

Helpdesk Research Report: Research on Social Movements

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Query: What actors are carrying out analytical work on the contexts and drivers that generate social movements in Africa and Asia and what are the main issues they are investigating?

Enquirers: DFID

1. Overview

This report maps groups of actors conducting research into social movements in Africa and Asia. A number of specific research programmes and projects are using a multidisciplinary approach to probe the questions surrounding the dynamics, influence and prospects of social movements (as variously defined). The prominent programmes are located in the United Kingdom, but operate through international partnerships with other universities and research centres. Social movement research programmes and projects are found within a range of disciplines and are not concerned only with developing country contexts *per se*.

Social movement research potentially concerns all aspects of civil society action. To a degree this is the case, but recent social movement research focuses more centrally upon social processes, theories of communication and integration and networks. Whilst a lot of the seminal work on social movements focuses on Latin America, research in Africa and Asia tends to originate – or have a strong association with – the following social concerns:

- Gender issues relating to empowerment and domination
- The religious aspects of social change
- Environmental concerns
- Land rights, land reform and the status of indigenous peoples
- The impact of urbanisation

Within these five inter-related themes, a survey of the research agenda suggests the following research trends:

- Identity and 'locating' the individual and group, particularly in the context of urbanisation;
- Globalisation, the breaking down of 'traditional' culture and the transnationalisation of socio-political issues;
- The use of science in generating knowledge and challenging assumptions;
- The relations between social movements, governments, NGOs and policymakers;
- Questioning the *efficacy* of social movements, particularly in relation to their ability to influence the policy process.

Note: The research programmes and projects detailed below are organised by organisation rather than by theme. Further, the mapping does not profile the significant amount of work key individuals have done on the subject of social movements.

The following information has been adapted from websites with input from individuals involved where possible.

2. General

University of Birmingham, International Development Department

<http://www.rad.bham.ac.uk/index.php?section=1>

Research programme:

Religion and Development (RaD): The research programme is an international partnership which seeks to explore the relationships between several of the world's major religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The research focuses on four country case studies: Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Tanzania. The relevant components of the programme are:

- **Faiths, Governance and Development**
The research provides a contextual analysis of the relationships between religion, politics and governance for all four focus countries, as a basis for detailed consideration of the roles of religious organisations in movements for social and political change, Poverty Reduction Strategy Processes, and post-conflict peace-building and development.
- **Religious identity, Faith-based organisations and development activities**
The overall question addressed is: in what development activities are faith-based organisations (FBOs) engaged and how does their religious identity affect their engagement? Therefore, it is concerned with the operations of FBOs, such as service delivery and development activities.
- **Religious transnationalism and development**
This research addresses some international dimensions of the role of faith communities in development, by asking: what outcomes do the financial and lobbying activities of religious and inter-faith organisations have for development at local and international levels?

Partners: University of Bath: Centre for Development Studies; Indian Institute of Dalit Studies: New Delhi; Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan; University of Dar es Salaam, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

Key Documents:

Kirmani, N., 2008, 'The Relationship between Social Movements and Religion in Processes of Social Change: A Preliminary Literature Review', Working Paper 23, IDD, University of Birmingham.

http://www.rad.bham.ac.uk/files/resourcesmodule/@random454f80f60b3f4/1226402281_working_paper_23_web_version.pdf

University of Manchester, Department of Sociology

<http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/disciplines/sociology/research/reading/sm/pubs/>

Contact: Dr Yousaf Ibrahim (yousaf.ibrahim@manchester.ac.uk)

Research programmes:

Social Movements Research Group: The aim of this group is to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas, to foster collaborative work and to promote research in social movements. The group's objective is to develop and extend knowledge of mobilisation and protest through engagement with theoretically informed and methodologically innovative research. They critically apply social movement theory to analyse protest in variety of historical and cultural contexts. The relevant research strands of this multi-disciplinary group are:

➤ **Network Analysis and Social Movements**

The research group takes an active part in the development and promotion of network analysis in research on social movements, in particular by analysing mobilization in variety of historical and cultural contexts. They employ a variety of ethnographic methods to learn about networks and utilise social network software to visualise, analyse and model networks, engaging with cross-sectional and longitudinal data. Topics of study include contemporary cross-national feminist social movements and their intersection with culture, music and political activism.

➤ **Social Theory and Social Movements**

The application of social theory to the empirical reality of social movements is one of the primary research interests of the group. Group members critically employ and extend the theories of such major social theorists such as Habermas and Bourdieu. Gemma Edwards and Nick Crossley have published widely on Habermas's new social movement theory. Nick Crossley and Yousaf Ibrahim have applied Bourdieu's ideas to analyse political activism.

Key Documents:

Edwards, G. forthcoming *Social Movements and Protest*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

University of Manchester Institute for Development Policy and Management, Environment and Development Research Group

<http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/socialmovements/>

Contact: Professor Anthony Bebbington (tony.bebbington@manchester.ac.uk)

Research programme:

Social Movements and Poverty in Peru and South Africa: This research addresses themes and knowledge gaps in relation to the strategies and debates used by groups engaging the policy process. To assess the overall significance of movements for poverty reduction, it identifies, maps and conducts basic analysis of movements active in Peru and South Africa. The second phase of the research addresses in more detail how and why movements adopt particular strategies in their relationships with the state, how these strategies affect the overall influence of movements on poverty reduction and how these strategies and effects vary according to the political context. This is done through a small number of comparative case studies conducted in collaboration with these movements.

Key Documents:

Mitlin, D. and Mogaladi, J. 2009, 'Social Movements and Poverty Reduction in South Africa', IDPM, University of Manchester.

http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/socialmovements/publications/reports/Mitlin_Mogaladi_SouthAfricamappinganalysis.pdf

Bebbington, A., 2007, 'Social Movements and the Politicization of Chronic Poverty', *Development and Change*, Vol. 38, No.5, pp. 793-818.

<http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/socialmovements/publications/papers/DevelopmentandChange2007BebbingtonPoliticizingPoverty.pdf>

IDS Development Research Centre for Citizenship, Participation and Accountability

http://www.drc-citizenship.org/Research_themes/index.htm

Research programmes:

Local-Global Citizen Engagements: The work of this DRC asks how citizens perceive and engage with global processes and in turn, what impact global processes actually have on the meanings and practices of citizenship, given their locations in diverse historical and cultural settings. This research programme is convened by John Gaventa and Rajesh Tandon. The local settings for the research include the partner countries of India, South Africa, Brazil and Nigeria, with additional work in the Gambia, Kenya, Argentina and possibly Sudan or Angola.

Key Questions:

- What alliances and identities are linking citizens from the local to the global and from the global to the local?
- How are citizens engaging with global institutions and how do global institutions affect local forms of engagement?
- What difference do these new forms of local-global engagement make to the emergence of new identities of transnational or global citizenship, to the formation of new kinds of alliances and intermediary organisations, and to practices and policies of global institutions?

Citizenship, Participation and Violence

The overarching theme of this research programme is to understand how people move from violence, through participation, to substantive citizenship. The research tracks mechanisms, theorises the processes and engages with research participants to generate new responses to violence and new approaches to policy and practice. This research programme is lead by Jenny Pearce. The local settings for the research include the partner countries of Brazil and Nigeria, with additional work in Mexico, Haiti, Jamaica and Uganda. Key Questions:

- How do people move from violence to citizenship through participatory social action?
- How do/can people begin processes of participatory social action in contexts of violence?

On this basis research is structured around four thematic areas:

- Social positioning, socialisation spaces and violence
- Tradition, culture, beliefs, religion and violence
- 'Parallel communities' and intersections with the state
- Violence, powerlessness and labelling

Deepening Democracy in States and Localities

This research programme seeks to go beyond and challenge the 'one-size-fits-all' understanding of democracy, by asking questions of how various types of democracies and citizenships are developed and institutionalized across different contexts. This research programme is convened by Vera Schattan P. Coelho and Bettina von Lieres and involves partners from Angola, Brazil, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, South Africa and the UK. Key Questions:

- How do contesting conceptions of democracy and its institutions and practices challenge or inform dominant assumptions about the design and effectiveness of democratic institutions that serve the interests of the poor? And how do diverse conceptions of democracy shape mobilizing and mediating practices?
- What are the most effective channels and mechanisms through which citizens deepen their democratic engagement with and claim their rights in state-initiated and non-state spaces?
- How and where are these mobilizations and mediations producing reconstituted meanings of democracy, as well as a range of other outcomes (material changes, changed identities, changed political cultures, alienation, and relationships with the state)?
- How can we understand and measure the outcomes and concrete effects of new forms of citizen engagement?

Key Documents:

Leach, M. and Scones, I., 2007, 'Mobilising Citizens: Social Movements and the Politics of Knowledge', *IDS Working Paper 276*, Development Research Centre for Citizenship, Participation and Accountability.

http://www.drc-citizenship.org/docs/publications/citizens_and_science/WP/wp276.pdf

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BB128/\(httpProgrammeAreasForResearchHome\)/22D98108BA57BDC98025718B003C2A4C?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BB128/(httpProgrammeAreasForResearchHome)/22D98108BA57BDC98025718B003C2A4C?OpenDocument)

Research programme:

Civil Society and Social Movements Programme: UNRISD's long-standing research programme on civil society and social movements is designed to generate a more realistic understanding of social actions and dynamics in civil society. In the late 1990s, it sought to analyse social initiatives and actions at the grassroots for protecting or improving access to resources, income and services in specific urban and rural contexts. In recent years, work in this programme area has focused on transnational activism, as global campaigns and movements increasingly combine their advocacy campaigns with distinct alternative proposals and seek to influence the policy process. In particular, the following aspects are being investigated:

- Civil society engagement with the policy process
- "Uncivil" movements
- "Old" and "new" movements in comparative perspective
- Social movements and inequality
- Youth and social movements

Relevant projects:

- **Global Civil Society Movements: Dynamics in International Campaigns and National Implementation (2003-8):** The project's objective is to emphasize both the strengths and weaknesses of major civil society movements and networks and their attempts to popularise and implement global issues of concern and specific initiatives. Are these movements capable of having any significant impact on the policies adopted by leading international donor agencies and governments? How do citizens and civil society groups participating in these movements articulate their concern and propose concrete suggestions? How are civil society movements able to facilitate exchange of information, ideas and knowledge and practical experiences among national and international bodies and civil society forces, including those

population groups at the grassroots level facing socio-economic deprivation and political marginalisation?

The project assesses five contemporary civil society movements:

- Campaigns for debt relief.
 - Movement to change international trade rules and barriers.
 - Global taxation initiative.
 - International anti-corruption movement.
 - Movement on fair trade.
- **Social Responses to Inequalities and Policy Changes (2006-8):** Funded by the Ford Foundation, this project investigates social and policy responses in the EU to inequality in the wider context of global issues. In particular it attempts to identify the implications of the evolving patterns of contestation and activism for policy and institutional reform associated with macroeconomic policies and TNCs. The project seeks to answer whether there is a shift from orthodox to more heterodox approaches that accommodate certain demands for policy change emanating from grassroots groups, NGOs, trade unions and social movements and in what ways are traditional political and policy actors and institutions responding through policy and institutional reforms that have important implications for global and national inequalities.

Key Documents:

(Book) Tadem, T.S.E., 2009, Localizing and Transnationalizing Contentious Politics: Global Civil Society Movements in the Phillipines, Lexington, Lanham.

[http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/\(httpPublications\)/0922DDE84F73CFABC125761D0024D6D4?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/0922DDE84F73CFABC125761D0024D6D4?OpenDocument)

Bandaña, A., 2006, 'NGOs and Social Movements: A North/South Divide?', *Civil Society and Social Movements Programme Paper No.22*, UNRISD, Geneva.

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=4F7CC72852DD23EBC12571D1002B45AD&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=80256B3C005BCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/4F7CC72852DD23EBC12571D1002B45AD/\\$file/Bendana.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=4F7CC72852DD23EBC12571D1002B45AD&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=80256B3C005BCF9/(httpAuxPages)/4F7CC72852DD23EBC12571D1002B45AD/$file/Bendana.pdf)

LSE Centre for Civil Society Non-Governmental Action Programme

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NGPA/>

Contact: Jude Howell (J.A.Howell@lse.ac.uk)

Research programme:

Non-Governmental Action Programme: This ESRC research is directed by Professor Jude Howell and works towards developing existing theory on social movements, generating new empirical data and developing beneficial links between researchers and users. Projects include international comparative work and transdisciplinary research.

Relevant research projects include:

- Reformulating Faith: Development and Public Action in Post-Apartheid South Africa
- South-North Non-Governmental Networks, Policy Processes and Policy Outcomes
- Conflict, Community and Faith: The Politics of Public Action in Sri Lanka

Key Documents:

Dinerstein, A., Spicer, A., and Bohm, S., 2009, 'The (Im)possibilities of Autonomy. Social Movements in and Beyond Capital, the State and Development', *NGPA Working Paper Series 29*, Centre for Civil Society, LSE.

http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/NGPA/publications/WP29_Autonomy_Dinerstein_Web.pdf

LSE Development Studies Institute (DESTIN)

http://personal.lse.ac.uk/FORSYTH/environmental_research_at_destin.htm

Contact: Dr. Tim Forsyth, Research Coordinator, DESTIN (T.J.Forsyth@lse.ac.uk)

Research programme:

Governance Research Stream: DESTIN's Governance Research Stream encompasses DESTIN's environmental work, which engages with environmentally-based social movements and public participation in environmental debates, with a particular focus on Asia.

Key Documents:

Forsyth, T., 2007, 'Are Environmental Movements Socially Exclusive? An Historical Study from Thailand', *World Development*, Vol.35, No.12, pp.2110-2130

[http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/4659/1/Are_environmental_social_movements_socially_exclusive_\(LSERO\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/4659/1/Are_environmental_social_movements_socially_exclusive_(LSERO).pdf)

Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester Institute of Social and Spatial Transformations (MISST)

<http://www.misst.mmu.ac.uk/>

Contact: Dr. John Binnie, Director (j.binnie@mmu.ac.uk); Dr. Susie Jacobs (s.jacobs@mmu.ac.uk)

Research programme:

Global Transformations: The project has two overriding themes:

- The abstract and impersonal macro-interconnectivities that increasingly bind together the fates of world citizens under globalising conditions.
- The micro relationships being forged by individuals in cities, social movements and organisations which are intended to resist or reform global crises and to construct cross-ethnic and national understandings.

The principal social movement-related research focus is:

- **Crossing borders and building transnational alliances:** Processes involved in crossing territorial and/or primordial cultural borders and then forging new alliances have been central to the research of several group members in this area. The group's interests include transnational feminist networks, social movements engaged in human rights issues.

Social movement research is also incorporated into the remaining three areas:

- **Gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and caste under globalising conditions:** This includes research on land ownerships and distribution, tribal communities and

- livelihoods and issues around work and employment in the software and garment industries across the South.
- **Producing and contesting globalisation:** Relevant areas of focus are the struggle for fair trade, the workings of global supply chains and the formation of global networks of resistance to injustice.
 - **Global cultural flows, migration, cosmopolitanism and tourism:** MISST members have conducted research on various themes relating to culture and globalisation.
 - **Issues around place/territory, space and identity:** MISST members are working on the theorisation of social and territorial space and the continuing power of national identities in a post-colonial era.

Key Documents:

Jacobs, S., 2009, 'Gender and Land Reforms: Comparative Perspectives', *Geography Compass*, vol. 4.

http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/geography/article_view?article_id=geco_articles_bpl257

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

<http://www.unc.edu/smwg/>

Research programme:

Social Movements Working Group (SMWG): The group's goal is to provide a forum for scholars in the social sciences, humanities, and professional schools to engage with critical debates about the role of contemporary social movements in the transformation of public life. It seeks to contribute to interdisciplinary dialogue around, and arising from, social movements of various kinds. The group's focus is at the interface between academic research on globalisation, social movements and the character of public life, on the one hand, and contemporary conversations about alternative economic, social, and natural orders, on the other. The group's stated goals are:

1. To investigate and assess critically the array of theories and methodologies associated with the study of social movements from interdisciplinary perspectives.
2. To develop theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of social movements in terms of autonomous knowledge production.
3. To investigate the role as well as the political and practical effectiveness of social movements in the articulation of alternative worldviews and their role in globalization and the transformation of public life.

3. Africa-specific

University of Leiden, Africa Studies Centre

<http://www.ascleiden.nl/Research/SocialMovementsandPoliticalCulture.aspx>

Contact: Professor Stephen Ellis (ELLIS@ascleiden.nl)

Research programme:

Social Movements and Political Culture (SMPC): This research programme aims to address new social movements and organizational forms in Africa against the background of the continent's changing political cultures. Research questions include:

- Why and how people seek modes of social, cultural and political expression in new organizational forms;
- New developments in the political cultures and governance structures and why democratization processes have not been very successful;
- Why 'traditional' ideologies and social mechanisms of mediation and tolerance seem to diminish in force, be reinvented, or become problematic in new contexts;

The programme consists of three sub-programmes:

- Changes in political culture and the emergence of new social profiles/movements
- Liberalisation and the remaking of the socio-political order
- Insecurity and conflict production

Key Documents:

(Book) Ellis, S.D.K. and van Kessel, W.M.J. (eds), 2009, Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa, Brill, Leiden.

<http://www.ascleiden.nl/GetPage.aspx?url=/publications/publicatie4717>

University of Natal, Centre for Civil Society

<http://www.ukzn.ac.za/CCS/default.asp?5,56>

Research programme:

Globalisation, Marginalisation and New Social Movements Project (2003-6): This three-year project was hosted jointly by the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) and the School of Development Studies, and was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Ford Foundation. The project is structured around 16 case studies of different social movements which were conducted between June 2003 and July 2004.

Key Documents:

Hassim, S., 2004, 'Voices, Hierarchies and Spaces: Reconfiguring the Women's Movement in Democratic South Africa', Centre for Civil Society/School of Development Studies, University of Kwazulu Natal, Durban.

<http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/files/Hassim%20Womens%20Movement%20RR.pdf>

4. Asia-specific

Intercultural Resources, New Delhi

<http://www.icrindia.org/>

Research programme:

Asian Social Movements: For the past two years, the group has been involved in a collaborative project on Social Movements in Asia (specifically Indonesia, Philippines, China and India). The project aims to learn from and strengthen Asian linkages among movement constituencies to facilitate collaborative research and activities. The Indian movements represented are: Chattisgarh Mines Mukti Sangathana, Chattisgarh; Koel-Karo anti-dam, Jharkhand; Movements opposing the Jaduguda Uranium Mine and the Manipur mass mobilizations for self-determination and democracy.

Institute of South East Asian Studies (ISEAS), Pasir Panjang, Singapore

<http://www.iseas.edu.sg/researchprogrammes.htm>

Research programme:

Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS): The programme focuses on a variety of socio-cultural issues including cultural globalisation, civil society and state relations, class and identity formations, religion in politics and everyday life, patterns of mass consumption, and language and national cultures. RSCS welcomes different disciplines from sociology, anthropology, ethnography, contemporary history, gender and cultural studies in order to engage in qualitative research or theory-building. The programme is comprised of four research groups, two of which have and continue to undertake work related to social movements in the South East Asian context:

- Contemporary Histories Group
- Religion and Politics Group

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS)

<http://www.nias.ku.dk/research/strategy.asp>

Contact: Dr. Gier Helgeson, NIAS Director/Asian Governance and Institutions in Transition (geir@nias.ku.dk); Cecilia Milwertz, Director, Gender Politics in Asia (milwertz@nias.ku.dk)

Research programmes:

Asian Governance and Institutions in Transition: This programme approaches the study of political developments in Asia by framing itself around the following themes:

- The development of 'grassroots' movements and the changing nature of civil society
- The relationship and forms of communication between those who govern and those who are governed
- The interrelationship between governance and socio-economic development
- Responses to internal and external pressures for political change

Gender Politics in Asia: Includes projects on:

- Organizing for Gender Equality in China - a Process of Cultural and Political Change
- Chinese Women Moving Boundaries - Activism, Constraint and Support

5. Additional information

Journals

Social Movement Studies, Routledge

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db=all~content=t713446651>

Interface Journal

<http://www.interfacejournal.net/>

Mobilization, Department of Sociology, University of Notre Dame

<http://www.mobilization.sdsu.edu/index.html>

Social Forces, Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina

<http://socialforces.unc.edu/>

Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization

<http://www.ephemeraweb.org/home.htm>

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Websites visited

UNRISD, DFID R4D, Institute of Development Studies, Centre for Global Studies, Centre for Global Development, University of Manchester Social Movements Group, Institute for Policy Development and Management (IDPM), Intercultural Resources, Centre for Civil Society Studies, Centre for Civil Society LSE, Third Sector Research Centre, Centre for Civil Society Studies John Hopkins Institute, Eldis, JStor, MISST, Afrika Studie Centrum, UNIFEM, World Bank, Sida, University of Berkeley African Studies Centre, Cornell University Institute for African Studies, SOAS, ODI Rural Poverty and Governance Group, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, CODESRIA, ASEAN, Global Development Network.

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