



How social movements can save democracy in pandemic time

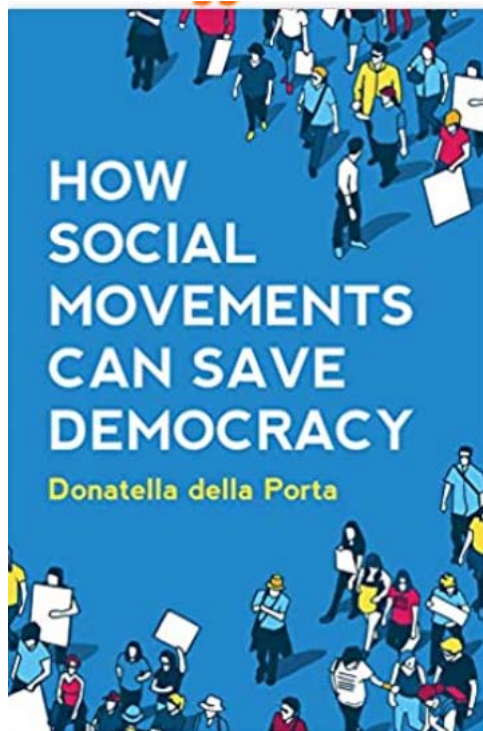
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Before the pandemic



Protesting for public health



Protesting for workers' rights





Protesting for climate



Protesting for citizens' rights



Protesting for democracy





Pandemic times as **movement times?**

“[t]he world is on fire, with both fever and flame. After a few months of lockdown, things are erupting in new ways. ... Around the world, movements are strategizing about how to ensure that no one is left behind”
(Chattopadhyay, Wood and Laurence Cox 2020, 1)



Pandemic times as emergency critical juncture

- given that it is an abnormal event, the pandemic **challenges the assumptions of predictability, stability and structuration** on which so much theorization in social and political sciences is based.
- As a juncture that is both global in its scale and critical in its nature, the spread of Covid-19 has somewhat **weakened the power of existing structures**, challenging routines and increasing the importance of agency.
- Given the **high degree of uncertainty**, movement choices cannot be built on solid routines, but rather must be taken in the heat of the moment and in the face of unfamiliar circumstances.



Critical junctures

- ‘(1) a major episode of **institutional innovation**, (2) occurring in **distinct ways**, (3) and generating an enduring **legacy**’ (Collier & Munck, 2017, p. 2).
- a type of **discontinuous** political change in which critical junctures “dislodge” older institutional patterns’ (Collier and Collier 1991, p. 36).



Intense times as **institutional turning points**

- Critical junctures as sudden and resilient change as

“instead of connecting initial conditions to outcomes, events carry the potential to transform the X–Y relation, neutralizing the reversing effects that initial conditions would have otherwise produced” (Collier and Mazzuca 2008,485).



Crises

Critical junctures as periods of '**crisis or strain** that existing policies and institutions are ill suited to resolve' – and therefore different from normal politics, when 'institutional continuity or incremental change can be taken for granted.' (Roberts 2015, p. 65)



Emergency rules

- '[e]mergency rule is conducted and narrated as the encounter with unfamiliar situations that demand to be handled on their own terms. It is about doing things differently because the situation at hand is different. At least in terms of its own rationale, but also in view of the creations it gives rise to, emergency rule is geared to the singularity of a certain moment' (White 2020: 188).



Emergencies as opportunities

- crises prompt the “attribution of new opportunities and threats leading to the appropriation or creation of new organizational vehicles for the purpose of engaging in innovative, contentious interaction with other field actors” (Flingstein and McAdam 2012).



Health emergencies

- “contagious diseases outbreaks lead to blaming either the infected or another social group as culprit” (Rao and Greve Insead 2018)
- Spanish flu was “an epidemic that legitimized reform” (Jenkins 2007, 337-338).



Eventful temporality

- ‘eventful temporality recognizes the **power of events in history**’ (Sewell 1996).
- events are a ‘relatively rare subclass of happenings that **significantly transform structure**’
- They ‘become **turning points** in structural change, concentrated moments of political and cultural creativity when the logic of historical development is reconfigured by human action but by no means abolished’ (McAdam & Sewell, 2001).
- **Ruptures** are ‘small alterations transforming big and ponderous social processes’ (Sewell, 2005).



eventful protests

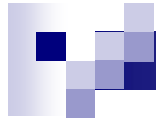
- as capable of transforming relations within social movements and between movements and their contexts (della Porta, 2004, 2014).
- reproduce, rather than just consuming, resources of solidarity and collective identification, fueling positive emotions of empowerment.
- the perception of time accelerates, as what had seemed impossible now appears possible



Social movements as carriers of emergent norms

Collective behavior ‘usual conventions cease to guide social action and people **collectively transcend, bypass or subvert established institutional patterns and structures**’ (Turner & Killian, 1957).

“**contentious and potentially subversive practices** that challenge normalized practices, modes of causation, or system of authority’ (Beissinger, 2002,).



A new wave of movements?

- Innovative protest
- New mutualism
- Alternative knowledge



Protest repertoire in pandemic steps

- Inventing online forms: live-streamed protest, digital rallies, virtual marches, online petition
- Contentious use of domestic spaces: pots banging, collective performance of protest songs from balcony
- Re-occupying the streets: Car caravans, bike caravan, walk outs, distanced demos, sit-ins, symbolic strikes



New Mutualism

- Emergence of localized (neighbor) solidarity
- Transformation of existing SM organizations
- Transformation of existing Charities



Alternative knowledge

- Information sharing as education
- Counter information, whistleblowing
- Knowledge production, as creation
subaltern public spheres (Nancy Fraser)




Organizational forms

- New grassroots groups as spaces of sociability
- Organizational appropriation
- Networking in action: reconstituting social relations




Framing the post-pandemic world

- Frame bridging: public health, social inequality, labour rights, environmental challenges, violence on women...
- Frame innovation: commonification through increased participation, caring



Challenges in emergency critical junctures

- Increasing inequalities and social fragmentation face to virus
- Isolation and scapegoating
- Limitation on possibility to move and organize
- Search for minimal common denominator
- Closing political opportunities in emergencies



Opportunity in emergency critical juncture

- Development of solidarity within communities
- Innovation in communication channels
- Opening of discursive opportunities for changes