egalitarianism premised on the possibility of normative consensus, juridical adjudication, reasonable disagreement and debate, and individual choice that became hegemonic in US political theory over the second half of the 20th century.[69] Mark Wenman identifies three core elements of this 'agonistic' political theory—constitutive pluralism, a tragic vision of a world without ultimate redemption, and the political value of contest—and traces a broad arch from Greek antiquity to Machiavelli, to Nietzsche, Arendt, Foucault (and sometimes Schmitt), down to four prominent contemporary theorists: Chantal Mouffe, William Connolly, James Tully, and Bonnie Honig.[70] As Wenman argues, this strand of political critique has roots in the "tragic wisdom of the ancients":

> the ancient conception of the ineradicable strife of the world and of the human condition has filtered into contemporary political theory via the great modern tragedians— Nietzsche, Arendt, and also Sigmund Freud—establishing a connection back once again via Machiavelli to the original sources in the texts of fifth-century Attic drama, as well as to Thucydides' *History*, and beyond that even to the epic poetry of the Mycenaean period.[71]

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[67] Toscano, "Politics in a Tragic Key," 27. Toscano is referring specifically to Scott's use of Arendt to analyze C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* in *Conscripts of Modernity*. Scott's *Omens of Adversity*, written a decade later, engages more with Williams, sharing in the latter's enabling approach to tragedy, which Toscano endorses.

[68] Toscano, "Politics in a Tragic Key," 30.

[69] See Katrina Forrester's *In the Shadow of Justice: Postwar Liberalism and the Remaking of Political Philosophy* (2018), which reconstructs this history in part to critique Rawlsian egalitarianism as depoliticizing because it lacks engagement with questions of power and domination.

[70] Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy*, 18.

[71] Wenman, *Agonistic Democracy*, 34-35. He goes on: "Furthermore, this appreciation of Hellenic tragedy distinguishes contemporary agonistic democracy from the dominant rationalist accounts of liberalism and democracy, which, in one form or another, build upon the pre-eminent modern *anti*-tragic (or redemptive) philosophies of Kant and G.W.F. Hegel" (35). There is debate over the extent to which the Hellenic etymological origin of 'agon' continues to influence contemporary political mobilizations of it. Andreas Kalyvas insists that recent use of the term "does not suggest a nostalgic appeal to a pre-modern Greek past" but rather radically redefines it through a "considerable divestment of its ancient significations" (31). Kalyvas follows the specifically aristocratic spirit of the *agon* in Greek antiquity—a contest "for greatness, glory and prominence" (32)—which is carried

Political life, radical democratic theorists insist, is fundamentally characterized by *interdependence* and (because of this) *strife*, for "no identity is an island."[72] Agonistic theorists try to 'recover' the political by accepting identity as co-constituted, contest as productive, and a harmonious society as untenable, utopian, and depoliticizing. This agonistic wielding of tragedy in radical democratic theory is less a spur to revolutionary overcoming of the tragic social problems of the modern world (as in Williams) than a critique of liberalism on the basis of the impossibility of closure.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

As shown above, this opposition between tragic (or agonistic) and liberal sensibilities has been influential in critiques of the depoliticizing effects of human rights discourse as well as projects to reimagine human rights as more political. Agonism can be read as a critical project of left repoliticization in a politically disenchanted age—it emerged just as 'third way' post-politics became hegemonic in the Euro-Atlantic—and has as such appealed to those invested in redeeming the human rights project. While recognizing the power and appeal of this articulation of the tragedy of politics, I want here to complicate the opposition between tragic and liberal sensibilities by pointing to the ways the genre has also been used by *liberals* to "create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility."[73]

One strand of liberal tragedy mobilizes the idea of contradicting but legitimate ends—such as protecting human rights and securing global security—to perform moral seriousness that then justifies whatever action is ultimately taken. As Jeanne Morefield shows, liberals like Michael Ignatieff who are deeply invested in the liberal state system are willing to condone illiberal means—like torture and empire—to secure democracy around the globe while performing a rhetorical agonizing over the "tragic choice" liberals must make in the name of reducing human suffering, even by dubious methods. She demonstrates how Ignatieff thus constantly plays up "the impossibility of this choice" between liberal ideals (who *we* are) and illiberal practices (what *we* do), making himself a tragic figure caught in the winds of history.[74] However, it is Ignatieff's hero, Isaiah Berlin, and his Cold War liberal peers, who reveal a more philosophically sophisticated relation between liberalism and tragedy, one that helps us understand the first aspect of movement liberalism's dual act. Returning to Moyn's Carlyle Lectures we see that the luminaries of the Cold War liberal canon overlap with several of the modern tragedians that the agonistic democratic theorists read. But unlike Williams, who sees in the recognition of tragedy a spur to bold—if responsible—political transformation under the banner of revolution, the Cold War liberals took the opposite, and disenchanted, lesson from our endemic tragic condition: a fear of both individual passion and collective agency. It is precisely this legacy of Cold War liberalism (which Moyn wants to supplant with a nervier, more maximalist liberal itinerary), I suggest, that has shaped how liberal political projects are currently being repoliticized. To understand how this is so—how a tragic articulation of authority, agency,

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through the work of Nietzsche and Arendt but dropped by contemporary theorists of agonism. See also Gagnon, "Agonistic Politics, Contest, and the Oresteia," 10.

[72] Gagnon, "Agonistic Politics, Contest, and the Oresteia," 11.

[73] Frow, *Genre*, 2.

[74] Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, 196. Morefield explains: "Ignatieff uses the confrontation with illiberalism, and the impossibility of this choice, as an opportunity to stage precisely the qualities he believes are so essential to liberal society—in particular, its endless 'trial of self-justification'" (196).

and truth emerges from and shapes the self-fashioning of third sector elites and their institutions—requires us to look more closely at this Cold War liberal tradition.

Moyn argues that Cold War liberalism was, for its adherents, couched as a project of disciplining the self while limiting the state.[75] It is important here to bracket (just for now) the irony of a tradition of thought like Cold War liberalism presenting itself as self-limiting, cautious, and responsible given the enormous and violent transformations that it wrought the world over in the 20th century. In any case, Moyn first turns to Judith Shklar, who before becoming something of a Cold War liberal herself wrote the "greatest anatomy and critique of Cold War Liberalism" in her first book *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith* (1957). There, Shklar traces an ambivalence about the enlightenment, understood, in Moyn's gloss, as "a plan for the construction of agency for individuals and society to assume the burden of self-making, rather than leaning on external authority." Writing in the 1950s, Shklar thought this aspirational enlightenment liberalism had withered into a conservative, "existential antipolitics." The catastrophes of the mid-20th century had cast liberalism's goal of creative agency in a more sinister light. As Shklar put it, "the gradual decay of the radical aspirations of liberalism and the evaporation of socialist thought have left the Enlightenment without intellectual heirs."[76]

Agreeing with Shklar, Moyn argues that fear of communism led Cold War liberals to foreground "the anti-canon of emancipation" made up of figures like Freud, Berlin, and Karl Popper, and to endorse alternatives like the neo-orthodox Christianity of Gertrude Himmelfarb, skepticism about revolution of Arendt, and constraining self-fashioning of Lionel Trilling.[77] The thought of these figures "prioritized the Enlightenment's dark side" with the aim of preparing liberals "for the tragic future disabused of emancipatory hope." Cold War liberals purified the romanticism, historicism, and belief in collective perfectibility typical of 19th century liberalism in order to secure the individual freedom these ideas supposedly threatened.[78] For example, they scapegoated romanticism by identifying it as an expression of perfectionist agency and blaming it—in particular Rousseau—for the coming of totalitarianism, nationalism and statism.[79] They instead focused their canon making on English political institutions and virtues at the expense of continental liberal traditions in the 20th century, which had drawn on "emancipating premises" in Hegel and Marx, severing the liberal tradition from "the freedom and equality achieved in and through the ethical state in historical time that had been familiar among 19th and early 20th century liberals."[80] Karl Popper's influential *Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945), for example, helped liquidate the "historicism and Hegelian legacy in liberalism," muting the fact that for many 19th century liberals "freedom and equality in and through institutions were the highest prize of progress,"[81] and inciting liberals to "reinvent their politics on the foundations of abstract normativism or anti-utopian realism." Influenced by Hayek, Popper's work "laid paving stones

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[75] Moyn, "Against the Enlightenment (Judith Shklar)," 25 January 2022. In his words: "compared to the perfectionist and progressive liberalism before, the Cold War entrenched a durable fear of and pessimism about the prospects of human emancipation that continues to haunt contemporary politics."

[76] Shklar, *After Utopia*, 3.

[77] Moyn, "Against the Enlightenment."

[78] Moyn, "Against the Enlightenment." Shklar points, for example, to Berlin's popularization of negative liberty.

[79] Moyn, "The Romantic Revolution (Isaiah Berlin)," 1 February 2022. Moyn notes that J.L. Talmon's *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, perhaps the Ur text of Cold War liberalism, did much to place Rousseau in the liberal anticanon. He also notes that Berlin had a more subtle position on this, encouraging "liberals to embrace the fundamental contribution of the romantics to the most defensible version of their creed."

[80] Moyn, "The Terrors of Historical Progress (Karl Popper)," 8 February 2022.

[81] Take, for example, T.H. Green, who influenced the British welfare state, and John Hobson and the new liberalism; both show that for later 19th and early 20th century liberals "Marx [was] a resource…a friendly sparing partner."

on the road from critique of historicism to a version of Cold War liberalism that verged on neoliberalism more and more."[82] With the enlightenment abandoned, romanticism stigmatized, and the grave of reason in history dug, Cold War liberals substituted for progressivism and perfectionism, among other things, a neo-Orthodox Christianity of "eternal moral commitments," expounded by Gertrude Himmelfarb and exemplified by Lord Acton, as "a model of a liberalism beyond the terms of historicism."[83] Meanwhile, Arendt's *The Human Condition* and *On Revolution* "drew on ancient inspiration for the sake of defending the American revolution's Cold War freedom against the French revolution's derangements," in the process participating in "liquidating Hegel's historicist's legacy."[84]

Most importantly for our purposes, however, is Moyn's observation that Cold War liberalism was "as much about the self as about the state."[85] His final lecture, "The Garrisoned Self", focuses on Lionel Trilling, whose hugely successful collection of texts from the 1930s and 1940s *The Liberal Imagination* (1950) Moyn considers "the essential Cold War liberal text." Though Trilling initially penned (but never published) a blistering review of Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929) in the 1930s, objecting to its presentation of aggression as a bar to emancipation, he later joined with Cold War liberals to canonize Freud in the name of "a new form of liberalism premised on durable limits to reform." Trilling is so central to the Cold War liberal mindset because of his insistence on the necessity of psychic self-constraint. As Moyn notes, this

> call to contain disorderly passion for the sake of austere freedom fit with an ideology of self-control in deep tension with Cold War liberal championship of liberty as non-interference and its insistence on avoiding cruelty, for Cold War liberals required self-subjugation and self-policing for the sake of personal and collective order."

Cold War liberals canonized Freud because he helped justify a self-repression and self-control that they thought was needed to ground a reformed liberalism in an "awareness that people are imperfect and utopianism makes things worse." Psychoanalysis and literature were thus essential to the project of "refounding…liberalism beyond idealism." As Trilling wrote: "The Freudian psychology is the only systematic account of the human mind which, in point of subtlety and complexity, of interest and tragic power, deserves to stand beside the chaotic mass of psychological insights which literature has accumulated through the centuries."[86] Trilling sought

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[82] Moyn, "The Terrors of Historical Progress." Shklar also articulated an early critique of neoliberalism, noting that the radicalism that remained in the liberal tradition at the time she was writing was "usually only a belief in the infinite extension of individual liberty for its own sake, without any of the Enlightenment's faith in the harmony and progress of society as a whole that would accompany freedom" (*After Utopia*, 24).

[83] Moyn, "Jewish Christianity (Gertrude Himmelfarb)," 15 February 2022. Himmelfarb wanted to "guard liberalism against perversion by its enemies, through an inflexible integrity of moral law, the sanctity of individual human lives." This led her to develop the idea of a moral majority defined by a neo-Victorian antistatism and familial moralism, and support of Reagan and Thatcher and ultimately neoconservativism and neoliberalism.

[84] Moyn, "White Freedom (Hannah Arendt)," 22 February 2022. Importantly, says Moyn, Arendt globalized skepticism about the legacy of the French revolution "in a decolonizing age when Cold War liberals more regularly presented the threat as Soviet or domestic." In other words, her worry that decolonization was a road to terror implied that the freedom that Cold War liberals championed was a specifically 'white freedom.' For a more detailed interpretation of Arendt's relation to cold war liberalism (based on this lecture), see Moyn, "Hannah Arendt among the Cold War Liberals."

[85] Moyn, "The Garrisoned Self (Lionel Trilling)," 1 March 2022.

[86] Trilling, "Freud and Literature," 34.

to chasten liberalism's belief that people are perfectible (through sound economic, political, and curricular reforms) by citing literature's lesson "that life is not so simple—for unfairness, snobbery, resentment, prejudice, tragic conflict, and neurosis are literature's particular subject matter."[87] Liberalism needed to be chastened because it was, thought Trilling, "not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" at the time he was writing and so in need of internal critique—the "putting under some degree of pressure the liberal ideas and assumptions of the present time"—to remain a robust counterforce to communism and fascism.[88] As he writes in the preface to *The Liberal Imagination*:

> It is one of the tendencies of liberalism to simplify, and this tendency is natural in view of the effort which liberalism makes to organize the elements of life in a rational way…But…we must understand that organization means delegation, and agencies, and bureaus, and technicians, and that the ideas that can survive delegation, that can be passed on to agencies and bureaus and technicians, incline to be ideas of a certain kind and of a certain simplicity: they give up something of their largeness and modulation and complexity in order to survive.[89]

Against this tendency, Trilling wants to "recall liberalism to its first essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty"—and he cites literature's "unique relevance" to this task, "because literature is the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty."[90] These qualities work against the too-simple ideas popular amongst agencies and technicians, ideas which promise freedom but might in fact realize its opposite. Freedom, rather, involved a recognition of the human tendencies that stymie it at every turn: freedom must be used for self-control, a freedom from one's own passions. As he wrote in a review of Freud's last book, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940): "Like any tragic poet, like any true moralist, Freud took it as one of his tasks to define the borders of necessity in order to establish the realm of freedom."[91] To the extent that Cold War liberalism "repudiated interference with the individual," Moyn concludes, it also "required interference with one's self."

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This strand of Cold War liberalism, or what Amanda Anderson calls *bleak liberalism*, shares with the progressive third sector elites discussed in the previous chapters a "chastened rationalism" and "apprehension of reason's limits."[92] As Jan-Werner Müller puts it, Cold War liberalism began with "an epistemological foundation, or, if you like, a 'politics of knowledge'—the question about the bases and limits of political knowledge"—and then advanced "a conception of political action that was informed by the knowledge about the limits of political

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[87] Menand, "Introduction" in Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, ix.
[88] Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, xv-xvi.
[89] Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, xix-xxi.
[90] Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, xxi.
[91] Trilling, "Freud's Last Book," in *A Gathering of Fugitives*, 58. The essay was originally published in *The New York Review of Books* in 1949.
[92] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 101.

knowledge."[93] If the Cold War liberals were "political epistemologists and moral psychologists first,"[94] so too are movement liberals.

This political epistemology is expressed in several ways. The first is the privileging of lived experience over technical or expert knowledge described in Chapter 2. The #ShiftThePower campaign discussed there not only indexes an anxiety about cooptation, but does so through perhaps the central analytical category of the progressive movement within the third sector, *power*, a category central also to Cold War liberalism. Though Shklar's first book is an early critique of Cold War liberalism, by the end of her career she came to share many of its positions. In her seminal essay "The Liberalism of Fear" (1989), Shklar insisted that liberalism is grounded in the conviction that "cruelty is an absolute evil" rather than in any "particular positive doctrines about how people are to conduct their lives."[95] "For this liberalism," she writes, in a passage that could have been written for today's third sector elite,

> the basic units of political life are not discursive and reflecting persons, nor friends and enemies, nor patriotic soldier-citizens, nor energetic litigants, but the weak and the powerful. And the freedom it wishes to secure is freedom from the abuse of power and intimidation of the defenseless that this difference invites.[96]

The intersection of a fear of holding power and understanding of the epistemological limits of political knowledge leads to a rhetoric of humility that is a cornerstone of both the social change ecosystem framework and movement lawyering, as shown in Chapter 3.

The second way this chastened rationalism is expressed is through the insistence on complexity in social movement monitoring and evaluation efforts and in systems change discourse.[97] As one member of the team working on the Global Fund for Woman's "Movement Capacity Assessment Tool" explained,

> [an] area of literature that really inspired me was complexity science, and being able to understand and diagnose problems as simple, complicated, and complex.…[T]here is no proven statistical study that says, if *this* then *that*, as it pertains to a social movement. It is not one linear path where *this* is the most significant variable in the outcome that you are looking at…I think people are really compelled by the language and the emotion behind what social movements might mean, but they are very illiterate in the actualities of social movements, the tense, sticky, messy, non-linear, non-controllable parts of it.[98]

In this passage, statistical research comes up short when tasked with calculating political dynamics and outcomes. Counterintuitively, the lesson this third sector researcher takes from complexity science is the very limits of science to make enough sense of complexity to meaningfully shape it. This invocation of complexity is in part a critical response to the simplifying conceptual architecture of philanthrocapitalism—metrics, measurement, scale, projectization—against which the greater potential impact of supporting movements is

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[93] Müller, "Fear and Freedom," 48.
[94] Müller, "Fear and Freedom," 58.
[95] Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," 21-23.
[96] Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," 27.
[97] A good example of the latter is Cynthia Rayner and François Bonnici's *The Systems Work of Social Change*.
[98] Interview #10.

juxtaposed, and an explanation for why third sector elites have limited ability to direct political action.[99]

The third sector progressive elite interested in movements thus seek, much like the Cold War liberals, in Müller's formulation, "a kind of certainty about uncertainty, or perhaps a certainty about unpredictability."[100] As Anderson notes, complexity was for Trilling elevated to a general 'ethos'. And it was connected by Trilling to one of his favorite terms: tragedy. "For Trilling," writes Anderson,

> one must acknowledge complexity but also those conditions that conduce to tragedy, and one must aim to respond to those conditions with more strenuousness. The forms of suspension or equivocation that mark his moral stance are above all a caution or vigilance in the face of moral dangers associated with instrumental action, especially action based on moral passion (rather than the standard origin, self-interest).[101]

Here, the themes of the previous chapters come together. The tools and conceptual practices developed by progressive third sector elites are designed precisely to avoid instrumental action—to achieve what in Chapter 2 I describe as non-instrumental relationality—and emerge from a strenuous, self-reflexive suspension of self-interest in the name of identifying and enabling action based on the moral passions of a purportedly more authentic political subject. The kinds of tools third sector elites tend to use to measure and then increase impact in the neoliberal age operate through a "if *this* then *that*" instrumental logic that runs counter to the kind of action and resulting change promised by grassroots social movements. Caution and vigilance are the overriding dispositions required of elites in this project of curtailing their own power, which could only be deployed instrumentally. The prominence of self-help discourse among these professionals meant to deconstruct their privilege reveals how, for them, as well as for Trilling (and Foucault, in Anderson's reading), "an apprehension about the very use of political power is met by a turn toward a morally heightened attention to the self's relation to the self."[102] From naming the exact nature of one's privilege to performing humility when it comes to political knowledge, the third sector elites discussed in the previous chapters are keen to communicate the "finely calibrated practices of the self"[103] that Trilling deems essential to curtailing the drive to use power instrumentally.

A final key theme in this tragic moment of movement liberalism's story of politicization is *responsibility*, the ethical principle that requires elites to strenuously consider their relation to power. As Müller argues, the Cold War liberals all to some extent "took certain elements of the Weberian diagnosis of modernity as their starting point and formulated what could be seen as variations on the ethics of responsibility."[104] Weber's generally tragic outlook on modern life, a

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[99] Staff at ORS Impact also noted that an appreciation of complexity is important to counter recent trends in evaluation and measurement towards entrepreneurial and market-oriented language. See Interview #11. For an exploration of projectization in humanitarianism see Krause, *The Good Project*.

[100] Müller, "Fear and Freedom," 51.

[101] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 112.

[102] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 112-113. She goes on: "Trilling's ethical sensitivity to violence and domination is indelibly a part of his liberalism and bespeaks a wariness of power effects rather than mere quietism. Foucault's chastened response to the ubiquity of power shares affinities with postwar liberalism, just as his turn to practices of the self privileges the forms of self-actualization and avoidance of harm that liberalism seeks to promote" (112-113).

[103] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 113.

[104] Müller, "Fear and Freedom," 53.

sense of our "eternal struggle" in the face of unintended consequences in a disenchanted age of competing values, was derived from Nietzsche and possibly Machiavelli, among other sources.[105] The ineffectuality of the power-hungry politician, Weber writes, "stems from a most wretched and superficial lack of concern for the *meaning* of human action, a blasé attitude that knows nothing of the tragedy in which all action, but quite particularly political action, is in truth enmeshed."[106] Wendy Brown takes up Weber to think about how his awareness of the way values lose their meaning and his understanding of the relation between means and ends in politics can form the basis of an ethic of political responsibility crucial to our nihilistic times.[107] Meanwhile, David Scott, in his ruminations on the tragedy of the Grenadian Revolution, argues that for political action to remain free—to avoid being insulated or becoming unfreedom—it "ought to be guided as far as possible by the practice of certain virtues—namely, modesty and responsibility," which might be seen as "entailments of an ethics of a properly tragic vision of political action": modesty tempers hubristic confidence "in our boundless capacity for mastery and self-mastery" and responsibility affords "pause to the tendency to see ourselves as merely determined by forces larger than ourselves and to which we are bound to surrender our capacity to act in freedom."[108]

While they cannot be assimilated into one position, the Cold War liberal ethos discussed here, David Scott's writing about the tragedy of anticolonial revolution, and Wendy Brown's work on nihilism and Weber all arrive at responsibility as a, if not the, central political temperament suited to the modern world.[109] In each of these cases, there is a "reach for responsibility rather than reason as the harness for political passion," as Brown says of Weber.[110] This, I want to suggest, is a key element of the movement liberal structure of feeling as well as one of the reasons it is so hard to distinguish from other Left political-theoretical projects, from the radical democratic theorists to Brown to Scott. Tragedy can be played in either radical or liberal keys to the tune of both political action or political disenchantment. If one part of movement liberalism's dual act sets up the tragic question of how to use power responsibly, the other act provides an answer.

Movement Romance

> "However thickly strewn a tragedy may be with ghosts, portents, witches, or oracles, we know that the tragic hero cannot simply rub a lamp and summon a genie to get him out of his trouble."
> — Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*[111]

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[105] Turner, "Max Weber and the tragedy of politics" and Lebow, "Weber's tragic legacy."

[106] Weber, "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," 354-355.

[107] See Brown, *Nihilistic Times*.

[108] Scott, *Omens of Adversity*, 64-65.

[109] Müller helps point out a key distinction in these positions, which is that, "ultimately, Berlin, Aron and Popper put their trust in educated elites imbued with an ethics of responsibility. Theirs was, in the end, a philosophy for the higher echelons of the civil service…Good bureaucrats, in this vision, needed Bildung, and a liberal education in moral psychology to come to terms with and understand the modern age as one of interminable value conflict, complexity and contingency" ("Fear and Freedom," 54).

[110] Brown, *Nihilistic Times*, 39.

[111] Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*, 206-207.

If movement liberalism shares something of the tragic sensibility of Cold War liberalism, it does so only to a point. That tragic sensibility emerges when one looks closely at how movement liberals embark on self-fashioning projects of curtailment and limitation, but it appears at odds with perhaps the overriding affect of many progressive civil society elites: rosy and optimistic bordering on Pollyanna, leaning heavily on the rhetoric of hope, change, action, and solidarity. While these elites might apply a tragic sensibility to themselves and 'the system' which they represent—professionalized civil society, capitalism, the West—in the end this sensibility is worked into a larger "drama of redemption," which is how Hayden White describes the structure of romance.[112] If part of the grammar of movement liberalism is political disenchantment, it is tightly fused with, and folded within, an adjoining impulse to re-enchant the political with the kind of perfectionist agency the Cold War liberals associated negatively with romanticism. One part of movement liberalism's dual act is a tragedy, but its other is a romance.

This at first seems surprising. As we saw, Cold War liberals scapegoated romanticism (as distinct from romance), identifying it as an expression of perfectionist agency that led to the Terror of the French Revolution. Even though, like Berlin, Trilling was not totally dismissive of the Romantic tradition, in fact reading romantics like Wordsworth and Keats through the lens of tragedy (via Freud) and viewing Freud as a culmination of that tradition, in practice his "call for self-control clamped down on the romantic call for self-realization."[113] Trilling nonetheless saw a "constrained modicum of self-realization as the acme of human attainment, while sacrificing how 19th century liberals had linked romanticism to personal and social emancipation."[114] What I want to start to show is that the Cold War or 'bleak' liberals that Amanda Anderson wants to channel and resurrect apply their doubts about the limits of reason, danger of wielding power, corruptibility of elite institutions and procedures, and contradictions of values to political action *tout court*, whereas movement liberals apply "liberalism's doubts about its own project"[115] only to themselves while simultaneously investing emancipatory faith in the agency of grassroots social movements.

Anderson's project is to draw out the richness of the liberal tradition by demonstrating how the writing of Cold War liberals "manifests an interplay between hope and skepticism often marked by a tension between moral aspiration and sober apprehension of those historical, sociological, or psychological tendencies that threaten its ambitions."[116] But as I will show, this "dialectic of skepticism and hope"[117] is not in fact something that animates and grounds the *political action* of individual third sector elites—or demonstrates that the liberal tradition is not "simply hopeful"[118] or "naively optimistic"[119] but imbued with an admirable "existential density"—but rather is split between two subjects: the existential density and skepticism directed towards the elite self, and the hope invested in the activist other, whose *experiential* density or proximity to suffering imbues their political instincts with certainty. The negative *and* utopian energies that Anderson wants to locate in bleak liberalism are expressed in movement liberalism in two different subjects. Thus, whereas Cold War liberalism offered a "rejection of the

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[112] White, *Metahistory*, 9.

[113] Moyn, "The Garrisoned Self (Lionel Trilling)," 1 March 2022. See Ware, "Lionel Trilling and the End of Romanticism" for Trilling's more complex relation to romantic thinkers and writers.

[114] Moyn, "The Garrisoned Self (Lionel Trilling)," 1 March 2022.

[115] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 22.

[116] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 24.

[117] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 22.

[118] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 13.

[119] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 1.

progressive optimism that was seen to mark nineteenth-century liberalism and its heir, twentieth-century radicalism,"[120] movement liberalism resuscitates progressive optimism but disowns the capability and responsibility for acting on it. If Cold War liberals voiced "the dangers of optimism and rationalism,"[121] movement liberals look to the inaccessible rationalism of the activist other as the source of optimism in emancipatory politics.

 Northrop Frye, the great mid-century genre critic, argues in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) that romance

> is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy.[122]

The most well-known is of course the chivalric romance of the Middle Ages, but Frye suggests this is true also of the 18th century's bourgeois romance and the revolutionary romance of 20th century Russia. In fact, according to Frye, as societies change, "romance will turn up again, as hungry as ever, looking for new hopes and desires to feed on."[123] Its generic features include a quest or adventure story in which an unchanging central character (the hero) overcomes test after test in pursuit of an ultimate goal, the redemption of society for the messianic hero of religious traditions or in secular romances some kind of treasure, which "often means wealth in its ideal forms [of] power and wisdom."[124] It is marked by two strong tendencies. The first is a nostalgic search for "some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space."[125] The second is romance's dialectical form, in which "everything is focused on a conflict between the hero and his enemy, and all the reader's values are bound up with the hero."[126] The "archetypal theme of romance" is thus *agon*, a conflict between opposing forces that is ultimately resolved on the side of good.[127] Narratively, as Hayden White observes of the historian Michelet, those plotting a romance "used the tactic of the dualist." The historical process for Michelet in White's reading was "a struggle of essential virtue against a virulent, but ultimately transitory, vice": tyranny vs. justice, hate vs. love.[128] As Frye says, "every typical character in romance tends to have his moral opposite confronting him, like black and white pieces in a chess game."[129]

 Several of these narrative elements appear in the structure of feeling of elite third sector professionals. First, there is a Manichean opposition between social movements, on the side of justice and virtue, and 'the system' in need of change (which includes, albeit ambiguously, the movement liberal elite), on the side of tyranny and vice. Despite their interest in complexity science, third sector professionals actually resist describing specific movements in too much detail or texture, as seen, for example, in their avoidance of the already-existing positivist

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[120] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 25-26.
[121] Anderson, *Bleak Liberalism*, 27.
[122] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186.
[123] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186. For the different itineraries of the romance genre, see Fuchs, *Romance*. Frye's fuller account of Romance is in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (1976).
[124] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 187-193.
[125] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 186.
[126] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 187.
[127] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 192. This differs from the unresolvable agon of the radical democratic theorists.
[128] White, *Metahistory*, 150.
[129] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 195.

languages of the sociology of social movements. The routine citing of grey literature instead of this more technical academic writing reflects not simple convenience, but a preference for a conceptual vocabulary that invokes 'social movements' as an indescribably-complex catch-all for virtuous, effective, bold political action rather than as a historically-specific, ambiguously-realized, organizational and political form. Instead, movements are described in terms that constitute what Raymond Williams, in his analysis of rural versus urban life in the 17th century English pastoral, describes as a "complimentary mystification"[130]—as grassroots, organic, natural, positive, vital, authentic. The complexity that is so key to the tragic view of movement liberals when viewing their *own* political action and expressed in their penchant for the language of contradiction—whether that complexity is real or imagined—is largely absent from their descriptions of actual movements, which appear as a hollowed-out category, a floating signifier, even though individual social movement actors are presented as connoisseurs of complexity, graduates from the prep school of hard life (which justifies ceding decision making power to them).

Second, there is a deep commitment to recognizing those most effected by various social ills, those most representative of suffering, as virtuous, and as already possessing the ultimate "treasures" of power and wisdom. Recall Edgar Villanueva's promise that, if only provided the opportunity, those historically denied power and wealth could use it to 'heal the world' (see Chapter 2), fulfilling one of romance's functions "to anticipate a future realm from which the old morality and imperfections will have been effaced."[131] Indeed, movement liberal thinking involves a fervent belief that in grassroots social movements and local wisdom lies the redemption of not only the project of progressive social change, but the world itself, a world buffeted by a set of interconnected crises that defy technocratic, market, or government solutions. The kind of utopianism found in romance, notes Fredric Jameson, is not "the substitution of some more ideal realm for ordinary reality," as in the idyll, but rather "a process of transforming ordinary reality."[132] The rhetoric of transformation is the bread and butter of those elite social change professionals who point to the great promise of supporting movements. Thus a key difference between the Cold War liberal ethos and movement liberal ethos is that the Cold War liberals tempered their "historically responsive sense of restraint" and "emphasis on tragic limitation" with a pragmatic politics defined by "democratic process, piecemeal reform, and limited or ad hoc political measures," whereas the movement liberals temper a deeply tragic ethos with a belief in the kind of ambitious social change—what they often call 'transformative systems change'—that the Cold War liberals rejected.

Perhaps the most influential engagement with Frye's work on romance comes nearly a quarter century later in Jameson's chapter "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism" in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981). As a historical materialist, Jameson is interested in historicizing Frye's largely synchronic exploration in order to unveil "the ideological significance and historical destiny of romance as a genre."[133] Thus for Jameson, romance is not simply a wish-fulfillment narrative, as Frye would have it, but a wish-fulfillment narrative that, like all genres, expresses a historically specific "private or

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[130] Williams, *The Country and the City*, 33.
[131] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 96-97.
[132] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 96-97.
[133] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 95. Hayden White, in "Getting Out of History: Jameson's Redemption of Narrative" in *The Content of the Form*, says that Jameson does to Frye what Marx claimed to do to Hegel: "plant him firmly in the hardened clay of 'history'" (144).

collective narrative fantasy."[134] At the heart of every genre is an ideologeme, "a historically determinate conceptual or semic complex" that offers a value system that provides "a symbolic resolution to a concrete historical situation"; it is the job of the critic to grasp the social contradiction that is the "historical subtext" of the ideologeme.[135] Crucially, for Jameson, this ideologeme doesn't simply reduplicate the historical context and its social contradictions, but "constitutes an active response" in the form of "imaginary resolution."[136] Thus Jameson finds the "original strong form" of romance in the 12th century with the rise of the feudal nobility as a universal class. In this context, earlier narratives about the conflict of good and evil in the real world as articulated for instance by the *chanson de geste*, with its cast of brigands and robbers, no longer registers when feudal society takes itself to be the universal subject of history. The 'other' now needs to be located not outside but rather within the universal class of feudal nobility. This is why romances of this period so often feature a sinister, strange, and unknowable knight who, once "defeated and unmasked," reveals his name and is "reinserted into the unity of the social class."[137] The seemingly external threat now neutralized, the category of evil is "expelled from the realm of interpersonal or inner-worldly relations" and "projectively reconstituted" in the realm of magic and the otherworldly.[138] For Jameson, then, romance's "ultimate condition of figuration," grounding the conflict of good and evil and drama of redemption, is an emerging antagonism between coexisting modes of production or socioeconomic scenarios that "is not yet articulated in terms of the struggle of social classes, so that its resolution can be projected in the form of a nostalgic (or less often, a Utopian) harmony."[139] Jameson's question then becomes: given the persistence of romance, what "substitutions, adaptations, and appropriations" emerge to replace "the raw materials of magic and Otherness" in medieval romance in the "wholly altered historical circumstances" of a secularized and rationalized post-feudal world.[140] Thus Shakespeare's romances oppose "the phantasmagoria of 'imagination' to the bustling commercial activity at work all around it," while in the 19th century romances react against "the new and unglamorous social institutions emerging from the political triumph of the bourgeoisie and the setting in place of the market system."[141]

One answer to the question of what replaces magic and Otherness in the 21st century is offered by Miranda Joseph in *Against the Romance of Community* (2002). Joseph argues that the story capitalism tells about itself is a romance in which *community* is nostalgically positioned as the "defining other" of capitalist modernity, representing a longed-for time prior to *society* and "our current fallen state of alienation, bureaucratization, rationality."[142] If community, according to this narrative, is local, rooted in values and particular places, then capital is global, "faceless," denaturalized, and abstract, equalizing everything by translating it into economic value.[143] Pitted as battling forces, the discourse of community posits and constructs the domain of community as "autonomous from capitalist society" and of "particular communities [as] discrete and

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[134] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 102.
[135] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 102-104.
[136] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 104.
[137] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 105.
[138] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 105-106. And see Fuchs, *Romance*, 7.
[139] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 135.
[140] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 117.
[141] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 135.
[142] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 1.
[143] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 1.

autonomous from each other."[144] But this binary opposition, as Joseph shows, masks the ways in which community acts "as a complement to capitalism, balancing and humanizing it, even, in fact, enabling it":

> in being articulated as discontinuous from each other and 'society,' communities are actually linked to capitalism and through capitalism to each other…[P]recisely through being cast as its opposite, community functions in complicity with 'society,' enabling capitalism and the liberal state.[145]

Whereas many early 19th century romantic invocations of community were anticapitalist and anti-commodification (even while also being reactionary and nostalgic)—examples of what Sayre and Löwy call romantic anticapitalism[146]—today's idealizations of community in the United States fantasize about "a long-lost communality [that] might return to nurture contemporary capitalism," in the process "detaching community from the social, economic, political, and historical conditions that enabled the particular forms of sociality that would seem to be so appealing."[147] In other words, community is fetishized and assumed to have intrinsic value in much the same way as commodities: while they are created through human struggle and relationships of labour and to capital, they "appear to be independent, organic entities over and against the subjects who produced them."[148] It is precisely because communities are presumed to be organic and spontaneous that they

> are frequently articulated as providing an alternative to the alienated realm of production…I would suggest that while civil society appears to be a realm of organic and independent communities, it is in fact where these communities are constituted through their interdependent productive practices.[149]

Fetishizing an abstracted, organic vision of community as capitalism's alternative obscures the ways that capitalist modernity leans on "the discourse of community to legitimate social hierarchies" required for capitalist production.[150]

Something very much like this is at play in movement liberalism's romance. Movement liberal elite partake of romance to the extent that they respond to the neoliberal transformation of civil society by fetishizing grassroots movements as an alternative to themselves, while obscuring or ignoring the complex ways that contemporary movements oftentimes simultaneously contest, engage, and ally with states and capital. The redemptive promise of 'transformative systems change' so central to third sector elite discourse and practice requires such elites to "summon a genie" precisely because they understand themselves to be inextricable from the "trouble" (or system) in need of transformation. The tragic impasse articulated by elites whereby their imbrication with state and market power place them in contradiction with their stated goals and the actors pursuing them is 'solved' by imagining and then investing in social movements as outside of (discontinuous from) that contradiction.

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[144] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 2.
[145] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 1-2.
[146] Sayre and Löwy, "Figures of Romantic Anti-Capitalism."
[147] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 8-9.
[148] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 57.
[149] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, 57.
[150] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, viii.

III.   Social Movements, Civil Society, and Paracapitalist Horizons

What are we to make of this romance? Picking up Frye's speculation that romance expresses utopian longing, Jameson submits that it is in late capitalism, as realism is reified, that romance "once again comes to be felt as the place of narrative heterogeneity" that offers "the possibility of sensing other historical rhythms, and of demonic or Utopian transformations of a real now unshakably set in place."[151] And indeed, both Marxists (according to Jameson) and anticolonial thinkers (according to David Scott) emploted the story of their political projects as romances, adopting a "salvational or redemptive perspective of some secure future."[152] In other words, the question remains as to the emancipatory credentials and potentials of the kind of romance to which the grammar of movement liberalism lends itself. Or, to translate this back into the terms of this chapter: what kind of redemptive, liberatory, or transformative future does movement liberalism's drama of politicization propose? Is this a political opening, or a closure? Surely it expresses, as Frye indicated, longing for redemption from the present, and not as simple nostalgia. Joseph's observation that the contemporary romance of community differs from its 19th century romantic forebearer by dropping the anticapitalist orientation, for instance, only partially applies to movement liberalism's romance. After all, the 'system' in need of transformation in system's change discourse is almost always an oblique reference to capitalism. Consider also the claim by the employee of Solidaire referenced in Chapter 1 that "we're anticapitalists!"[153] Even if we might question how this individual understands anticapitalism, their insistence registers at the very least a desire to be perceived as anticapitalist. It seems fair to suggest that there is thus something of an anticapitalist impulse motivating the turn to supporting movements, something oppositional to capitalism and supportive of collective action, rather than simply nostalgia for a time *before* capitalism, as in Joseph's critique of the romance of community.

As I will argue, however, even though the third sector professionals discussed in this dissertation are drawn to a rhetoric of futurity that could indicate a utopian impulse, it is better understood as an investment in a never-fully-realized ideal of civil society as a space shielded from and a counterforce to the powers of state and market. It is an ideal often associated with a kind of 1970s welfare state in which the 'new social movements' challenged the encroachment of market upon lifeworld, in Habermas's formulation.[154] As I argued in Chapter 1, this ideal of civil society is what social movements are thought to redeem, in the movement liberal structure of feeling, and what third sector elites aim to secure through their support of movements—elites who, like Michelet according to White, see it as their task to "serve as the preserver of what is redeemed."[155] In this final section of the chapter I draw out the implications of the ambiguous, chiasmatic relationship posited between this notion of civil society and social movements in both scholarly debates and third sector discourses, showing the limitations the grammar of movement liberalism places on the meaning of social movement but also its ambivalent attraction to a

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[151] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 91. He describes romance as offering "freedom from that reality principle to which a now oppressive realistic representation is the hostage" (91).

[152] Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 89-90, citing White, *Metahistory*, 281-282; and see Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, on anticolonial romance.

[153] Interview #12.

[154] See Habermas, "New Social Movements," as well as Haysom, "Civil Society and Social Movements," and Edwards, "Habermas and Social Movement Theory."

[155] White, *Metahistory*, 152.

limitless political agency. If political (re)enchantment means for movement liberals an autonomous space of agency couched within an account of political modernity the terms of which are already settled, their continuous grappling with the tension between that limitless agency and delimited or settled account reveals the way radical political possibility exists as a permanent—even constitutive—remainder in movement liberal structures of feeling. The fate of liberalism in movement liberals' reinvention of it hinges on locating a subject capable of resolving this tension and making liberal political modernity *work*—a search itself fated to be endless.

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The remainder of this section will use three examples to show how theoretical and programmatic attempts to secure an oppositional civil society sphere through support of grassroots social movements lead to tensions that remain unresolved, even if frequently obscured by conceptual and rhetorical sleights of hand.

First, the Funders Initiative for Civil Society (FICS) provides an instructive example of movement liberalism's project to politicize and secure the oppositional role of civil society through support for social movements. FICS is a donor affinity group established in 2016 by American Jewish World Service, Arcus Foundation, Ariadne, Asfari Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders, Ford Foundation, Fund for Global Human Rights, Human Rights Funders Network, Mama Cash, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Sigrid Rausing Trust, and Wallace Global Fund—in other words, many of the foundations and philanthropic support organizations pushing the social movement funding practice and discourse discussed in previous chapters. FICS's mission is to "defend and expand civic space," which it defines as "the physical, digital, and legal conditions through which progressive movements and their allies organise, participate, and create change."[156] As their website states, civic space is shrinking right at the moment when we need it the most: "If we are to tackle the enormous crises humanity faces, from irreversible climate change to the economic and social inequalities that are pulling societies apart, we must expand civic space. Then people will be able to come together freely, work out the answers to our problems and create better futures for us all."[157]

FICS details at greater length in its report *Rethinking Civic Space in an Age of Intersectional Crises: A Briefing for Funders* (May 2020) that one of the major problems is that civic space is under threat also from corporate lobbyists working against regulation, effectively "occupying the spaces of political contestation in which civil society has traditionally plied its trade, from civic halls to federal government offices."[158] The rise of private-public partnerships for designing and implementing policies, both in national governments and at the international level at the UN, is "increasingly displacing [the role of] civil society organizations."[159] FICS sees the closing of civic space as a challenge "not external to modern, liberal democracies but rooted in their contemporary development":

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[156] https://www.fundersinitiativeforcivilsociety.org/what-is-fics/.
[157] https://www.fundersinitiativeforcivilsociety.org/.
[158] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 20.
[159] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 20.

Vested interests acting in the name of political and economic liberalism have produced the structures that are now at the intersection of closing civic space. Corporate power and privatisation, the failure of democracies to meet the needs of many citizens, and ceaseless rhetoric of national security have also provided fertile ground for right-wing populism. A rich and, until recently, often overlooked and maligned scholarship has painstakingly documented how neoliberalism has paved the way for the ascendancy of corporate power and the hollowing out of democracy over the last four decades. This too was a backlash: a response to the post-war gains of the labour movement and the cultural and political revolutions of the late 1960s.[160]

The neoliberalization of civil society described in Chapter 1 is here a key part of FICS's analysis of the problem of closing civic space, a problem that emerges from the history of liberalism itself. Likewise, they argue, the rise of the "reactionary Right" emerges from neoliberalism's failures and has involved the deployment of tactics that "draw from progressive critiques of power and social control, from Gramsci to Foucault to liberation theology."[161] Just as the Right uses theories of power from the Left, many of the professionals and activists interviewed for the FICS report say progressives need to "learn from the 'playbook' of the Right".[162] This means two things for funders. First, avoiding the way professional progressive civil society actors have tended to go about their work: those interviewed "reported frustration at the 'NGOisation' of progressive politics and an overwhelming focus by civil society organisations and funders on policy, legal and institutional reforms, at the expense of grassroots work and community mobilisation."[163] And second, avoiding the kind of philanthropic approach developed by tech sector billionaires, who, though they might desire social change, "are often more focused on technological solutions and less likely to invest in human rights and democracy as pathways to solutions."[164]

The solution, rather, is progressive social movements in collaboration with more traditional civil society organizations. In terms akin to the ecosystem rhetoric discussed in the last chapter, FICS argues that "a range of strategies" by individuals and groups "working at every level as allies"—"from grassroots movements to the transnational advocacy level, backed by funders who can commit to long-term support and taking some risks"—is needed to push back the drivers of shrinking civic space.[165] FICS believes "that the funding community has a special role to play in enabling progressive movements to step back and view the drivers of this repression, and then develop strategies to resist it," and sees its own role as motivating funders to "move more resources to rights-based movements for this task."[166]

Yet this picture of social change gets fuzzier the longer you look at it. Consider the following three statements. First, like many in the progressive philanthropic community, FICS argues that the COVID-19 pandemic:

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[160] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 24.

[161] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 25. This analysis is essentially the same as that offered by Wendy Brown in recent years, though Brown is not cited here.

[162] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 25.

[163] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 27.

[164] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 7.

[165] https://www.fundersinitiativeforcivilsociety.org/how-can-we-defend-and-expand-civic-space/

[166] https://www.fundersinitiativeforcivilsociety.org/

has momentarily upended assumptions about the social contract between state, private sector, and civil society, and created openings for activists globally who are arguing that long called for measures – including climate justice, community agriculture, universal basic income, investment in public health, strengthening workers' rights, and equality – offer the most effective protections against future systemic crises.[167]

The FICS report goes on:

[t]he key challenge for civic space funders is to continue to defend civic space as a pillar of democracy while working to create [and] nourish [sic] those spaces in which radical and dynamic solutions to the crises we face can flourish. This means identifying and supporting those progressive actors most likely to be catalysts of change over the next decade, defending them against the specific threats they face and enabling them to take their disruptive and transformational ideas from the margins to the mainstream.[168]

Finally, the report states that:

[s]trengthening democracy will require a re-set of the social contract between State, private sector and civil society, and a doubling-down of efforts to curb the corrosive influence of corporate lobbying, the private financing of political campaigns, corruption and organized crime. Civil society will also need support in disrupting the business model underlying surveillance capitalism and the agglomeration of vast amounts of personal and public data, through the advancement of a structural policy agenda that focuses on data rights, competition, education, and public service. It will require strengthening the voices and aggregate power of citizen-led movements that represent the most marginalised in society, in particular the women's rights, LGBTQI, migrants' rights and minority right movements who are at the vanguard of changing culture and social norms and a buffer against majoritarian rule.[169]

Moving across these passages, we go from an upended social contract between state, market, and civil society that opens possibilities, to nourishing and defending 'radical and dynamic solutions' and 'disruptive and transformational ideas' produced by progressive actors within this space of open possibility, to *re-setting* the social contract and doubling-down on defending civil society so that civil society can hold back the corrosive overreach of state and market into our lifeworlds (as exemplified by surveillance capitalism). If the global pandemic 'upended' our assumptions about the relationships between state, market, and civil society, then the mainstreaming of movements' 'disruptive' ideas is one way to re-set that relationship back to an imagined time prior to encroachment by forces like surveillance capitalism, rather than a reimagining or rejection of the terms of the state, market, civil society relationship. The 'oppositional role' and 'critical potential' of social movements in FICS's account, to use Cohen and Arato's language, stops at redeeming civil society as a force capable of entering into a stabilizing rather than antagonistic relationships with state and market forces. Social movements are here enjoined to be a vanguard and catalyst of new norms, radical solutions, and disruptive, marginal ideas, while

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[167] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 9.
[168] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 10.
[169] Funders Initiative for Civil Society, *Rethinking Civic Space*, 29.

simultaneously being qualified as movements that are "rights-based" and "citizen-led"—qualifications that sharply curtail the range of future social and political arrangements proposed by different movements, especially anticapitalist ones. Identifying, enabling, and then mainstreaming progressive movement actors whose ideas are disruptive enough to solve global crises like climate change but that endorse a social contract between state, market, and civil society (no matter how revised) becomes the guiding mission of institutions like FICS.

The example of FICS helps us see how the narrative of civil society-in-crisis propels the search by movement liberals for a particular kind of social movement actor capable of redeeming civil society while retaining its basic structural relationship with state and market. The next example highlights the importance of such an actor for the future of liberal political modernity more generally and in weaving together social movements, human rights, civil society, and liberal modernity into whole cloth. Jack Snyder's *Human Rights for Pragmatists: Social Power in Modern Times* (2022) shows how a scholarly project to politicize human rights by tying them to grassroots social movements can ultimately turn into a project of securing the oppositional role of civil society in political modernity. As noted earlier, Snyder is critical of the legalism, universalism, moralism, altruism, and idealism of professionalized human rights activism; this "unconvincingly apolitical façade" has weakened the message of these professionals at a "moment of precarity…for the liberal project as a whole."[170] To rectify this, human rights practitioners need to adopt a clear-eyed, consequentialist approach to power and interests, rather than investing further in "normative persuasion about standards of appropriate behavior for individual actors whose politically relevant social identity is 'human'."[171] Such persuasion, while "worthy and perhaps ultimately necessary to sustain successful liberal modernity," forgets that "the processes needed to advance it depend on the creation of social power in the hands of groups that perceive an interest of their own in achieving it."[172] The current mainstream approach to human rights activism only appears feasible in societies that already possess the right "facilitating conditions" like the rule of law, while in other places, these conditions need to be produced: "There are no magic shortcuts that get directly to rights through law and moralism by taking a detour around politics."[173] And creating these conditions will require more force than human rights professionals have at their disposal. In a nod to the tragic limitations of liberal actors, Snyder reminds us that "elite-based, legalistic rights NGOs" have rarely if ever been at the centre of transitions to democracy or away from violent systems like apartheid in South Africa.[174] The "angle of vision" of such human rights NGOs "is far too narrow to be the central engine of progressive change."[175] While human rights NGOs can frame and publicize issues, their main task is to "lobby others to take direct action rather than organizing it themselves."[176]

The problem for human rights professionals is that, unlike their heroes—Mandela, Gandhi, MLK—they "have no mass movement that they can mobilize toward a goal."[177] Snyder thus argues that for global civil society to actually become the human rights project's "power source"[178] certain "strategic adjustments" need to be made to mobilize movement energies, and

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[170] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 3.

[171] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 29.

[172] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 29.

[173] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 140.

[174] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 142.

[175] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 143.

[176] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 132-133.

[177] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 244.

[178] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 244.

"[tap] into the latent power of mass civil society."[179] These adjustments include channeling the "power of religious zeal and networks," focusing on "core rights values that speak to the interests of the majority groups in a society," and mobilizing around "big, hot-button grievances that unite everybody."[180] The legal advocacy work of human rights professionals needs to be "embedded," says Snyder, in "a broad-based movement animated by religious or other locally resonant themes," and "aligned" with "a pragmatic political party." His vision, like that of FICS, is an example of movement liberalism's ecosystem imaginary:

> Success comes together through the mutually supportive efforts of an organizational tripod: principled activists provide an aspirational compass; a mass social movement provides numbers, commitment, and sustainability; a pragmatic progressive party assembles an institutionally powerful, tactically attuned coalition that gets results.[181]

Getting the different legs of the tripod to stand together requires convergence on "compatible conceptual frames" so that they can "coordinate their efforts in complementary ways," recognizing that each of these tools "have strengths and limitations that make them appropriate to particular tasks and circumstances."[182]

Snyder's project helps us see the role that movements are asked to play in making liberal modernity work—the essence of movement liberalism. Snyder is invested in redeeming the rights project to the extent that the rights project might redeem liberal modernity: "the liberal rights project" plays a crucial role "in making modernity work."[183] This task is urgent, says Snyder, echoing FICS's crisis narrative, because trends within liberalism, such as economic libertarianism and free speech fundamentalism, have "hollow[ed] out the pragmatic class compromise of the welfare state" that he calls a "more successful tradition of pragmatic progressive reform" than the legalism and moralism of today's human rights activism.[184] And while the liberal project is currently precarious, it must nevertheless be saved: Snyder is adamant that human rights-based societies are best because they have the best outcomes (he describes "the long-term functional advantages of rule-based individualism for modern social organization"), that liberal societies allow rights to thrive, and that therefore it is justified to make societies liberal through "power and politics." In other words, because he believes that for human rights to thrive they must be embedded in liberal modernity, the goal is to use power and politics to bring about "the institutional entrenchment of a rights-based system."[185] Snyder's, then, is an argument for modernization: "the liberal powers need to stabilize their system in a way that creates the right incentives for rising powers to liberalize." Their tool kit for stabilizing the liberal system includes:

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[179] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 127. In this argument, Snyder differs from scholars like Michael Doyle, who similarly argue for the superiority of liberal political order (focusing more on the liberal peace thesis) but place more emphasis on international institutions for securing it. See Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs" parts 1 and 2.

[180] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 244-245.

[181] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 127.

[182] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 129-130. Others, like César Rodríguez-Garavito, are explicit about the need for securing the future of human rights through the ecosystem metaphor. See "The Future of Human Rights: From Gatekeeping to Symbiosis."

[183] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, ix-x.

[184] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 3.

[185] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 3.

politically regulated markets embedded in democratic social welfare states, using policy tools of Keynesian domestic economic management and Bretton-Woods-style adjustment arrangements at the international level. The growing contradictions in liberalism have been caused by the disembedding of markets for capital, goods, and labor from democratic control, and they can be fixed by redesigning the control mechanisms of social welfare democracy for adaptation to current conditions. Human rights, including civil-political and economic-social rights, are central to the functioning of this system.[186]

Stabilizing the liberal system at home evidently means turning back the clock to a time before neoliberalism 'caused' (rather than realized) contradictions in liberalism—a claim that should be contested—and the social welfare state and the social rights it championed was still robust. Abroad, he suggests, human rights professionals should focus on corruption and inequality, which "are anchored in the modernizing logic of the shift from clientelistic societies based on in-group favoritism to inclusive societies based on impartial rules."[187] Thus for Snyder, human rights are "the keystone to all the elements that makes liberal modernity work. No rights, no functioning modernity,"[188] even as at the same time rights need to be embedded in liberal modernity for them to work: no liberal modernity, no human rights.

In Snyder's project, human rights are infrastructural to a functioning liberal modernity, and reach their full potential when embedded in it; bringing about a liberal modernity characterized by the realization of rights involves using power and politics to achieve post-WWII social welfare state modernization and liberalization; and power and politics refer to a coordinated project of elite human rights professionals housed in NGOs, progressive political parties, and mass social movements, the latter being the "power source" of this coalition. The goal, then, is to wrest the future from the forces of illiberalism in the name of liberalism and to secure a "cooperative league of liberal welfare states."[189] In light of this goal, one of Snyder's key questions is, "[u]nder what conditions will religious mass movements addressed in the vernacular be a safe, reliable partner of liberal rights advocacy?"[190] This question could be reframed in Cohen and Arato's terms as: how can movements function as the power behind a *self-limiting* civil society?

This is a sticky question, and I suggest that an anxiety about the transformative and systems-changing (rather than systems-stabilizing) force of grassroots movements emerges in the ambiguous locus of agency in Snyder's program.[191] To replace the mainstream human rights theory of "a norms cascade that begins with normative persuasion and culminates in institutionalization and internalization" Snyder posits a "pragmatic counterpart that begins with incipient changes in the structural organization of society, proceeds through shifts in social power and coalitions, solidifies rights in the course of struggles to build enabling institutions, and legitimates rights through a locally persuasive ideology."[192] Presumably the incipient changes in

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[186] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 11.

[187] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 12.

[188] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 12.

[189] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 239-240.

[190] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 137.

[191] A similar anxiety is likely behind, for example, Bernard Mayer and Jacqueline N. Font-Guzmán's distinction between "chaotic disruption" and "strategic disruption" in their practitioner-facing book *The Neutrality Trap: Disrupting and Connecting for Social Change* (2022).

[192] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 6.

society and shifts in social power are the work of social movements, which throughout his project Snyder identifies as the "power source" (or zeal) of civil society, and he further specifies that, "[u]nlike episodic protests and riots, social movements capable of sustained effort require a centralized leadership cadre to develop an ideology, articulate a common framing discourse, formulate strategy, recruit existing groups and individuals to join the movement, and organize coordinated sequences of action."[193] Here a kind of organic intellectual is essential to ideology formation, framing, strategizing, recruiting, and coordinating. But only a few pages later, Snyder says:

> Overall, it seems reasonable to conclude that the best results come when strategists of rights-based progressive change prepare a full menu of complementary organizational tools, including reform parties as well as social movements and elite civil society organizations. These organizations work best when they converge on a common (or at least complementary) frame that resonates with mass audiences and allows for legal follow-through and the political flexibility to close deals within a capacious reform coalition.[194]

Notice here that the ambiguous category "strategists of rights-based progressive change" appears as the coordinating actor, or at least the actor that "prepare[s] a full menu" of organizational tools. What might the verb 'prepare' tangibly refer to in this context? Is this strategist the same as the social movement's "centralized leadership cadre," the leaders of reform parties, the elite civil society professional, or all the above? Perhaps it doesn't matter, because in the very next sentence this actor's role is immediately obscured through the use of passive voice: Snyder argues that such organizations "work best *when they converge* on a common…frame," but doesn't state how such convergence is to be motivated, produced, or enforced. The "strategist of rights-based progressive change"—of which Snyder himself might be most representative—takes credit only for setting the menu while refusing the burden of making the meal hold together. There is a sentence missing in the middle of the above passage which would identify a subject with the agency and authority to orchestrate such convergence. That convergence is possible between such different actors is either assumed as a natural feature of progressive politics (an idealist, teleological belief in the inevitable triumph of liberal values) or rests on an unacknowledged step wherein these different actors are *made* to converge on a common frame by an elite actor (an imperialist belief in the legitimacy of advancing liberal values by whatever means). This question of how to ensure convergence around a common frame that could both resonate with a mass movement while limiting it so that it remains a "safe, reliable partner of liberal rights advocacy" is part of the same genre as liberal tragedy's concern over responsibility in political action and the need for self- (and other-) limitation. The missing subject of that missing sentence has an implied (and perhaps chimeric) referent that captures the imaginations and energies of movement liberals: the social movement that bridges the seemingly limitless power of mass civil society and the self-limiting power of liberal rights advocacy.

Snyder's project might seem like the extreme case of movement liberalism placing its ideological cards on the table, but it does help illuminate what is only slightly more implicit in the practice of social movement funders. Several of the subjects interviewed for this dissertation, and who work at a number of the organizations that founded FICS, said they were influenced in

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[193] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 132.
[194] Snyder, *Human Rights for Pragmatists*, 137.

their work on supporting movements by Maria J. Stephan's writing on the "movement mindset."[195] Stephan, who has worked at the US State Department, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, the Atlantic Council, and as a senior policy fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, combines insights from social movement studies, research on nonviolent civil disobedience, and civil society as a normative framework. Stephan's preferred term is "civic movements," combining civil society and social movement, though she is clear to distinguish civic movements from NGOs—"more established organizations, often registered with the government"—noting that "both fall under the umbrella of civil society."[196] Paralleling Snyder's question about how to make movements responsible partners of the human rights project, Stephan says that, given the shrinking of civic space globally, "one question that emerges from this new context is how foreign aid can most effectively be used to support civic campaigns and movements whose goals align with international norms."[197] And like Snyder she says that each actor in civil society "plays a distinct role, representing and mobilizing a particular constituency," though movements are especially important.[198] For example, Stephan cites the findings of a 2005 Freedom House study "that transitions generated by nonviolent civic coalitions lead to far better results for freedom than top-down transitions initiated by elites," but adds that "elites and governments are often important allies in reform and challenging the abuse of power."[199] Nonetheless, "[g]rassroots movements that mobilize diverse constituencies…do tend to be the drivers of democratic change,"[200] or the 'power source' in Snyder's words. So while it is a positive development that "the idea of increased and more effective support for civil society has become a trending theme of high-level discussions and policy statements," including in the context of state-building and development programs, it is problematic that the definition of civil society used by donors "often privileges elite perspectives and organizations that grasp[] donor rhetoric and procedures," given that the calls for change during the Arab Spring, for example, did not primarily come from NGOs.[201]

Stephan's recommendations for aid agencies, foundations, businesses, and NGOs "seeking to creatively support civic campaigns and movements" seek to challenge this problematic definition of civil society: prioritize local nonviolent movements; identify local change agents from across civil society; offer small, long-term, and flexible funding, using intermediaries; don't overpay activists and thereby reduce intrinsic motivation; help in nonfinancial ways such as by providing equipment and legal assistance or by disseminating statements; avoid reframing local struggles or setting new agendas (be sure to align with movements); maximize local expressions (vernacularization); don't delegitimize local struggles; support NGOs that act as brokers and widen democratic space out of which movements emerge; create "enabling environments" through political cover, public dialogue, and legal support; and encourage local philanthropy and social enterprise to sustain the movement over the long term.[202] These kinds of enabling mechanisms are necessary in situations where the "normal political and

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[195] See in particular "Aid to Civil Society: A Movement Mindset" (2015), "Adopting a Movement Mindset to Address the Challenge of Fragility" (2016), and *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns: Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?* (2021), written with Erica Chenoweth.
[196] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 2.
[197] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 2.
[198] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 3.
[199] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 4.
[200] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 5.
[201] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 4-6.
[202] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 9-11.

legal channels [are] preferable" but unavailable or unrealistic and "technocratic tweaks" ineffective.[203] But they do require threading a needle:

> Social and political goals organically emerging from local realities are far more likely to be met and sustained than those suggested by external actors. This doesn't mean that donors can't align with causes that forward their values. They should, however, align their objectives to the local environment rather than stimulate an environment where local change agents must adapt to donors to receive support.[204]

After all, "Movements are legitimate if it is clear that the activists, rather than the donors, are driving the agenda."[205] At this moment in the argument, Stephan emphasizes the greater effectiveness of organic activism; the power and authenticity of grassroots movements go hand in hand.

However, because the donor agenda is presumed to be the *stability* of the system, as it is also for Snyder, the agendas of the movements receiving support do need to be coaxed in certain directions:

> Because outside actors probably will not be able to prevent people from engaging in protests or other direct action, particularly if they are suffering acute grievances, to minimize risk of violent instability they could invest in helping civil societies develop the capacity to organize nonviolently and maintain nonviolent discipline. Research in this area makes it clear that civic actors can maximize discipline and resilience by taking certain actions. Diversifying tactics, broadening the base of participation, engaging government insiders, providing assurances to security forces, and combining negotiations with nonviolent direct action are a few of these actions. Outside actors are never in the best position to give strategic or tactical advice to local civic actors, but they are in a position to support capacity building for strategic, disciplined nonviolent action.[206]

In a sleight of hand over little more than a page of text, Stephen separates a movement's agenda and its tactics, its ends and means. Activists must drive the agenda for a movement to be organic, legitimate, and effective, but donors can shape the means by which that agenda is pursued, ensuring "nonviolent discipline and resilience." However, baked into tactics like 'organizing nonviolently' is a stricture against certain ends, like some kinds of revolutionary regime change. Such a means/end split is a popular move amongst movement liberals, allowing them to claim that they are not driving change or setting the agenda (not 'stimulating' the objectives), but merely increasing the capacity of the organic/authentic movement actors to pursue whatever they want to pursue. The final sentence of this passage goes even further, splitting the idea of

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[203] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 7.

[204] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 10.

[205] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 10. This claim is also born out in Walker and Stepick, "Valuing the Cause."

[206] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 11-12. For another instance of articulating support for movements within a nonviolence framework see Naimark-Rowse, *Dollars and Dissent: Donor Support for Grassroots Organizing and Nonviolent Movements* (2022) and Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *The Role of External Support in Nonviolent Campaigns: Poisoned Chalice or Holy Grail?* (2021), both published by the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. Chenoweth and Stephan's earlier *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (2012) has been widely influential in providing an evidence base for civil society practitioners seeking to articulate the value of nonviolent movements specifically. See also Chenoweth's *Civil Resistance* (2021).

"strategic or tactical advice" from "supporting capacity building for strategic, disciplined nonviolent action." What Stephen refers ambiguously to as 'outside actors' should not do the former—give strategic advice—but can do the latter—support capacity building towards specific strategies. One of the bits of strategic advice that 'research in this area' suggests, furthermore, includes having diverse tactics, broadening participation, engaging with the government and security forces, negotiating, and protesting—in other words, it involves the organic movement morphing to include the widest possible array of civil society actors, including those elite organizations "that grasp donor rhetoric and procedures" that Stephan devalued a few pages prior.

Stephan appears to want it both ways. 'Outside actors' like donors should not and cannot intervene to stifle protests and direct action, but 'civic actors' can foster 'discipline and resilience' *of movements* by deploying a wide range of tactics and broad base of participants and engaging with government (even though she is aware that movements tend to emerge precisely when normal legal and political channels are unavailable). The distinction that Stephan is so keen to introduce and solidify earlier in the paper disappears here, as civic actor and grassroots movement become one, with the former acting as agent for an always-repudiated donor intent. This is one answer, then, to Snyder's question: investing civil society with the right set of enabling conditions, one of which is a robustly-funded NGO contingent, can discipline mass movements in a stabilizing, non-violent, self-limiting direction.

While in this piece Stephan cautions that a "movement mindest" involves identifying "legitimate, local civil society partners" and then "manag[ing] with a light hand" and learning how to "support rather than direct agendas,"[207] in a policy brief written the next year for the Fragility Study Group, Stephan recommends that the United States National Security Council consider "greater integration of the security community in efforts to strengthen civil society and democratic development" using these same tactics.[208] As she argues there, US Government officials:

> should prioritize engagement with grass-roots actors as part of an overarching fragility strategy and devise strategies and tools to amplify their voices and efforts at the local, national, regional, and international levels. This means expanding beyond the realm of professional, technocratic NGOs. Adopting a 'movement mindset' would mean recognizing and exploiting the comparative advantages among outside actors working with civil society to more effectively engage informal civic actors and help them forge strategic alliances with traditional NGOs and governments. For example, the Civil Society Innovation Initiative, a multistakeholder initiative being spearheaded by USAID and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) that is establishing regional hubs, should focus on building bridges between the grass roots and these other actors.[209]

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[207] Stephan, "Aid to Civil Society," 13.
[208] Stephan, "Adopting a Movement Mindset," 5.
[209] Stephan, "Adopting a Movement Mindset," 5. She goes on: "Building an ecosystem of support for movements involves doubling down on protecting citizens' basic rights to speech, assembly, and association. The Civic Space Initiative, a coalition that includes the freedom of expression non-profit Article 19, the World Movement for Democracy at the National Endowment for Democracy, CIVICUS, and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, launched a "right to protest" initiative in 2015 that is focused on strengthening the legal environment for nonviolent protest activity, which is protected under international human rights law. This initiative should be backed by increased investment in the leadership and capacities of activists and community organizers. Movement-building

Again, amplifying the voices of and prioritizing engagement with grassroots actors turns out to mean facilitating the development of alliances *between* grassroots social movements and traditional NGOs (how this constitutes 'expanding beyond' NGOs remains unclear) *as part of* a fragility strategy created by donors. Stephan even recommends that American diplomats and military officials take up this project, arguing that the 2013 Brookings Institute's "handbook for security professionals, *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions*, offers concrete tools, ranging from military education to bilateral and multilateral military exercises, to encourage democratic norms and behaviors in militaries from non-democratic countries."[210] The "movement mindset" so appealing to progressive social movement funders, then, slides easily into a US military tool for 'stabilizing' countries at risk of violating the norms of liberal modernity.

It is only a half-step from Snyder's *Human Rights for Pragmatists* and Maria Stephan's "movement mindset" work to the explicit liberal imperialism of Michael Ignatieff's *Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan* (2003). Although written two decades after Ignatieff's defense of liberal imperialism, Snyder's book retains the modernizing logic, but replaces a hegemonic US military force with a more diffuse progressive coalition powered by grassroots movements as the agent of change, while Stephan merges the two. If Ignatieff's liberal imperialism responds to the specter of global terrorism, Snyder's liberal pragmatism responds to the specter of China's geopolitical ascent. For both, the hegemony of liberal modernity is threatened and must be strengthened against illiberal forces. All three projects offer a return to the ambitious 19th century liberalism that Moyn wants to resurrect, but none succeed in sheering that liberalism of its imperialism. Ignatieff retains that imperialism consciously, while Snyder's movement liberal project holds onto a modernizing logic that calls for the eventual sedimentation of liberal modernity across the globe.

The visions of FICS, Snyder, and Stephan are, at the end of the day, the same as Cohen and Arato's ideal of a civil society that, through the power of social movements, embodies a kind of self-limiting radicalism capable of opposing the encroachments of both liberal (state and market) and rising illiberal forces on the promise of liberal political modernity.[211] Thus from within the problem-space of the late 20th and early 21st century third sector in the United States described in Chapter 1—in which the role of producing innovative and large-scale social change is being usurped by market forces as the lines between state, economy, and civil society become increasingly blurred—emerges a profound interest in supporting social movements, understood as a self-limiting form of radicalism that promises to make civil society more authentically oppositional; movements are then funded in practice by assimilating them to the concept of civil society. This is the conceptual architecture of what I have been calling movement liberalism. Like Snyder, Stephan, and Cohen and Arato, the third sector professionals discussed in this dissertation recognize social movements as possessing a form of power that is distinct from that wielded by market actors or the state, but strong enough to hold them accountable. They also

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involves skills that can be learned and transferred across cultures, facilitated by organizations such as Rhize, ActionAid, and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict" (6).

[210] Stephan, "Adopting a Movement Mindset," 6.

[211] See their chapter on "Social Movements and Civil Society" in *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 492-563. They argue in their introduction that to "guarantee the autonomy of the modern state and economy while simultaneously protecting civil society from destructive penetration and functionalization by the imperatives of these two spheres," it will be necessary to ensure "both the differentiation of civil society from state and economy and its reflexive influence over them through the institutions of political and economic society" (25).

recognize a need to distinguish movements from the discourses of social capital used by advocates of unregulated markets to make their own case for the benefits of a flourishing civil society in place of paternalistic state intervention.[212]

What this chapter has shown is that movement liberalism picks up the more ambitious Enlightenment project of emancipating human agency that Moyn says characterized 19th century liberalism, but applies it only to one kind of actor, while circumscribing its horizon. It is a paracapitalist ideal, the solidifying of civil society as a permanent counterforce, not a transformative one.[213] The chiasmatic relationships described above and in Chapter 1 between social movements and civil society (each relying on the other) is a way to fold potentially radical collective political action within a stagnant notion of time, an endless present where there is no achievement in history but instead a kind of détente between the main forces of degradation—capitalism and state power—and those that mitigate them—civil society. Movement liberalism thus retains a tragic, Cold War suspicion of collective transformation through action in time, despite its romantic idealization of the 'systems change' promised by grassroots social movements. This poses a serious obstacle to thinking solidarity and transformation, while reifying capitalism as always-already present. It is an end of history argument, and it hinges on the threat that civil space is weak, threatened, or shrinking, rather than the possibility that action from that space might radically shift or transform the terms of the triad.

Conclusion: Ontologizing the Political

Movement liberalism offers an alternative to revolution that is appealing to those dissatisfied by the limits of liberal social and political change projects like human rights.[214] Against the depoliticizing, bureaucratic, and elite nature of such projects, movement liberalism presents a story of politicization structured both as tragedy and romance. This chapter has deployed genre as an analytic to help show how movement liberalism's structure of feeling involves a splitting of the self of social change. One part of this dual act is a tragic account of the political disenchantment of liberal elites, whose proximity to power and privilege renders responsible political action by them nearly impossible; against action, this figure endorses their humility, deference, and restraint. The other part, however, is a romance, wherein the liberal project is redeemed; grassroots social movement actors are the protagonist in this redemptive narrative, and what they save is an ideal of civil society as a space able to fend off both the encroachment of market rationality in liberal countries and authoritarian overreach by illiberal states.

The chapter has asked: if one of the 'systems' in the project of movement-led 'system's change' is capitalism, what kind of anti-capitalism is support for the *autonomy* of civil society

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[212] Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*, 175.

[213] There is, of course, a long tradition of Marxist critique of the concept of civil society that articulates why an excessive focus on transforming relations within civil society come at the expense of anticapitalist movements. One notable example of this is Ellen Meiksins Wood's critique of the new social movements. See the chapter "Civil Society and the Politics of Identity" in her *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*. The other substantial tradition that I don't have space to engage with here comes out of critical theory, most significantly Habermas's theorization of the public sphere. See on this, in general, David Ingram, "Contesting the Public Sphere."

[214] Recall from Chapter one that it was in thinking about how to *avoid* revolution that 19th century social theorists developed the concept of 'social movement', and that late-20th century sociologists then consciously differentiated the concept from more unruly forms of collective action like riots.

from state and economy? Is 'reflexive influence' (Cohen and Arato's phrase) over those spheres the horizon of a politicized civil society for progressive third sector actors? The logic of the practices created by those elite third sector professionals invested in supporting social movements is the purification of civil society of capital and state influence so as to empower it to be in sustaining tension, rather than *contradiction*, with them. In other words, this chapter has told the story of how an anticapitalist impulse becomes a paracapitalist project.[215] And it is here that we can see how the movement liberalism of third sector elites and agonistic democratic theory used by some scholars to imagine a politized human rights become susceptible to the same critique. Both endorse as a virtue a kind of endless struggle—agonism—that sustains rather than seeks to enter into an antagonistic relationship with the forces of degradation that each names. Movement liberalism thus imagines social movements as a permanent feature of political modernity—think of the terms "social movement sector," "social change ecosystem," "movement infrastructure," "enabling conditions"—that solidifies civil society as a space, structure, fixture existing in a right relationship to state and market. All of the best practices presented for instance on the Funding for Real Change website launched by Ariadne and Edge Funders Alliance are about sustaining a movement infrastructure for the long haul through longer-term, multi-year, more flexible and consistent funding.[216]

Yet this is not meant to be a story of cooptation's inevitable triumph over third sector elite's intention to be non-coopting. It is probably too early to say what effect the turn to supporting social movements has had on these movements; if anything, the commitment to offering general support with no strings attached does seem to produce some distance between movement actors and civil society elites. As this dissertation has argued, the cooptation only helps us see some of what is going on here. Thinking about this dynamic instead in terms of the assimilation of movements into civil society, differently, opens up the question of how elite civil society actors are also transformed in their efforts to work together different social change tactics and agents. Thus while anticapitalist desire is not necessarily transformed into a paracapitalist imaginary *for movement actors*, movement liberalism does seem to be a structure of feeling that blocks civil society elites and their institutions from acting on *their own* anticapitalist impulses, or thinking of themselves as part of an antagonistic relationship with the forces they diagnose as at the root of contemporary problems. Instead, they imagine themselves as facilitating an unending, agonistic kind of political dynamic within liberal modernity: the ideal of civil society is the black hole that absorbs elite's anticapitalist political energies, while giving the progressive elite subject work to do that is not radical.

This, however, is not inevitable. Part of the appeal of developing an analytic using genre theory is that genres are always the subject of ironic reversal and subversion. Genres are structures of meaning put to both reactionary and radical purposes, as we saw in the case of tragedy's appeal to both revolutionaries and liberal imperialists. This is important to remember because an anticapitalist impulse remains evident in third sector elite discourse, for example in recent projects like Post-Capitalist Philanthropy or the Just Transition framework.[217] While on

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[215] This, however, is not the case across the board. Some prominent social justice philanthropists, such as Ford Foundation president Darren Walker, see it as their task to actually fix capitalism, which in their view has been distorted and made unfair by free market ideology. Walker thinks that rampant inequality is the great problem, and that making capitalism more meritocratic is the solution. See his *From Generosity to Justice* (2023).
[216] See: https://www.fundingforrealchange.com/.
[217] See Alnoor Ladha and Lynn Murphy, *Post Capitalist Philanthropy: Healing Wealth in the Time of Collapse* (2022). For "just transition," see the definition of the Climate Justice Alliance: "Just Transition is a vision-led,

the one hand these projects to some extent jump past the work to be done in the present (the antagonism), on the other they call for us to imagine the place (or not) of civil society organizations after or beyond their role of merely keeping market and state at bay.[218]

What is of more interest, however, is the way that the movement liberal enterprise is erected on shaky conceptual grounds when it comes to the subject of change. On the face of it, the self-limiting tragic subject (liberal elite) and limitless subject of romance (grassroots social movement activist) are meant to either work together or work in dynamic tension so that the limitless potential of the one achieves what the self-limiting subject cannot achieve, while the self-limiting subject checks and restrains the range of political possibilities available to the apparently limitless subject. (This is why we have here a dual act, not a dialectic). Yet it remains unclear whether this subject distinction can be maintained by movement liberals because, in order to actually support social movements those movements need to be assimilated to (a concept of) civil society. Because there is no guarantee that grassroots movements will be progressive (right wing populism is a case in point), the goal, as seen in the questions animating both Snyder and Stephan, is to enable the flourishing of only those social movements defined by liberal commitments to buttress a key institution of liberal political modernity—civil society—against the rising tide of illiberalism. Ensuring the liberal commitments of grassroots movements at home and abroad, these theorists imply without stating, requires yoking them with the elite, bureaucratic civil society actors like NGOs that, progressive donors today contend, are less effective at bringing about social change than organic movements. To thread this needle, movement liberal thinkers erect a distinction between elite civil society actors (traditional NGOs) and grassroots movements, while simultaneously destabilizing that distinction. That movements in this structure of feeling need to be at once self-limiting and redemptive or emancipatory, to be limited and limitless, is what generates the split and its impossibility.[219]

It also generates the search for a subject capable of holding these contradictory impulses together—a search fated to be endless. The ultimate unreality of this political subject—a subject at once limitless and self-limiting, grassroots and aligned with international norms, authentic and allied with elite civil society actors, bearer of radical zeal and safe partner for human rights organizations—is what encourages essentialist imaginings of it to thrive. In other words, this chapter calls for greater attention to assumptions about subjectivity and agency in projects of politicization. The problematic that Celikates articulates is central to my concern: "the questions of whether and how different logics of depoliticization, politicization, and repoliticization can be accounted for theoretically without falling back into problematic essentialist or even ontological assumptions about the political."[220] If the reactionary right invests in an essentialist account of the political subject along ethnonationalist lines, movement liberals also essentialize the subject of political action as an actor purified of or autonomous from state or market influence and power.[221] So it is not so much that the movement liberal project is antipolitical or depoliticizing,

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unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy." https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/.

[218] Methodological nationalism remains strong: no real conversation exists about post-*national* philanthropy.

[219] Also note here that movement liberals appear in one sense as the opposites of the cold war liberals: whereas the cold war liberals claimed to be self-limiting (if we follow Moyn) while exerting tremendous, devastating power across the globe, for movement liberals social movements are called upon to exert world-redeeming power but from a self-limiting space of civil society. I thank Samera Esmeir for pointing out this reversal to me.

[220] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 144.

[221] Kristian Stokke and Giles Mohan identify this dynamic within development discourses as the essentialization and romanticization of civil society itself as separate from state and market, and point out how a pull to such local civil

but that it holds contradictory images of what appropriate political agency looks like for different kinds of political subjects.

The splitting of the subject of social and political change described in this chapter is important because in its apportioning of transformative agency to one side, it leaves the other side effectively an innate object; all the dynamism exists on the side of social movements, while professionalized civil society organizations either remain as an inert tool sometimes used by movement activists (as in participatory grantmaking), or a force enabling social movements from afar (as in the social change ecosystem framework). In movement liberal discourse the project of securing civil society as an autonomous sphere in and from which political actors can challenge state and market power subtly turns into a search for a particular *subject* whose ideological purity and experience of harm enable them to be the "power source" underwriting that autonomous sphere's oppositional potential—there is an 'outside' to capitalism and state power and authentic political action is generated in this space. In other words, there is a slide from a search for the autonomy of the political to a search for the ontological ground of the political as embodied in a kind of subject. This tendency to ontological thinking—"a perfectionist or essentialist notion of politics no longer tenable today," in Celikates's words[222]—is the problem of theoretical, and actual, attempts at repoliticization that rest on securing the autonomy of the political from the economic, juridical, and social.

society unites neoliberal and post-Marxist development theories that endorse social capital and social movements, respectively (see "The Convergence around Local Civil Society and the Dangers of Localism"). See also here Timothy David Fisken's analysis and critique of the problem of the autonomy of the political in post-Marxist thinking, "The Turn to the Political."

[222] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 144.

Conclusion

In an article published in January 2023 as part of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*'s "What's Next for Philanthropy" series, the Marguerite Casey Foundation's president and CEO, Dr. Carmen Rojas, writes:

> Philanthropy work is not frontline work…Our job is ultimately to fund, not to fight…Philanthropy and movements are different things. Related, but very different…I am concerned that by situating foundations within racial and economic justice movements, we are fundamentally abdicating the responsibility to name the privilege of our role, to state the conflicting commitment many of us hold in challenging racial capitalism yet working within institutions or relationships that are their most pernicious byproduct. And, perhaps most importantly, that in centering ourselves we lose sight of our actual job and role in movements for justice, which is to listen to their leaders and to give them the money they need to do what movements are supposed to do, which is to move…[1]

Rojas' concern reflects central features of what I have called in this dissertation movement liberalism: apportioning different roles to philanthropic and movement actors, asking the former to recognize their privilege, proximity to capital, and contradictory subject position, and to pay deference to movements, all in the name of responsibility and accountability. In the above chapters I have tried to draw out a particular kind of functionalist thinking gaining prominence in elite progressive third sector circles, the epistemological assumptions underwriting it, and the tools elites' fashion in its name. I have argued that third sector elites' efforts to articulate the co-relation of different functions in the social change ecosystem leads them to search for and discursively construct a particular subject capable of giving meaning, direction, and legitimacy to the elite's functional role. The 'subject' is 'the social movement', the authentic political actor that can instrumentalize other actors in the ecosystem. This functionalism leads these subjects to ask not "what do I need to do?" but rather "where is this subject that can act?"

These chapters have largely drawn inspiration from Foucault in seeking to unveil the order of discourse and regime of truth elite civil society professionals construct about social movements, and from Raymond Williams in probing its structure of feeling and giving the nascent ideology that comes into view a name: movement liberalism. But this is only a necessary first step that can inform other lines of inquiry. For example, a proper history of movement liberalism would involve tracing a genealogy of authenticity within liberal political projects and thought, homing in on moments like the mid-19th century turn from direct to indirect rule in India when scholars like Henry Maine formulated accounts of 'authentic' native society as governed by status rather than contract and therefore in need of protection rather than assimilation.[2] Or following the ambivalent relation that Victorian liberals had to objective distance and immediate experience down to the present.[3] The kind of thought I'm calling movement liberalism could also be interpreted and critiqued using other theoretical resources: as an instance of Schmittian political romanticism, given its coupling of an abstention from political action with an attraction

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[1] Rojas, "Seeding a More Just Future."

[2] See Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*, and Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule*.

[3] See, for example, Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance*.

175

to satisfying discussion about political action; as the response of individuals conscious of inhabiting the elite subject position that is often the object of *ressentiment*, who form a peculiar kind of "wounded attachment," but at one remove, an attachment to others perceived as wounded; or as ambivalent heir to Pierre Clastres' vision of society rather than the state as the site of freedom.[4] Other theoretical and empirical questions also remain to be explored: What is transformed in the idea of 'social movement' when it becomes the redemptive force of civil society? What capacities or entailments or traditions of 'social movement' remain in excess of this conceptualization? While the 'social movement' that is assimilated to the discourse of civil society is by definition non-violent, for example, the extent to which actually existing movements are conscripted to this political grammar remains an open question. Even if 'the political' for progressive third sector elites exists within a paracapitalist imaginary that accepts the liberal state-economy-civil society premise, this does not foreclosed the multiple ways movement actors can strategically inhabit the movement capacity apparatus of progressive foundations.

However, these lines of inquiry still largely try to adjudicate the question of cooptation and depoliticization. By way of conclusion, I will instead point to what I take to be one of the more curious and unsettling features of movement liberalism: it advances an elaborate discourse of solidarity that in effect radically limits the forms that solidarity can take. An excessive attention to the perceived dangers of solidarity—cooptation—lead elite progressive actors to elaborate terms for 'responsible' solidarity that are underwritten by epistemological and ontologizing assumptions that seem to take off the table many forms of acting in concert. What's more, the splitting of the social change self that is imagined to be the essential terms of a 'responsible' form of solidarity, as seen in Rojas's statement above, is what further necessitates the proliferation of discourse around solidarity by emphasizing the gap between these subjects. The more the essential difference between the elite and grassroots actor is stressed as an ethical requirement for elite solidarity with movements, the more elaborate discursive performances and practical tools are required to produce connection across that divide while maintaining it. Thus the rhetoric and technologies of solidarity run counter to each other: the rhetoric emphasizes unity and alignment—indeed, solidarity—while the tools third sector elite build are underwritten by assumptions about political agency which, if not surfaced and engaged, could stymie the realization of solidaristic action.

The lesson here is that when elites fetishize social movements they risk losing sight of the range of ways they—both elites and movements—can respond to the forms of injustice in the world.[5] The cynical extreme of this phenomenon is the reality TV show "The Activist" announced by CBS in 2021, which would see six activists pitted against each other in activism-related competitions with a chance to win money and an audience in front of the G20. While "The Activist" has stalled amid fierce criticism—the network says it is reimagining the show as a documentary special to be released at a future date—it nonetheless stands as a parable about the market for consuming fetishized grassroots political action. Though in a very different register, the elite subjects and institutions at the heart of this dissertation likewise view, package, judge and reward activists, and have failed to find a vocabulary for thinking individual difference and

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[4] See Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*; Wendy Brown's chapter "Wounded Attachments" in *States of Injury*; and Clastres, *Society Against the State*. For Clastres' influence on post-Marxist thought and the discourse of civil society, see Moyn, "Of Savagery and Civil Society."

[5] A similar argument is made about the fetishization of community by Miranda Joseph in *Against the Romance of Community*, ix.

collective emancipation together in ways that don't place the most responsibility for achieving that emancipation on the least privileged. Self-emancipation in this order of discourse is off the table; or rather, the elite self can only imagine emancipation if it comes to them from 'below', through the working of a different kind of agent. What is unsettling about immersing oneself in movement liberal discourse is the profound sense of constraint even while purportedly engaging with those movements whose very *raison d'etre* is the opening up of possible worlds.

But the understanding of elite responsibility to grassroots movements in movement liberalism is only a partial and particular one vying for credibility amongst other understandings. Consider two moments. The first is the controversy related in the Introduction surrounding the decision by Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation leadership in 2020 to divide the organization into a 501c3 philanthropic entity, a political action committee focusing on electoral politics, and a chapter-led structure called BLM Grassroots. In response to this reorganization, 10 dissenting BLM chapters published their open letter, "It is Time for Accountability," slamming BLMGNF for acting undemocratically.[6] The decision to restructure the organization, they assert, was made unilaterally despite years of calls by chapters for internal accountability and transparency. A second letter, signed by additional groups, explained that BLM Grassroots was launched in the midst and instead of completing an internal process to democratize the organization.[7] With the failure of the internal process to achieve accountability, the chapters renewed their accusations that BLMGNF coopted local units and "consolidated credibility, power, and resources into an opaque institution," arguing that its decisions show how "liberalism and capitalism have manifested" in the organization. For the second moment, jumping back to an earlier period in the movement for racial justice, consider this observation in a 1990 documentary on Berkeley in the 1960s by Hardy Frye, a SNCC field secretary in Mississippi and Alabama in 1964-1967 who eventually became a sociologist and scholar of the civil rights movement:

> The [Black] Panthers in a sense, let, in my opinion, white radicals off the hook, some white radicals, not all, but some white radicals off the hook from what SNCC had challenged them about three years earlier; that was, to go organize the white community. They [white radicals] could say that they were supporting the Panther's because the Panther's were the vanguard, they assumed that the movement could only be led by blacks, they had made it clear that the blacks would have to be the group to start the revolution, and that the Panther's were the army of that black vanguard.[8]

Frye describes the white student radicals at UC Berkeley as being in awe of the Black Panthers, whose militancy they regarded as the acme of commitment.

In the passage at the beginning of this conclusion Rojas is clear that philanthropic workers have actually very little to do with "what movements are supposed to do," a phrase that appears intentionally ambiguous, as if the missing referent of the verb "to do" is so foreign to the third sector elite that it cannot be specified non-tautologically (movements are supposed to move). But in the case of BLMGNF, separating the philanthropic and the grassroots actors in the

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[6] "It is Time for Accountability," November 30, 2020. The letter is signed by the Black Lives Matter chapters of Philly, Hudson Valley, Oklahoma City, Chicago, New Jersey, DC, Indy, San Diego, Vancouver, and Black Lives Matter 5280.

[7] "Tell No Lies," June 10, 2021.

[8] "Berkeley in the Sixties," starting at 1:23:27.

movement in part enabled the very cooptation dynamic that Rojas and other progressive philanthropic elite are keen to avoid. Instead, the grassroots BLM chapters imagined accountability and responsibility to require the democratization of the wider structure, and for *that* entity to retain "a radical vision, objectives, and strategies."[9] Meanwhile in Frye's analysis, white radicals' intention to 'support' the Black Panther's meant they shirked *their* responsibility to radicalize their own communities. For both the BLM chapters and Frye, 'responsibility' *requires* a kind of engagement with movement politics unthinkable in the grammar of movement liberalism, which appears ill equipped to navigate the messy elements of movement building even as it takes movement building to be its ultimate goal.[10]

These critiques lead to a set of questions. First, are there avenues *through* movement liberalism to a different kind of political subject? One move would involve continuing to orient towards grassroots movements, but refusing to insist upon their purity or distance from state and capital. I am intrigued in this respect by Miranda Joseph's comments on the liberating potential of embracing complicity instead of fetishizing the authenticity of 'communities' (or 'movements'):

> While for some my move to mark community as 'complicit' may seem a loss of an imagined space of authenticity and opposition, I find this complicity a relief, opening up space to imagine collectivities unimaginable from within the repressive space of community. In marking the complicity of heterogeneous social practices, identities, and communities with capitalism, I hope to make it possible to imagine alliances across those differences.[11]

In practice, this might require elites in these institutions to recognize their anticapitalist longing for what it is, and that the social movements to which that longing draws them might not be fully compatible with the liberal framework of civil society. Who knows what might come into view with a more ambivalent posture towards the need to ascertain whether a movement will necessarily be a 'safe and reliable partner'? What changes in liberal conceptualizations of civil society if we recognize the possibility that there might need to be something not-liberal or illiberal at the heart of civil society to be able to secure it? A movement liberalism that engages these kinds of questions might look very different.

Eschewing the pull towards purity and over-investment in avoiding hypocrisy can also open a space for asking: What other options exist for imagining solidarity relationships? First, we can look to history. As Bruce Robbins writes, in a critique of radical democratic theory that applies equally to movement liberals:

> The cynics are right that such projects are permeated by existing structures of power. This has to be conceded. But in conceding it, one merely repeats a proposition that ought by now to be both obvious and unobjectionable: that no politics happens in circumstances of its own making. No political action, however revolutionary, can be solely and successfully carried out by people who lack any trace of power or privilege. To demand purity from political actors is to take oneself out of politics. And to assume that those

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[9] "Tell No Lies," June 10, 2021.

[10] Nina Luo calls on grassroots organizers to engage so as to radicalize left-leaning funders in "Money Power."

[11] Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, xxxiii.

178

who have some self-interest in the status quo will always and necessarily act to maintain the status quo is simply to ignore the historical record.[12]

Leela Gandhi's work, for example, points to historical instances when anticolonial solidarity developed across sometimes radical differences and when the encounters of solidarity occasioned unexpected transformations of self and belief.[13] Closer to the movement liberal milieu, we can locate numerous examples when foundations have spent down their endowment and closed shop.[14] We can chart the ways in which elite actors have made claims to *belonging* to radical movements, and then navigated the kinds of responsibility and self-fashioning that come from that identification.[15] And we can entertain, on the individual level, the possibility or even responsibility of leaving institutions, and thereby refusing to inhabit the contradictory subject position that Rojas says it is our responsibility to acknowledge.[16]

Examples of these options exist, but they are muted in comparison to the conversation about how to support movements at a distance from within elite liberal institutions. The point, as Robin Celikates writes,

> is not to find a new vanguard…onto which frustrated revolutionary desires can be projected, but to see the collective enactment of denied freedoms, the temporary realization of utopian possibilities in the here and now, and the practical de-centering of the state for what they are: openings of political space that reveal a radical-democratic potential. The question is, which practices and forms of organization can accommodate rather than repress and conceal this political potential that seems to push beyond hegemony?[17]

If existing frameworks and institutions of human rights, philanthropy, and development are to be politicized, as there seems motivation to do now within these sectors, they will have to consider thinking differently about the epistemological assumptions and values they carry into this work. At the same time, left scholars interested in drawing on radical practices of resistance or emancipation to challenge the pervasive spread neoliberal rationality should recognize that cognate projects are being constructed in the halls of capitalist and liberal institutions as well. It is likely that the near future of liberalism in these times of overlapping and accelerating crises will involve a pull to reimagine it as a more ambitious project, one made to the measure of the problems at hand. The slice of professionalized progressive civil society analyzed in these pages is an early example of an attempt to do just this, to bend a sector generally committed to liberalism in a more 'radical' or 'political' direction. We can learn something from the conceptual and rhetorical work done in the name of this reimagined liberalism.

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[12] Robbins, "Sartre, Ranciere, and the cause of the Other," 258.

[13] See Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*.

[14] See Ostrower, "Limited Life Foundations," and Honig, Behrens, Martin, and Brenner, "Time-Limited Foundations."

[15] See Luca Falciola's *Up Against Law: Radical Lawyers and Social Movements, 1960s-1970s* for examples of this. Two contrasting examples from the philanthropic sector are Susan Ostrander's study of the Haymarket People's Fund in *Money for Change*, and Ira Silver's study on The Crossroad's Fund in Chicago, "Buying an Activist Identity."

[16] See, for example, forthcoming work by Benjamin P. Davis on this.

[17] Celikates, "De-, Hyper-, or Pseudopoliticization?," 154-155.

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