McGill Journal of Education
Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill

Learning to Sleep without Perching: Reflections by activist-educators on learning in social action in Ghanaian social movements
Apprendre à dormir sans perchoir : réflexions d'éducateurs activistes sur les apprentissages réalisés via l'action sociale dans les mouvements sociaux ghanéens

Jonathan Langdon

Cite this article

Langdon, J. (2009). Learning to Sleep without Perching: Reflections by activist-educators on learning in social action in Ghanaian social movements. *McGill Journal of Education / Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill, 44*(1), 79–105. https://doi.org/10.7202/037773ar

Article abstract

This article conveys results from a participatory action research (PAR) engagement with activist/educators working in Ghanaian social movements. First, this PAR group has articulated two typologies from which to understand Ghanaian social movements based on their processes of organization, communication and learning rather than merely the issues, resources or populations that occupy their focus. Second, expanding on Griff Foley's (1999) notion of learning in struggle, the PAR group provides three lenses from which to view learning in social movements in Ghana. Both of these contributions help to present a much needed African inflection to ongoing discussions of learning in social movements, especially as these contributions attempt to maintain a complex view of learning based on the shifting characteristics of power and capital.

LEARNING TO SLEEP WITHOUT PERCHING: REFLECTIONS BY ACTIVIST-EDUCATORS ON LEARNING IN SOCIAL ACTION IN GHANAIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS[1]

JONATHAN LANGDON *McGill University*

ABSTRACT. This article conveys results from a participatory action research (PAR) engagement with activist/educators working in Ghanaian social movements. First, this PAR group has articulated two typologies from which to understand Ghanaian social movements based on their processes of organization, communication and learning rather than merely the issues, resources or populations that occupy their focus. Second, expanding on Griff Foley's (1999) notion of learning in struggle, the PAR group provides three lenses from which to view learning in social movements in Ghana. Both of these contributions help to present a much needed African inflection to ongoing discussions of learning in social movements, especially as these contributions attempt to maintain a complex view of learning based on the shifting characteristics of power and capital.

APPRENDRE À DORMIR SANS PERCHOIR : RÉFLEXIONS D'ÉDUCATEURS ACTIVISTES SUR LES APPRENTISSAGES RÉALISÉS VIA L'ACTION SOCIALE DANS LES MOUVEMENTS SOCIAUX GHANÉENS

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article met en lumière les résultats d'un projet de recherche-action (PRA) effectué auprès de groupes sociaux ghanéens d'éducateurs activistes. Tout d'abord, le groupe PRA a articulé deux typologies afin de comprendre les processus organisationnels, communicationnels et d'apprentissages des mouvements sociaux ghanéens plutôt que de se limiter aux problématiques, ressources ou populations au centre de leur action. En deuxième lieu, s'inspirant de la notion mise de l'avant par Griff Foley en 1999 sur l'apprentissage au sein des luttes, le groupe PRA offre trois éclairages sur l'apprentissage dans le cadre des mouvements sociaux au Ghana. Ces deux contributions tracent un portrait du besoin pressant des Africains pour des discussions constantes sur les apprentissages dans les mouvements sociaux, dans le contexte où ces contributions permettent de maintenir une vision complexe des apprentissages basés sur les caractéristiques mouvantes du pouvoir et du capital.

INTRODUCTION

If hunters have learned to shoot without missing, birds must to learn sleep without perching. Northern Ghanaian Proverb. (C. Agyeyomah, personal communication, 2007)

Since the return to democracy in Ghana in 1992, Ghanaian social movements have had to constantly learn new processes of engagement with the ever-changing face of power and capital. The above proverb from Northern Ghana speaks to the necessity of this cyclical process of learning, and the risks faced if social movements do not remain actively engaged in this cycle – lack of vigilance could lead to a sleep with fatal consequences. This image of watchfulness – the awareness of the hunter's every move – is an appropriate opening to this article as it indicates two major themes that run through the collective PAR work reported here. First, and most importantly, it provides an epistemic link to the Ghanaian setting of this research; even as theories of contestation and of learning in social movements are drawn from elsewhere, this study takes seriously Mahmood Mamdani's (1996) call to ground analyses of African phenomena in African histories and thinking. Second, this proverb captures the spirit of thinking of all those involved in this study – as the complexity of current neoliberal colonial manifestations of power and capital reconfigure themselves, Ghanaian activist-educators and social movements need to reflect on their history of engagement with these legacies to determine the best way to out-manoeuvre them.

The importance of the cycle of learning and reflection needed to enact this out-manoeuvring is at the heart of the PAR engagement reported on in this article. This engagement brought together Ghanaian activist-educators from a number of social movements throughout the country to reflect on learning in social movements in Ghana's new democratic era. For the activist-educators involved in this study, the ways in which social movements in Ghana learn and reflect on the shifting and often contradictory role of power and capital – not only against a movement's interests, but also within its ranks – are indicative of whether a given social movement will remain grounded in the needs of those it purports to represent. For instance, the democracy movement that successfully pressured for a democratic transition in Ghana also demanded a change in neoliberal economic relations with foreign capital. This point that was dropped upon transition as elements within the movement began to transform into political parties (Ninsin, 2007; Abrahamsen, 2000; Akwetey, 1994; Yeebo, 1991). Griff Foley has called this dual-natured, complex process "learning in struggle" (1999). He has described the ways in which social movement success can also be a double edged sword as particular sets of interests begin to dominate others, undermining the very collaborative spirit at the heart of movement organization. In a thought-line that echoes the collective analysis of the PAR group at the centre of this study, Foley notes that studying learning in struggle must be grounded in an analysis that "recognizes the

complex, ambiguous and contradictory character of particular movements and struggles" (1999, p. 143).

In this article, a complex understanding of learning in Ghanaian social movements is articulated by referring to a selection of results emerging from the activist/educator PAR engagement. These selected results fall into two inter-textually linked categories: 1) providing an initial overview of the characteristics of contemporary social movements in Ghana; and, 2) making a contribution to ongoing discussions of social movement learning through the introduction of an African perspective that expands on Foley's (1999) notion of "learning in struggle." The introduction of an African perspective on learning in social movements is especially important as it remains largely unarticulated: social movements in Africa themselves remain under-researched (Prempeh, 2006), let alone any articulation of their processes of learning.[2]

The article first situates the research in ongoing theoretical debates about learning in social movements, beginning with an elaboration of Foley's notion. It then elaborates two different axes along which one can analyze Ghanaian social movements: as being embedded in old social movement and new social movement dichotomies or in subverting these dichotomies through local itera-tions of movement activism; or, as emerging from two particular approaches to organization, communication and learning. The final of these two views is based on a heuristic typology articulated by the activist-educator PAR group, where didactic movements are differentiated from dialogue-based movements.

The article then provides a detailed articulation of three lenses intended to expand Foley's (1999) notion of "learning in struggle." These three lenses provide different ways of viewing learning within social movements. The first, a re-articulation of Foley, provides a long-term view of the complex and ambiguous process of learning within movements in the Ghanaian context. The second zeroes in on particular moments of extreme learning, where an event or major conflict reveals the hidden agendas of many of those in the movement and on its outside. These events are often the moments where movements are born or reborn, but they are also the time when they are most open to cooptation precisely because the conflict/event forces the hand of those with hidden agendas, making them declare allegiances that can shut doors to social transformation/emancipation. Finally, the last lens reflects how movements themselves conceive of learning, and how to use learning to build struggles. Here, the two typologies that the PAR group modeled are seen to be indicative of how particular movements conceive of learning to struggle, whether this is a didactic process of instruction or a dialogue-based process of mutual learning and problem-posing.

As a final aside it is important to remember McTaggart's (1991) point that the results of a PAR process are collectively owned and therefore must be seen as a collective product. The collaboration at the heart of this study is based

on between five and ten years of working together within various contexts in Ghana. This long-term relationship provides the trust necessary for this type of endeavour to contribute positively to processes of learning in social movements (Kapoor, 2007; Reason, 1994).[3] While I consider myself a member of this PAR collective, I am also acutely aware of the challenges of both participating in and then reporting on collaborative work – both as a cultural insider/outsider and also as a researcher who has a background in the context, but is nonetheless predominantly based in a university setting. This is a tension that Michelle Fine and Maria Torre (2006) report on in their work with female prison inmates. They suggest we must be open about our complementary roles in the research, and the way in which what appears here as consensus is in fact the result of collective debate and analysis where not everyone agreed all the time. In the pages that follow, I will speak of decisions made by the PAR group, not in an effort to write myself out of the research, but rather to honour the collaborative nature of the work presented here. However, it is important to state that my main role in the collective was to help connect some of our collaborative thought to theories and research on learning in social movements that already exists. In this sense, the theoretical framework outlined below was articulated collaboratively, but much of the theory and language came from my contributions to our ongoing analysis.[4] Before turning to this framework, however, Mamdani's (1996) call introduced above underscores the importance of beginning a discussion of Ghanaian social movement learning by grounding this discussion in a recent history of movement activism in Ghana, especially as this activism connects to the contemporary democratic era. This interconnected historical snapshot will be used as a reference point for elaborating the typologies of Ghanaian social movements and the ways through which their learning can be understood.

SETTING THE CONTEXT:
A BRIEF HISTORY OF RECENT GHANAIAN ACTIVISM

In a recent study of Ghana's current period of democratization, Kwame Ninsin (2007) suggests that Ghanaians do not have an active tradition of activism. This remark is strange given the consistent pressure of various Ghanaian social movements around such issues as women's rights, water privatization, the effects of globalization in such areas as mining, agriculture and timber, as well as the repeated defence of democratic institutions in the face of real threats of cooptation and corruption. In this last instance, a consistent force of activist-educators associated with the various manifestations of the democracy movement, has constantly asked critical questions about power throughout the rule of the military government of the 1980s, as well as the democratic terms of both major political parties. In order both to provide an example of activism in Ghana and also to better articulate what social movements mean in the Ghanaian context I will dwell here on the ebb and flow of this movement.

Ghana's democracy movement must first be situated in its origins in the ante-cedent socialist student, worker and lower rank military movement of the late 1970s to early 1980s. First in 1979, and then in 1981, Ghana went through what have been called socialist-informed revolutions (Shillington, 1992). While both of these seizures of power revolved around the central figure of Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, there were also huge numbers of students, workers and lower-ranked military personnel that actualized and defended these revolu-tions. In 1981 in particular, these elements made up an important part of the first institutions of the revolution – the People's Defence Committees (PDCs) (Shillington, 1992; Yeebo, 2007). However, a large number of those who led or were a part of these institutions were later targeted by the Rawlings military regime – the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) – as it took a giant right turn in its political allegiances in 1983 and began implementing Ghana's first structural adjustment policy sponsored by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Yeebo, 2007). Many of those described in this article as activist-educators were targeted during this period, and were in many cases captured and tortured at the hands of this regime – becoming living testaments to the saying that the revolution eats its babies.

In many ways, it is during this period of targeting that the momentum for a movement to return to democracy began. For many of those targeted, this experience led to the critical realization that it is only within a broader public space where one's human rights can be defended that it is possible to truly mobilize for a socially just form of governance that contests the exploitative nature of capital and globalization. This realization was steeped in a social-ist praxis of activism, yet this praxis had been deeply affected by the failure and totalitarian turn of the PNDC (Yeebo, 2007). Meanwhile, the growing dislocation of structural adjustment (Hutchful, 2002; Hilson, 2004; Ninsin, 2007) became intertwined with the activism of those whom the revolution had targeted, which generated a growing platform from which to question the violence and lack of accountability of the government as well as its growing link with transnational capital and Bretton Woods institutions (Abrahamsen, 2000; Akwetey, 1994; Yeebo, 1991; Langdon, 2009). This convergence sparked the democracy movement and forced the military government to return power to civilian institutions in 1992. While there are mixed interpretations as to whether or not this transition led to free and fair elections, one characteristic did emerge in this form of democracy – it did not question the relations with foreign capital (Ninsin, 2007; Abrahamsen, 2000). Partially as a result of this failure, many of the same activist-educators who matured in the complex period of revolutionary disappointment turned their activism on the newly minted democratic institutions and the foreign-imposed policies they enacted that further deepened the poverty of average Ghanaians.

In the democratic period, these activist-educators became embedded in amal-gamations of urban labour-forces, the urban working poor, students and – to

a lesser extent – oppositional politicians (these later had mostly an exploitative relationship with these movements, which I discuss below). While both major political parties were in power – the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) – these amorphous movements sparked major demonstrations around several policies that affected the poor and marginalized in Ghanaian society. In 1995, a schism in the formal labour movement, led by a younger set of labour activists against the older generation that was closely aligned with the ruling NDC party (formed from the former military government that maintained Rawlings as its leader) brought out into the open tensions surrounding the introduction of a World Bank-sponsored Value-Added Tax (VAT). This schism provoked a massive outpouring of street activism throughout the country, known as the *Kume Preko* demonstrations. This mobilization not only slowed down the application of this new tax and changed its nature, but it also provided the NPP opposition with the platform it needed in 2000 to achieve the first ever democratic transition of power in Ghana's history. Yet, despite initial support for this new NPP regime, many of these same activist-educators became involved in a similar series of demonstrations as the new government also aimed to build growth on the backs on the poor. Reacting to what it called the "Whahala" ("hard suffering") budget, this new manifestation of many of the same elements that made up the democracy movement helped to coordinate demonstrations in every major city in Ghana. The most recent manifestation of these elements has called itself the Committee for Joint Action (CJA). Central to these demonstrations was the huge burden of costs for services and goods being shifted to the urban and rural poor, as the government attempted to privatize and deregulate health, education, electricity, water and fuel. The National Coalition Against the Privatization of Water (NCAP) – a movement that arose in the previous NDC regime but faced its greatest challenge during the NPP tenure – has also been closely aligned with both of these manifestations. NCAP has successfully built a nationwide resistance movement that brings together urban and rural poor to contest what they see as the erosion of a social water policy meant to bring clean water to every Ghanaian (Prempeh, 2006). In one particular demonstration in Tamale, 400 women from across Ghana's mostly rural north showed up and took over a meeting where World Bank-hired consultants were trying to sell the privatization to urban users. Not only did these women forcefully drive home the link between public water provision and urban subsidization of rural water – making water privatization everyone's business. They also insisted that the proceedings be conducted in the northern language of Dagbani, a demand that revealed the intersection of capital interests with identity politics as the consultants could no longer speak directly to the crowd. This intervention made it clear to all present that privatization served someone else's interest – not their own.

As a further telling indication of the lasting nature of some of Ghana's social movements, the CJA – with its antecedent links to the organization in the previous NDC democratic regime, to the democracy movement itself, and to the socialist movements of the 1980s – remains constantly vigilant regardless of who is in power. For instance, the CJA endorsed John Mills of the NDC who subsequently won Ghana's most recent election, securing Ghana's second peaceful transfer of power. Yet they have mobilized mass demonstrations against this new government as it set about granting huge end-of-service benefits to members of the previous administration. As a result of this action, the benefits have been frozen in place and a major member of the NDC has been purged for signing the authorization (Daabu, 2009).

In this sense, Ghanaian social movements can be understood as being embedded in the history of activism in the country that goes back to failed socialist experiments in the 1980s and runs through the current democratic period. Yet they can also be understood as consistently questioning power, especially as it is intertwined with foreign and domestic capital, though in the section on social movement typologies below, this is recontextualized based on two models articulated by our PAR analysis. Finally, the Ghanaian movements need to be understood through the lens of local identity and cultural politics, especially as these politics became sites of resistance to coercive or hegemonic power.

LEARNING IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN ONGOING DISCUSSION

John Holst's (2002) recent study could be one place to introduce the ongoing discussion of theories of social movement learning, especially as it provides a detailed account of contemporary radical adult education contributions to this discussion. Holst is equally compelling for his insistence that to begin discussing learning in social movements necessitates a discussion of broader sociological debates concerning social movements themselves. Yet, as Kapoor (2007) notes, Holst can be criticized for being over-situated in Euro-American debates and understandings of movements and of their learning processes. Extrapolating Kapoor's critique to the African context, one can add Mamdani's (1996) strong argument against analogizing African phenomena with other spaces, places and histories. Mamdani (1995), along with Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, co-edited one of the only articulations of social movements in the African context, especially as they relate to the problematic of the failures of state-led and market-led development models, as well as a complex thinking through of the links between social movements and democratization in Africa. For Mamdani (1995) an important shift in thinking is captured in this collection, as authors in their network entitled "Social Movements, Social Transformation and the Struggle for Democracy in Africa" have critically challenged their own connections to a strictly structuralist, Marxist, materialist, and dependency informed position with a position much more deeply informed by the problematic of the

state in the African context.[5] In this sense, Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba's collection is in dialogue with Kapoor's (2007) critique of the tendency of radical adult education writing on social movement learning, including Holst, to over-simplistically universalize the Euro-American experience onto other settings outside of this set of experiences. What needs underscoring here, however, is that like the proverb that began this article suggested, the starting point of the collaboration at the heart of this research has been a particularly Ghanaian and more generally African analysis of social movements and their learning. It is critical to keep this starting point in mind as it frames how theories of social movement learning are understood in the Ghanaian context as well as how they came to inform our PAR group's analysis.

With this important inflection in mind, Foley's (1999) work on learning in social action provides an equally important point of departure for theorizing learning in social movements. Not only does it provide an important critique of formal approaches to conceiving of learning in organizations – and adult education in general – it offers a complex and nuanced theoretical framework for beginning to think about learning in social movements. With case studies ranging from environmental activism in Australia to popular education in the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, Foley's framework elaborates three important concepts that were helpful to the PAR group in situating our analysis of Ghanaian social movement learning.

First, Foley (1999) makes a strong case for being aware of the shifting role of capital in understanding the challenges – both internal and external – that social movements are facing. In re-emphasizing the importance of a political economy analysis, Foley also critiques those educational theorists who have analyzed social movement learning from a strictly post-structural point of view, such as Holford (1995). For Foley, simply focusing on the discursive and ignoring the complex interplay of power and capital in social movement formation, mobilization and learning is "idealist and simplistic" (p. 143). While I think Foley may himself be oversimplifying discursive interpretations of power, his emphasis on the importance of the shifting face of capital certainly surfaced in the current Ghanaian study as a key facet to build into the analysis both of the formation of movements and of their learning processes.

Second, Foley (1999) embeds this awareness of capital in a complex and multifaceted conception of power and how it operates:

> People's everyday experience reproduces ways of thinking and acting which support the, often oppressive, status quo, but [...] this same experience also produces recognitions which enable people to critique and challenge the existing order. (p. 4)

In this sense, he presents a vision of emancipatory learning which is both complex and contradictory – sometimes leading to moments of broadening of emancipation, and sometimes leading to other moments where resistance

actually contributes to new forms of oppression. In this sense, and though he may resist the connection, Foley is employing a Foucauldian sense of power and embedding it in a recognition of the role capital plays in these moments of contradiction. This nuanced concept of power is important as it helps underscore one of the main reasons for the typological differentiation articulated by the PAR group – discussed more fully below – where, in the didactic social movement, leaders become deracinated from their core, making strategic decisions for the broader collective, and becoming directive in their instructions to this collective core.

Third, both of these two other dimensions of Foley's analysis of social movements are intertwined with a reconceptualization of struggle as learning. For Foley, this notion goes right to the heart of his argument about the primacy of informal learning over more formal educational processes. More importantly for the analysis here, it also provides a key conceptual hook for understanding how learning occurs in social movements. While Foley's case studies provide a variety of instances of "learning in struggle" – learning often overlooked by those involved because it is embedded in the struggle – he does not make an attempt to classify or breakdown these different types of learning in struggle. Without intending to do so, this research on Ghana organized itself along the lines of Foley's theoretical hook, and has provided three categories, or ways of thinking about learning in struggle. Before turning to these three lenses, there are two other voices that need to be amplified here as they add other key inflections to the study presented.

Kapoor (2007) has expanded on Foley's original notion of learning in struggle, and has linked it to an emerging postcolonial critique of radical adult education perspectives on learning in social movements. As mentioned above, Kapoor criticizes Holst (2002) for taking a global view of local struggles and learning. While acknowledging the importance of the political economy perspective that Foley brings, Kapoor reminds us of the dangers to a subaltern movement, such as the Adivasi movement with which he collaborates in India, of becoming theoretically appropriated by either the overtly-Marxist position, or the civil-societarian and identity politics analysis of new social movement theorists. The portability of these conceptual lenses across cultural divides, especially in postcolonial contexts, needs to be questioned, and their link to a colonial legacy of thought needs to be highlighted.[6] In light of this criticism, Kapoor (2007) proposes using a subaltern studies lens to examine social movements in postcolonial positions, providing room for subaltern perspectives to resist hegemonic interpretations through local iterations embedded in their context. In this sense, an analysis of Ghanaian social movements must constantly ground itself in conceptions of social action and learning that are informed by the historical legacy and contemporary manifestation of colonialism within particular settings as well as by the political-economic context.

The tension at the heart of this balance has important implications for both Marxist conceptions of hegemony and subaltern iterations of agency. While Marxist extrapolations from Lenin and Gramsci may situate capitalist hegemony as the major adversary of radical learning in social movements (Holst, 2002), even while civil-societarian theories may position the state as the adversary in the achievement of group and individual rights (Holford, 1995), Kapoor's study provides an important reconception of both of these positions. As he notes:

> *Adivasi* movements often appropriate the human rights or civil societarian discourse (e.g., around notions of people's participation or individual rights) or Marxist conceptions (e.g., revolutionary left-party sloganeering), digesting them within localized frames of reference or instrumentalizing them in the interests of *Adivasi* prospects and existence rationalities. Such strategic utilizations need to be recognized as such and understood within the various contexts of the historic struggles of the *Adivasi*. (2007, p. 34, italics in original)

In this articulation of subaltern agency, social movement learning not only implies a demystification of power and hegemony, but also a recognition of the ways in which marginalized groups produce subjugated knowledges that question dominant narratives from their own lived realities. Like Scott's (1990) notion of the hidden-transcripts and the infrapolitics of subaltern groups, this view of power inflects a political economy approach with the epistemic and lived reality of groups contesting their place in the status quo.

Finally, to this we should add Choudry's (2007) recent articulation of the power relations among non-government organizations and social movements, especially as they move from the context of an indigenous struggle to a transnational context. For Choudry, the power differential between these two different sites of resistance can lead and has led to silencing and dominance by the transnational anti-globalization movement over those forms of local struggles such as the indigenous Maori social movement with which he works. In many ways, Choudry's example echoes the complex power relations Foley has articulated. What is important to Choudry, however, is being aware of the knowledge being produced by indigenous movements, and the ways in which this knowledge production could bring new insights, yet is often marginalized as oppositional space is dominated by the larger Euro/North-American movements and non-government organizations. While this is not something addressed in this article, it has been a major feature of learning of many movements in Ghana, where they have seen their localized concerns and understanding of issues sidelined in transnational debates about strategy (Langdon, 2008a).

In this way, the PAR engagement at the centre of this article is built on a research outlook that is wary of analogies with other locations. Nonetheless, the outlook does keep in mind the role of capital in the challenges faced by social movements, the complex and contradictory nature of their learning and growth, and that the informal learning in struggle undergone by members of these movements is where these issues play out. Added to this, the research

outlook has aimed to consistently ground discussions of Ghanaian social movements in the post-colonial African and Ghanaian context, especially as these discussions question dominant narratives of contestation from subjugated and subaltern perspectives. Finally, it has also attempted to build into all discussions an awareness of the power dynamics not only within social movements but also between them, especially when these movements are situated in sites away from the locations of national and global geopolitical power. To sum up, the research outlook that has shaped – and was validated by – the participatory action research described below is informed by Mamdani's (1996) position and therefore uses an African and Ghanaian informed perspective as its starting point, uses Foley's notion of learning in struggle as the background of investigation, inflects it with Kapoor and Choudry's perspectives, and, through the analysis of our PAR group adds a much needed contemporary African articulation of the ongoing learning in struggle of Ghanaian social movements. In the next section, I expand on the parameters of this study, including the methodology used, and then share some of the research results.

STUDYING GHANAIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH WITH MOVEMENT ACTIVIST-EDUCATORS

PAR has been identified as an important window through which to research social movements (Kapoor, 2007). Not only does the methodology provide for collective ownership of all aspects of the study, but it also requires that the research produce action – a very important element to activists involved in social movements (Reason, 1994; McTaggart, 1991; Tandon, 1988). As Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes, PAR is an important aspect of a research methodology that decolonizes – in line with Kapoor's (2007) point above of ensuring social movement research remains grounded in a postcolonial awareness. The potential of PAR to lead to cooptation of voice must also be kept in mind (Jordan, 2003), and therefore needs to be grounded in Fine's (2007) notion of response-ability, where all outcomes of the research contribute to furthering the collective goals of the group, and where there is a clear articulation of the complementary roles of all those in the group.

On this last note it is important to articulate one last note about using a PAR approach in an activist setting. Using the knowledge of those working from a subjugated position as its starting point, the PAR approach being articulated here assumes a dialogue-based stance on research knowledge production where, as Fine et. al. (2004) note, "insiders carry knowledge, critiques, and a line of vision that are not automatically accessible to outsiders" (p. 111). This understanding of PAR does not mean a university based non-Ghanaian such as myself has nothing to bring to the discussion, nor does it mean that these discussions do not involve challenging one another's understanding of issues. As Fine et. al. (2004) note, in a study of US prison education from the perspective of women prisoners, collective work is not consensus-building but

is rather collaborative, where those involved disagree with each other, bring complementary skills, trust that all involved have the interest of the group and their larger question at heart, and at the end of the day do not have to agree on everything. Yet it must be clear that in this discussion there is not a privileging of any one understanding of the issues faced by a particular movement. For instance, during our discussions our group initially disagreed on whether or not to focus on religious groups as one example of movements in the Ghanaian context. In the ensuing debate, a number of us pointed out that the larger project was to focus on movements attempting to make changes in Ghanaian society to better address the needs of marginalized communities, and that Ghanaian religious movements seemed largely more concerned with stabilizing the population rather than contributing to its change. I also added that from a Gramscian perspective, we needed to be wary of forces in civil society interested in maintaining the status quo. This critical interpretation became our way forward even though one of our number disagreed with understanding all religious movements in this way.[7]

Before turning to a more detailed explanation of our PAR process, it is important to recognize that there are many ways to engage in PAR. As Fine et. al. (2004) note, the decision around the way PAR is articulated in a particular research setting is determined largely by the circumstances of that study. In their research setting in a women's prison, inmate researchers as well as college-based researchers faced challenges in actualizing PAR elements such as the collective analysis of transcripts. They also faced the additional challenge of being unable to record interviews with other inmates outside of the core research group. In similar ways, the design of the PAR approach taken here was based on the practical realities of doing research in this particular setting. As a sort of caveat, a number of distinctions[8] stand out. First, that the consultation of an older generation of activist-educators was necessary not only for the reasons listed below but also for the future reception of the research, as their initial consultation would make them more open to the research analysis. This stems from the strong cultural importance of respecting elders in Ghanaian society, even when one presents an alternative and critical view. Second, as an additional sign of respect for a generation that was tortured and harassed during the years of military rule and is still wary of being documented, our PAR group decided recordings of discussions were to be limited to our group's discussion alone. We understood this research to be a form of baseline study of social movements and their learning in the Ghanaian context, in preparation for a longer PAR engagement with a particular movement to be determined as part of our action-taking process.

With these caveats aside, let me now turn to a description of the actual PAR process. As noted earlier, the PAR group that initiated this study is the product of a long-term set of relationships that brought together 6 activist-educators from an emerging generation of activism, yet who were also grounded in

various different movement backgrounds.[9] The term "activist-educator" is derived from the work of Michael Newman (2006), who powerfully describes how activists who take on the active role of educator can make an impact in their movements.[10] In the year prior to the active engagement of the research, a number of us in the group discussed strategies for conducting research on social movement learning in the country. Out of these discussions, a research approach emerged that was further refined in the first few weeks of the active period of engagement.[11] First, the members of the collective agreed on the importance of the research, not only because of the lack of research on Ghanaian social movements, but more significantly because we saw this process as an opportunity for each of us to step back and reflect on what Ghanaian social movements are and the ways in which they learn. Considering the amount of pressure and work most group members faced just to keep up with the ongoing challenges of being deeply involved in a movement, having this space to pause and reflect was a critical feature of why many of us got involved.

Second, because of the workload faced by my colleagues, the group decided that I should conduct a wide array of interviews with activist-educators from an older generation – and from movements not covered by our collective experience – in order to garner their inputs into these questions. This approach was seen as the most effective since the inputs of this older generation were critical for our collective deliberation, yet this older generation was perceived to be too busy to be actively involved in the research.[12] I have alluded to some of the reasons for this importance above, but it should also be noted that my colleagues also saw this as an educative process for me as it gave me a rich set of discussions from which to begin to understand the Ghanaian context of social movement learning. I therefore conducted 25 interviews in the leadup to the retreat of our PAR group where we would collectively analyze these inputs. The ongoing thought-lines these conversations provoked were shared with the rest of the PAR group on an ongoing basis through an invitation-only blog – a blog all those interviewed could also contribute to anonymously – and in hard copy. Using this technology allowed those interviewed and the PAR group to question and comment on any of the thought-lines before the PAR collective analysis began. This was an important feature as it provided a dialogue-based space where a number of interpretations could be questioned: my interpretation of the issues raised in interview discussions; an open debate of these interpretations amongst all interviewees and members of the PAR group; the ability to question individual interviewers' accounts; and the possibility of posting alternative understandings of the interpretations. In this sense, the blog provided an online forum for broader participation in the research process, and helped ensure a more accountable and interactive process of interviewing a large number of people. This approach had a real impact as a number of interventions emerged from this space that contributed to a more fleshed-out starting point for the discussions held by the PAR group.

For instance, the critical role of the antecedent socialist movements of the late 1970s to early 1980s in the formation of contemporary movements was made apparent through an intervention made early on by more than one blog participant. This helped to remind our group that though we were interested in the learning of contemporary movements, these movements could not be understood without reference to their antecedents. This historical link can be seen in the example of the democratic movement elaborated above.

Thirdly, we built in a PAR group retreat that would allow members of the group to mentally and physically step back from the ongoing issues facing our respective movements. This proved crucial for our collective in-depth analysis of Ghanaian social movements and their learning. In discussions like the one on religious movements described above we were able bring our complementary experiences to bear on how to understand social movements in the Ghanaian context, and then how to analyze their learning trends. These discussions involved unpacking the constitution and its impact on activism as well as natural resource allocation, connecting discussions to particular theories in social movement learning and organization, placing particular movements in their historical context, and coming to grips with why some movements represent the interests of the marginalized while others push a middle-class agenda. Most of us brought some theory and some first hand experiences to bear on discussions. Some, like myself, concentrated more on the theoretical side while others had a stronger connection to the everyday realities of activism in Ghana. Having this space to come together as a group helped solidify our sense of what needed to happen next, in other words, what action should come from the research. From my personal perspective, this was one of the most electrifying moments of our collective work as we came to a decision I had not even anticipated, where we decided to start working as a collective with an organic movement, defined below, that one of our number had already been working with for some time. In this sense, our group came out of our research process with a clear call for action. This is a call we have already followed up on, as a longer-term process of engagement with this movement has begun. Some of the details of this organic movement are elaborated in the next section.

Out of this collectively defined process emerged two clear contributions to thinking on Ghanaian social movements. The first, described in the next section, elaborates a distinctive differentiation of movement types in the Ghanaian context. This mode of differentiation moves away from a simple analysis of the issues that inform particular movements and their connection to "old" and "new" movement labels, to a more complex understanding of the politics of movement formation, organization, leadership, communication, and learning. The second contribution examines the learning of Ghanaian social movements and provides three key inflections to Foley's original notion of learning in struggle: learning in struggle, learning through struggle and learning to struggle.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN GHANA:
HEURISTIC TYPOLOGIES THAT EMERGED FROM PAR PROCESS

Although there has been some recent literature on social movements in Ghana (Prempeh, 2006), this work has failed to provide an overview of the movements, or to provide any background into their antecedents. As such, it has fallen to those involved in this research, whether interviewed or part of the PAR group, to provide this type of overview of social movements in Ghana. As a result, two axes of analysis emerged in both the interviewing process and the subsequent PAR group collective analysis. The first axis takes the labels of "new" and "old" social movements and reconfigures them in the post-colonial and Ghanaian context. The second axis, based on analyzing movement patterns of organization, communication and learning, yielded two heuristic typologies for categorizing movements in the Ghanaian context. Due to the lack of literature to build on to elaborate a detailed articulation of Ghanaian social movement trends, our PAR group decided to focus on providing heuristic typologies – as opposed to detailed accounts of individual movements – in order to begin a discussion in the larger Ghanaian activist community as to the nature and composition of Ghana's contemporary movements.

Postcolonial inflections of "old" and "new" movement labels

The first axis falls along a similar line as the Euro-American literature on social movements, in that a line of tension emerged between old and new social movement interpretations. As in the example outlined in the beginning of this article, the old social movements (OSMs) of organized labour and socialist party structures grew to prominence in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Ghana. Since that time, and especially since the return to democracy – and some would add most especially since the NDC, or the civilian version of Rawlings' government, lost power – there has been a proliferation of issue-based movements, such as women's rights, environmental protection, and the people with disabilities rights movements. In many ways, these movements suit the descriptions laid out elsewhere of new social movements (NSMs) (Habermas, 1981). Yet, as the opening example above should indicate, the clear lines of distinction between these movement labels are blurred when one considers the links between many contemporary, or apparently "new," movements and the "old" socialist movements of the past. In this sense, it is apt to draw comparisons to Kapoor's (2007) warning against facile distinctions between old and new social movement strategies in a postcolonial setting, given their potential use by movements at different times.

This nuance is further underscored as the initial axis of analysis was expanded to include what our PAR group called natural/communal-resource based movements. While communal defence of natural resources has been identified elsewhere as an important mobilizer of social movements (Peet & Watts, 2004), what emerged in the Ghanaian analysis as critical was the way in which

this defence is embedded in deep structural critiques of globalization. Here, a clear sense of a critique of the global and national economy is intertwined with the issue-based critique of the rights of rural communities to land access and decision-making rights to their land and natural resources. When this is coupled with strong spiritual and ancestral connections to these resources and land, the implications not only on everyday livelihood issues but also on cultural reproduction become clear. The Ghanaian anti-mining movement is a perfect example of this. Communities affected by the "perpetual expansion of mining and mineral exploration activity [that] has displaced numerous subsistence groups outright and destroyed a wide range of cultural resources" (Hilson, 2004, p. 54) has led to an emerging critique that combines the erosion of cultural ways of life as well as livelihoods into a strategy that uses both human rights discourse as well as a pointed and well-articulated critique of capital exploitation to defend their ways of life (Owusu-Koranteng, 2007). The Ada example discussed further below is also indicative of this intertwined balance.

Movement typologies based on organization, communication, and learning patterns

According to our PAR group analysis, movements in Ghana should not only be analyzed by what they are interested in, but also by the ways in which they organize, communicate, and learn. This is the second axis of analysis. Based on these criteria, we concluded that there are two types of movements in Ghana. While movements often emerge or are re-energized by an event or new issue that is confronting a particular group, the way in which a given movement mobilizes and organizes can be seen in two ways: one that is grounded in the larger membership of the movement and one that is professionalized and begins to take over the leadership. While the professionalization of movements is not a new phenomenon (McCarthy & Zald, 1987), for our PAR group it begs the question, "How rooted in the people's needs are the decisions made by this elite leadership?" The learning that emerges from these two types of movements is telling: where the first is seen as communicative and dialogue-based, recycling all learning and decision-making back into the wider movement; the second is didactic and strategic, instructing the movement on its goals and further "educating" the membership on what they "need to understand." Based on our group's analysis, Ghana's most recent manifestation of the women's movement is suggestive of the didactic model, as it has been dominated by an urban professional elite that has failed to connect with a wider cross-section of rural and market women's issues. The anti-mining movement, on the other hand, is an example of the dialogue-based movement as it is a pluralistic movement constantly re-grounded in the needs of the communities affected by mining. Both of these movements and their connection to the typologies established by our PAR group are explored more fully elsewhere (Langdon, 2008b).[13] In many ways, the language that emerged around these two models is grounded in Freire's (1970) differentiation between dialogue-based and didactic learning, as well as in Habermas' distinction of communicative versus strategic action

(1984; 1987).[14] Both of these theorists helped the PAR collective frame some of its thoughts around these two types of organizations, but it should be noted that the differences emerged prior to the introduction of these theories.

The differentiation between these two types of movements is key for what we identified as the most important characteristic for the successful emergence of a movement that is communicative and dialogue-based within the Ghanaian context. Building on the natural resource defence model discussed above, where a way of being as well as way of life is being defended, our group discerned that dialogue-based movements are most likely to emerge around communally held resources whose protection implicates a community as a whole. This connection, when threatened by external – or even internal – capitalist exploitation can lead to an "organic" movement, one firmly grounded in the needs of that community. Here needs are very much understood as being mediated both by the influence of and resistance to capitalist hegemony as well as by the strategic agency of marginalized communities embedded in their own history of land use and natural resource management. This type of movement was seen to be a building block of many resource-based movements, including the anti-mining movement – part of the reason they have been successful at impacting decisions around mining despite an incredible uphill battle (c.f. Owusu-Koranteng, 2007).

Based on this definition of organic movements, we decided to begin working with a local movement defending the communal ownership of the salt flats in Ada, a town a short way east from the capital, along the coast. These salt flats are sustainably maintained through a traditional ownership arrangement that sees none of the chiefs who surround it having overarching rights to the resource. Anyone, even those not from Ada, can obtain salt from the flats, so long as they pay a small amount of what they take to the authority upon whose land the salt is collected (Langdon, 2009). The Ada movement has successfully defended this communal ownership process despite successive governments' attempts to expropriate it for use by foreign and national capital. At one point, during the military regime of the 1980s, the defence of this resource resulted in a confrontation between troops and the local citizens where a number of people were wounded and a pregnant woman was killed (Radio Ada, 2002). To this day, a statue dedicated to this woman stands in a nearby village. This highly successful organic movement has begun to face new challenges as new forms of capital exploitation emerge. Smalltime entrepreneurs have purchased and enclosed some of the land surrounding the lagoon that transforms into salt flats, effectively blocking off a large chunk of the land by which people have traditionally accessed the flats to collect salt. Young people associated with the movement mobilized and destroyed these walls and, in the aftermath, were jailed for destruction of private property (Langdon, 2009). The community is uncertain how to advance, since some of the entrepreneurs are also locals. This clash of loyalties has meant that the movement must engage in a much

deeper reflection on how this emerging form of capitalist exploitation could alienate them from this resource as well as split their movement – a perfect example of Foley's (1999) notion of contradictory and ambiguous learning in social movements. This process of re-engagement is precisely where the PAR collective has been asked to make a contribution, although how this will evolve remains to be seen given that our engagement has only just begun.

While the differentiation between didactic and dialogue-based movements is based on shifting from classifying movements by their links to "old" or "new" labels, to classifying them based on the way they organize, communicate and learn, this is only one way in which we analyzed learning in social movements in Ghana. In the next section I present three lenses for further thinking about learning in social movements that emerged clearly throughout the research. Each of these lenses highlights a different aspect of learning in social movements, and are all interlinked with the typologies of movements our PAR group articulated. Again Foley's (1999) notion of learning in struggle has framed the emergence of these lenses, though like the note about Freire and Habermas above, it needs to be clarified that this concept helped our PAR group find common language for trends most of us had already noticed. Any expansion of the concept was due to the refinement of the term based on our mutual understanding of the Ghanaian context. It is towards an elaboration of these lenses that we now turn.

LEARNING IN SOCIAL ACTION: GHANAIAN ACTIVIST-EDUCATORS REFLECTIONS ON THE CONVERGENCE OF LEARNING AND STRUGGLE

The multiple articulations of the link between learning and struggle described below are grounded in three different definitions of the word "struggle." Struggle can be understood as an ongoing process, as in the struggle by slaves for emancipation. Struggle can also be defined as a singular event of struggling over something, such as a struggle at the workplace. Finally, struggle can also be understood as an action, where one struggles to learn a new skill. These different articulations of struggle are indicative of how the combination of learning and struggle can come to mean different things when expanded upon within social movement activism. It should be noted that in describing these three approaches to understanding learning in social movements in the Ghanaian context, our PAR group elected to first identify trends in the ways in which the larger group of older generation activist-educators described learning, and then to gloss these interpretations with a collective group analysis. These categorizations were cycled back to the larger group through the online blog for comments and further discussion.

Learning in struggle

Based on Foley's model, this lens helps to view the long term process of learning that has occurred *in* social movements through the emergence of new

strategies, and through the cycle of external conflicts with the shifting nature of capital and internal conflicts that often result from these external shifts. This understanding of learning in social movements takes a much longer view than the particular moments of learning *through* an event or conflict discussed below. Many of those interviewed talked about the shifting strategies of movements over time, or the conclusions and compromises movements made as a result of shifting realities.

For instance, a great many of the older generation of activist-educators involved in the socialist movements of the 1980s spoke at length about the realization that human rights discourse was an important starting point for building a better Ghana, even if it had been previously critiqued as a capitalist tool used to stabilize the populace. For many of these respondents, faced with the reality of a military government that was persecuting, torturing, and killing people, human rights were seen as a first necessary step in creating the room to discuss a form of Ghanaian society based on social justice. Hand in hand with this change in thinking was the support for democratic change, which was seen as a strategic first step in opening up the space to question and explore alternative societal arrangements. This generation also elaborated other learning that emerged over time, such as the realization that the Soviet Cultural Centre, and Marxist analysis and discourse, had played too great a role in their articulation of issues facing Ghanaians, and that they had ignored the critical factors of Ghana's colonial and pre-colonial histories as well as the cultural make-up of the various peoples in the country in their analysis. Likewise, they underscored how the Rawlings revolution had "ruined revolution in Ghana" for a long time to come, and that they did not see state seizure as a realistic goal for the time being – another reason why they have consistently been a part of a movement stance critically watchful of whomsoever is in government (see the opening example for an illustration of this stance). As the section below on learning *to* struggle elaborates, socialist seizure of power has not been ruled out, but must be worked for through a long-term educational process with new generations of potential cadres and activists.

Equally compelling is the evolving sensibility of those contemporary anti-globalization movements, such as the anti-mining movement and the anti-privatization of water movement, who have seen that it is only through constant, ongoing engagement with the issue that some constraints can be placed on the expanding needs and desires of capital – foreign and domestic. Both of these movements have learned how victory today is only really a pause in the battle until tomorrow.

This type of long-term learning was also discussed in our PAR group, and the relationship of the movement and its ability to generate effective new strategies was seen as being intrinsically linked to an organic reconnection with the needs, ideas and thinking of the broader constituency of a given movement.

This realization is the basis of the typologies described above. In this sense, the ongoing internal reflection on learning *in* struggle was seen by our group as critical to the process of dialogue-based movements. But this process is not easy, as the example of the Ada movement shows: processes of dialogue-based reflection on learning are likely to be messy and, to quote Foley, "contradictory and ambiguous." However they are necessary if movements wish to avoid becoming technocratic in nature, leading to changes in strategies that would a) further alienate the constituency a movement supposedly represents, and b) increase the likelihood that new strategies would be more responsive to status quo needs than to changing the sets of relations that sparked the movement in the first place.

Learning through struggle

Here struggle is understood as a singular event or conflict *through* which learning occurs. It is learning that emerges from a particular moment of conflict over resources/issues/policies that leads to a deepened awareness of the political terrain, both on the individual level and the movement level.[15] A number of interviewees talked about the learning that occurred when the 1981 coup happened – ushering in an ostensibly socialist government – and how they began to see how socialist rhetoric was abused and misused for power consolidating purposes. Likewise, the learning that happened during the 1995 *Kume Preko* demonstrations to stop the application of a value-added tax, as well as to protest against the continued application of structural adjustment in the country emerged as a major theme (Abrahamsen, 2000; Essuman-Johnson, 2007). As the opening example discusses, demonstrations which originated in the rank and file of the national trade union movement, erupted around government misrepresentation concerning progress in the economy and the need for the tax. They were quickly turned into a political tool on the one hand for members of the opposition to gain notoriety and exposure in the public eye, and a conservative union leadership on the other hand, who used their protests as an excuse for imposing a constitution on the Trade Union Congress that defanged its outright potential for partisan political mobilization. In this sense, this event revealed who was truly interested in transforming the sets of relations in the country, who was interested in taking advantage of the situation to improve their public image, and who wanted to restrain this possibility in the future. These telling moments, to quote one of the respondents, showed "people's true colours" and being a part of them was the best education one could receive in discerning who was really interested in change that would benefit average Ghanaians rather than the status quo.

These conclusions were validated and further inflected in our PAR group retreat, where a number of other moments of learning were added. All of these moments were seen as the sites of birth or rebirth of movements discussed in the typologies above. Similarly, how a movement was organized coming out of

these moments of extreme learning revealed to our group which of the two types of movements they would become. It is a moment like this that the movement in Ada currently faces, where the community is split between supporting the new forms of capital and the youth who are resisting its attempts at enclosure. How this emerging learning is processed, as well as decisions around how the movement should now be organized will indicate whether it will continue to be an organic movement of the people of Ada, or merely a remnant of a bygone era. If, for instance, the youth are excluded from the movement, it will likely lose its connection with the needs of the broader community, and therefore will become more and more of a didactic movement detached from the source of its support.

Learning to struggle

This lens represents thinking by activist-educators on the process of education within social movements or that can contribute to movement activism. Many of those interviewed reflected upon how to generate/mobilize enough momentum for change. Key to this question in most of their minds was the way in which movements and their members learned *how to* struggle. Reflecting back on the cadre-building days of the socialist movements of the 1980s, many of the older generation insisted it was necessary to start rebuilding the revolutionary cadres, but to avoid any shortcuts to this process, since these lead to the potential for cooptation.[16] Other older activists spoke of the need to reinstitute educative processes that would help the young become aware of the realities of current global power dynamics. For some, this would require establishing a school in a remote location where the next generation of activists could be bred. The regenerations of activism in the youth emerged as a major preoccupation of many of those interviewed as they worried about the lack of radicalism in the current generation, and wondered if it could be re-instituted. Part of these discussions revolved around the ways in which the past generation acquired their knowledge from the Soviet Social Centre in Accra, but also from the previous generation of activist-educators of the Kwame Nkrumah era – even as they now are asking critical questions about a too-easy assimilation of European and Soviet socialist thinking.[17] It was clear that the current older generation feels a certain responsibility to pass on their knowledge and their experiences to the next group to carry the torch, even where these experiences are complex and contradictory.

At the same time, from the perspective of our group, a different vision of learning *to* struggle was discussed. While the need to go back to the education and momentum building techniques of the past was seen as useful, for those of us in the PAR group what was necessary was not to look for the proper ideological educative process, but rather to look at those already-existing organic movements, and to work with them to better understand what is being learned, and how knowledge about the localized struggle is being connected

to other locations of resistance as well as to larger structural issues. In this sense, the question became, "What can this PAR collective contribute to those movements already struggling to help them be more effective, and to connect their learning to learning ongoing on a wider scale?" It was this question that led our PAR group to explore working with the movement in Ada. However, what has become apparent is that the process of engaging with this local movement will take time, especially if our group is to resist any tendency towards didacticism. Nonetheless, in our first meetings with members of the Ada movement, a dialogue-based process of learning was already emerging, as we learned about the complex history of the movement, while also sharing our experiences of learning *in/through/to* struggle in other Ghanaian movements. This led to new ideas about potential methods/strategies for contesting the use of the constitution as a lever for appropriation of the resource by government and foreign capital, as well as ways to use current environmental policy frameworks to place barriers on those attempting to enclose the salt flats. Our discussions also led to new ideas about organization, as well as the possibilities of linking the Ada movement to other resource-based struggles in the country, such as the anti-mining movement. Where this process will head next remains to be seen.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion presented a selection of results from a PAR engagement with activist-educators that collectively analyzed the ongoing learning of social movements in the Ghanaian context. Our group found that the differences among Ghanaian social movements could be understood not only through the labels of "old" and "new" social movements, but also by the ways in which they organize, communicate and learn. Based on this, our group articulated two heuristic typologies of movement organization: one that was didactic with professionalized leadership and decision-making within the movement, and the other that aimed constantly to cycle back learning and challenges to the larger collective for broad dialogue-based deliberation. Furthermore, our PAR group also articulated three lenses for further refining our understanding of learning in social movements in the Ghanaian context. These lenses are based on an expansion of Foley's notion of learning in struggle – a theoretical frame that both informed the work of our PAR group, but that we also pushed at and made fit the Ghanaian context.

Returning to the proverb that began this article, the research emanating from this PAR process provides important insights into the ways in which social movements in Ghana are engaged in a cycle of learning and action that heightens their awareness of their adversaries' every move. Yet it also reveals just how complex a proposition this is, as the power dynamics within movements, as well as their relationships to ongoing shifts in capital, reveal the messy, contradictory and ambiguous process the learning entails. More often

than not, according to the activist-educators that made up our PAR collective, Ghanaian social movements have become strategic and didactic, alienating their broader membership. This is why it is so important to us to work with organic movements that are grounded within dialogue-based histories, as we believe these are the only movements that can truly have a positive effect on power-relations in Ghana, and on broader, globalized forces of capital. Together, our PAR group has attempted to build a praxis-based approach that will re-main aware of the ways in which new forms of power are constantly emerging within movements, as well as against them. This process is important to all of us involved as it helps reveal how power operates in all our work, even as we try to build new strategies and alliances for struggling against domination. To put this proverbially, movements – like flocks of birds – that are better at dialoguing internally have a greater likelihood, according to our PAR group analysis, of remaining more vigilant against the changing strategies of "hunt-ers," and of remaining in touch with the needs of the "birds" that make up this "flock." For it is not enough to develop keen strategies to challenge capital and power in the Ghanaian context if in the process our movement activism has re-entrenched new orthodoxies that dictate ways of being and learning that are disconnected from those Ghanaians who helped the movement take flight in the first place.

NOTES

1. The support of the International Development Research Center (IDRC) is gratefully acknowl-edged. Its provision of a standard Doctoral Research Award to the author helped to make this research possible.

2. Although Mamdani and Wamba-dia-wamba (2005) have provided one example that stretches across sub-Saharan Africa, the only African country with substantive writing on social movements is South Africa (c.f. Ballard et al 2005; Bond 2004; Habib & Valodia 2005; McKinley 2004) although very little of this work has focused specifically on learning within these movements.

3. This long-term relationship also helps mitigate my position as a cultural insider/outsider. While I have over ten years of working experience in Ghana, and am now related to a Ghanaian family, I nonetheless occupy a white male position of privilege. Based on the PAR process our group defined – expanded on below – I bear responsibility for the reproduction of the results here and also in my PhD thesis and therefore am solely responsible for any errors or omissions. This according of responsibility is grounded in Fine's (2007) notion of response-ability, where PAR results can be communicated in different forms so long as the PAR collective has the consistent ability to respond to the products.

4. For instance, when first discussing the research with colleagues who would later become part of the PAR group, a number of them underscored how they liked the term activist/educator, and felt it was appropriate for what they did, as well as the role those others they identified as important to interview. Likewise, the notion of "learning to struggle" became the starting place for our collective deliberations.

5. Taking a note from Ferguson (2006) here, it is important to recognize both the tensions around reducing all the complexity of the continent into the conceptual container of Africa, as well as the reality of this term in the everyday lives of Africans as a result of ongoing othering that stems from a colonial legacy, and a concomitant economic reality that sees current globalized capital flows paint all of Africa with a singular brush.

6. Leela Gandhi (1998) has pointed out that postcolonial theory is both informed by and in tension with Marxist and poststructuralist thought, where the tension emanates from the applicability of both of these lines of thought in post-colonial settings.

7. This difference is noted here both as an example and a way to recognize this disagreement.

8. The importance of this approach was further underscored in our initial interactions with the Ada movement as my colleagues insisted we start with the older generation in order to be able to interact with the youth that had led the recent destruction of enclosures around the salt flats.

9. Including myself as the sixth member, the other five group members are: Al-hassan Adam, Gifty Emefa Dzah, Kofi Larweh, Coleman Agyeyomah and Tanko Iddrissu. Collectively they have been involved in the socialist movements of the 1980s, the national democratic movement, the current movement to stop privatization of water, the women's movement, the Songhor Lagoon protection movement (in Ada), and the northern people's movement.

10. Given the lack of writing on social movements in the Ghanaian context, building a collaborative research space with activist-educators is a useful starting point to establish an overview of the movements in the country since they have experienced movement learning in Ghana first hand.

11. The active period of engagement ran from December 2007 to April 2008.

12. The differentiation between generations of activist-educators is important in the larger context of the study, as the power differential between generations is pronounced in Ghana, even in a social justice movement. While there isn't room to explore this issue fully here, the clashes between the generations are very indicative of the kinds of contradictory and ambiguous learning struggles going on in Ghanaian social movements. With me conducting these interviews, the PAR group felt able to critique the older generation that often dominates the movements in which they have worked. The PAR group was also highly interested in collectively exploring the possibilities of working with movements in new ways that are not dominated by an older generation.

13. In both of the examples used to illustrate these types of movements, our group discussion circled around how each could become more like the other type given the right or wrong circumstances. As another indication of the ebb and flow of our discussions, one of our members discussed at length how the current version of women's movement could be understood as a historical reaction to dominance of the space by government-aligned movements prior to 2000, and how in the contemporary space a resistance to connecting to rural women's issues could be understood as a by-product of this dominance. Nonetheless, this was seen as problematic given the class-bias of the majority of current women's activism.

14. Morrow and Torres (2002) have provided a useful convergence of Freire and Habermas, revealing how dialogue-based learning and communicative action complement each other. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, it has been suggested that the emphasis on a dialogue-based posture needs to be measured against writers such as Žižek (2008a; 2008b) who are critical of this position.

15. While it is beyond the scope of this current paper, especially as it is focused on Ghanaian iterations of social movement learning, it has been helpfully pointed out that there is a wealth of literature in Euro-American socialist circles that focuses on conflict and its subsequent learning. Lenin's speech on Bloody Sunday (1964), or Sorel's (1999) Reflections on Violence are two such entries.

16. In the lead up to the 1981 return to power of Rawlings, a large number of cadres were established within student, worker and rural populations. These were transformed under the Rawlings government into Committees for the Defence of the Revolution. As the regime changed ideological tacks, these committees became more like police forces than sources of socialist learning and debate.

17. Nkrumah was Ghana's first President, and his coming to power on the wave of a popular movement in 1951 helped to propel the government into independence in 1957. Many of those associated with this popular movement were aligned with socialist values.

REFERENCES

Abrahamsen, R. (2000). *Disciplining democracy: Development discourse and good governance in Africa.* London: Zed.

Akwetey, E. O. (1994). *Trade unions and democratisation: a comparative study of Zambia and Ghana.* Stockholm: University of Stockholm.

Ballard, R., Habib, A., Valodia, I., & Zuern, E. (2005). Globalization, marginalization and contemporary social movements in South Africa. *African Affairs, 104,* 615-634.

Bond, P. (2004). South Africa's resurgent urban movements: The case of Johannesburg, 1984, 1994, 2004 (no. 22). Durban: Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Choudry, A. (2007). Transnational activist coalition politics and the de/colonization of pedagogies of mobilization: Learning from the anti-neoliberal Indigenous movement articulation. *International Education, 37*(1), 97-112.

Daabu, M. A. (2009). Temper justice with mercy – Moses Asaga. Retrieved Feb 22, 2009, from http://news.myjoyonline.com/news/200902/26054.asp

Essuman-Johnson, A. (2007). Organized labour and the liberal state. In K. Boafo-Arthur (Ed.), *Ghana: One decade of the liberal state* (pp. 205-226). London: Zed Books & CODESRIA.

Fine, M. (2007). In the PARticulars: critical dilemmas and radical possibilities of participatory action research. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association.

Fine, M., & Torre, M. E. (2006). Intimate details: Participatory action research in prison. *Action Research, 4*(3), 253-269.

Fine, M., Torre, M. E., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., et al. (2004). Participatory action research: From within and beyond prison bars. In L. Weis & M. Fine (Eds.), *Working method: Research and social justice.* New York: Routledge.

Foley, G. (1999). *Learning in social action.* London: Zed Books.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Herder and Herder.

Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Gandhi, L. (1998). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Habermas, J. (1981). The new social movements. *Telos, 49,* 33-37.

Habermas, J. (T. McCathy, Trans.). (1984). *The theory of communicative action, Vol. 1: Reason and the rationalization of society.* Boston: Beacon.

Habermas, J. (T. McCarthy, Trans.). (1987). *The theory of communicative action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason.* Boston: Beacon.

Habib, A., & Valodia, I. (2005). Reconstructing a social movement in an era of globalisation: A case study of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. In R. Ballard, A. Habib & I. Valodia (Eds.), *Globalisation, marginalisation, and contemporary social movements in South Africa.* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Hilson, G. M. (2004). Structural adjustment in Ghana: Assessing the impact of mining-sector reform. *Africa Today, 51*(2).

Holford, J. (1995). Why social movements matter: Adult education theory, cognitive praxis and the creation of knowledge. *Adult Education Quarterly, 45*(2), 95-111.

Holst, J. (2002). *Social movements, civil society, and radical adult education.* Wesport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Hutchful, E. (2002). *Ghana's adjustment experience: The paradox of reform.* Geneva: UNRI.

Jordan, S. (2003). Who stole my methodology? Co-opting PAR. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 1*(2), 185-200.

Kapoor, D. (2007). Subaltern social movement learning and the decolonization of space in India. *International Education, 37*(1), 10-41.

Langdon, J. (2009). Democratic hopes, transnational government(re)ality: Grounded social movements and the defense of communal natural resources in Ghana. In D. Kapoor & D. Caouette (Eds.), *Beyond development and globalization: Social movement and critical perspective reader.* Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

Langdon, J. (2008a). Strategies of social movements in Ghana: questioning the dividends of democracy and/or being embedded in new topographies of power? Paper presented at the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development.

Langdon, J. (2008b). Ghanaian social movements, dialogue and learning in struggle. Paper presented at the OURMedia 7.

Lenin, N. (1964). *Lenin collected works* (Vol. 23). Moscow: Progress Publisher.

Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism.* Princeton: NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mamdani, M., & Wamba-dia-wamba, E. (Eds.). (1995). *African studies in social movements and democracy.* Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA.

McCarthy, J., & Zald, M. (1987). The trend of social movements in America: Professionalization and resource mobilization. In J. McCarthy & M. Zald (Eds.), *Social movements in an organizational society.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

McKinley, D. (2004). The rise of social movements in South Africa. Debate: Voices form the South African Left, 17-21.

McTaggart, R. (1991). Principles of participatory research. *Adult Education Quarterly, 41*(3), 168-187.

Morrow, R., & Torres, C. (2002). *Reading Freire and Habermas: critical pedagogy & transformative social change.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Newman, M. (2006). *Teaching defiance: stories and strategies for activist educators.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Ninsin, K. A. (2007). Markets and liberal democracy. In K. Boafo-Arthur (Ed.), *Ghana: One decade of the liberal state* (pp. 86-105). London: Zed Books & CODESRIA.

Owusu-Koranteng, D. (2007). Petition against the international bridge builders award to Mr Wayne Murdy the CEO of Newmont. Retrieved Feb 22, 2009, from http://www.globalresponse.org/content/Letter%20to%20DU%20Chancellor%20from%20WACAM%20%20Ghana.pdf

Peet, R., & Watts, M. (Eds.). (2004*). Liberation ecologies: Environment, development, social movements* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Prempeh, E. O. K. (2006). *Against global capitalism: African social movements confront neoliberal globalization.* Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Radio Ada (Writer) (2002). Radio Ada Oral Testimony Documentary: Resource Conflict – The Songor Lagoon. Ghana: Radio Ada.

Reason, P. (1994). Participatory action research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook for qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts.* New Haven: Yale UP.

Shillington, K. (1992). *Ghana and the Rawlings factor.* London: MacMillan Press.

Sorel, G. (1999). *Reflections on violence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tandon, R. (1988). Social transformation and participatory research. *Convergence, 21*(2/3), 5-14.

Tuhiwai-Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous people.* London: Zed Books & University of Otago Press.

Yeebo, Z. (1991). *Ghana: The struggle for popular power.* London: New Beacon Books.

Yeebo, Z. (2007). Ghana: 1957-2007, a brief political overview. Retrieved Feb. 22, 2009, from http://ghanaianoracle.wordpress.com/the-history-of-ghana/

Žižek, S. (2008a). *In defense of lost causes*. London: Verso.

Žižek, S. (2008b). *Violence: Six sideways reflections*. London: Profile.

JONATHAN LANGDON is a PhD candidate in the department of Integrated Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, McGill University. He recently completed his field research in Ghana, where he studied the ongoing learning in struggle of the country's various social movements. Using Participatory Action Research techniques, Mr. Langdon worked closely with a group of activist-educators to both analyze the learning in struggle and to begin dialoguing with certain emerging social movements to better understand their ongoing learning. Mr. Langdon has also conducted other research in Ghana on the teaching praxis of indigenous health practitioners.

JONATHAN LANGDON Jonathan Langdon est doctorant au département des Études intégrées en sciences de l'éducation de l'Université McGill. Il a récemment complété un projet de recherche au Ghana, dans le cadre duquel il a étudié le processus continu d'apprentissage au sein des luttes effectuées par les divers mouvements sociaux du pays. Utilisant les techniques de recherche participante, monsieur Langdon a étroitement collaboré avec un groupe d'éducateurs activistes afin d'analyser le processus d'apprentissage réalisé au sein des luttes et d'établir un dialogue avec certains mouvements sociaux émergents pour mieux comprendre leur processus d'apprentissage. Monsieur Langdon a aussi piloté des recherches au Ghana sur les méthodes d'enseignement des travailleurs de la santé autochtones.