



MOVEMENTS IN TRANSITION

How pro-democracy activists may better realize
their revolutionary demands during transition

REPORT
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ABOUT THE REPORT

Over the past two decades nonviolent action has spread across the world, providing hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy activists with the strategic means to achieve revolution. Despite these revolutionary and democratic achievements, liberal democracy is at a high risk of backsliding. At the same time, the rights of minority groups – women, ethnic and racial minority groups, and LGBTQ+ individuals – continue to be targeted for further restriction. In light of these challenges, activists are calling for support to develop a transition strategy in order to safeguard the achievements of their revolution- whether it be safeguarding the wins at their university or local town or on a national level, nonviolent action and to better guarantee sustained democratic change takes place. This report captures The Center for Applied NonViolent Actions and Strategies or CANVAS' response to these calls: a year-long project to develop a practical training curriculum on how a movement can successfully shift from playing a role of resistance

to a role of reform and rebuild during the post-revolution transition. While there have been some efforts to further research this shift, few have translated insights into fit-for-purpose materials that will provide pro-democracy activists with materials to build a transition strategy and realize it leveraging existing tools from a variety of disciplines, including peacebuilding, negotiations, coalition-building and institutional reform.

This project, instead, collected what we know about movements in democratic transitions from reviewing the academic literature, and drawing from CANVAS's rich network of social movement veterans and stakeholders through interviews and case studies. It then developed this knowledge into a set of training modules that were piloted and refined. In the CANVAS spirit, we seek to combine social science with our own experiences, including what we did right, but especially what we did wrong so that future generations of activists can avoid making the same mistakes.



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SUMMARY

This report is a product of a year-long project with the goal of gathering what is known about social movements in democratic transitions and transforming that knowledge into practical lessons and tools for activists on the ground.

This report is a product of a year-long project with the goal of gathering what is known about social movements in democratic transitions and transforming that knowledge into practical lessons and tools for activists on the ground. In reality, however, it is the product of dozens of CANVAS trainings with hundreds of activists over more than a decade and countless meetings and brainstorming sessions. The CANVAS core curriculum focuses on building the skills for activists to engage in active nonviolent struggle in any contexts. However, at its heart, and the core of CANVAS trainers' experiences, is in struggles for democracy. It has always been clear, however, that the installation of democratic regimes is only the first step towards achieving more just, inclusive, equitable, and safe societies. Over the years, CANVAS has received many requests from activists, partners, and stakeholders for advice on what to do the day after the transition, when, some would say, the real work begins.

This question has become markedly more salient in recent years as a new wave of authoritarianization sweeps the globe. In the 2020s, electoral autocracy is now the most common regime type in the world.¹ This project, of which this report is a component, collected what we know about movements in democratic transitions from reviewing the academic literature, and drawing from CANVAS's rich network of social movement veterans and stakeholders through interviews and case studies. It then developed this knowledge into a set of training modules that were piloted and refined. In the CANVAS spirit, we seek to combine social science with our own experiences, including what we did right, but especially what we did wrong so that future generations of activists can avoid making the same mistakes. We look forward to sharing these lessons with all those who struggle for human rights and dignity.

1 Lührmann, Anna & Staffan I. Lindberg (2019) A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?, *Democratization*, 26:7, 1095-1113, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029



INTRODUCTION



16-YEAR
DECLINE IN GLOBAL FREEDOM

Over the past two decades nonviolent action has spread across the world, providing hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy activists with the strategic means to achieve revolution. Whether a movement be fighting to make a change in their university or local town or on a national level, nonviolent action has played a part in spreading pro-democracy voices, raising up nontraditional leaders and achieving monumental changes without the use of violence and through the use of social media, humor, and personal negotiations.

Despite these revolutionary and democratic achievements, liberal democracy is at a high risk of backsliding. Authoritarian actors and regimes have become more effective in co-opting and circumventing institutional norms, as well as building coalitions in order to support one another to isolate, harass and disempower democratic oppositionists through economic and political intimidation. According to a 2022 Freedom House study measuring global democratic and authoritarian trends over the past two decades, the concurrent threat to democracy comes amid a 16-year decline in global freedom. Based on the watchdog's estimates, only 20% of the world lives in "Free countries." At the same time, the rights of minority groups – women, ethnic and racial minority groups, and LGBTQ+ individuals – continue to be targeted for further restriction.





This means that while a movement's opponent concedes to their demands for change, causing revolution, activists have been unable to ensure those demands are becoming reality through institutional and behavioral change. In some cases, such as in the US (2020), Hong Kong (2019), Georgia (2003) and Bolivia (2019), contexts have become more authoritarian than before the nonviolent revolution due to consolidation among anti-democratic groups and gradual backsliding. In other cases, such as in Nepal (2008), Lebanon and Iraq (both 2019), post-transition chaos has risked causing the states to fail. Still in others such as Egypt (2011), Sudan (2019) and Myanmar (2008), activists have struggled to collaborate with the military and hard-liner politicians to gain democratic ground, resulting in coup d'états. In light of these challenges, activists are calling for support to develop a transition strategy in order to safeguard the achievements of the revolution and to better guarantee sustained democratic change takes place.

This report captures The Center for Applied NonViolent Actions and Strategies or CANVAS' response to these calls: a year-long project to develop a practical training curriculum on how a movement can successfully shift from playing a role of resistance to a role of reform and rebuild during the post-revolution transition. While there have been some efforts to further research this shift, few have translated insights into fit-for-purpose materials that will provide pro-democracy activists with materials to build a transition strategy and realize it leveraging existing tools from a variety of disciplines, including peacebuilding, negotiations, coalition-building and institutional reform.

The report summarizes the project approach to achieving the final training curriculum. The project team built upon CANVAS' institutional knowledge in strategic nonviolence, from training pro-democracy activists in over 50 countries since its founding in 2005, by undertaking a thorough review of the literature, examining a diverse set of transition case studies – including on specific causes outside of regime change and transitions that are top-down – and interviewing a variety of stakeholders to hear their needs and lessons learned. After piloting a draft set of modules with activists, the project team finalized the curriculum into a training series of seven modules and practical exercises.

THIS REPORT CAPTURES THE CENTER FOR APPLIED NONVIOLENT ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES OR CANVAS' RESPONSE TO THESE CALLS: A YEAR-LONG PROJECT TO DEVELOP A PRACTICAL TRAINING CURRICULUM ON HOW A MOVEMENT CAN SUCCESSFULLY SHIFT FROM PLAYING A ROLE OF RESISTANCE TO A ROLE OF REFORM AND REBUILD DURING THE POST-REVOLUTION TRANSITION.





LITERATURE REVIEW

² Though traditionally “the literature” would refer to scholarly-reviewed materials only, the goal of this research was to produce evidence-based materials that are practical and ready to be implemented for pro-democracy activists currently preparing for the transition. Therefore, non-academic material was consulted to account for this current crux in time; authoritarian actors are evolving quickly in an attempt to outpace democratization efforts by adopting tactics of non-violence; authoritarian juggernauts like China, Russia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are funding hardliner military parties for geopolitical and economic gain; and many governments used COVID-19 pandemic public containment measures as pretenses to consolidate power and erode on personal freedoms. This research aims to contribute to some identified gaps at the intersection between academia and civil society, while also calling for further advancement.

³ Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

The project team reviewed 83 secondary sources in the literature, both academic and civil-society-produced (non-profit organizations and think tanks), to source current findings on theory, strategy, and tactics for movements to navigate the post-revolution transition. ²

The literature generally concludes that nonviolent action greatly promotes democratic concepts in the lead up to the revolution, and during the transition that follows. Chenoweth and Stepan, both core theorists and practitioners to nonviolent action, found in their foundational 2011 study *Why Civil Resistance Works*: the strategic logic of nonviolent conflict reviewing revolutions over the past century that nonviolent movements are 40 percent more likely to result in democratic advancement and long-term internal peace compared to violent insurrections.³ Pickney (2020) found in an analysis of civil resistance transitions through nonviolent action that a movement is able to elevate non-traditional and democratic leaders, diffuse democratic norms like coalition building and negotiation and civic participation, and increase public expectations on institutions to fulfill public needs.

The literature produced eight core themes relating to how a movement may navigate the transition, from the high-level strategic activities down to on-the-ground tactics. The project team then validated and built upon these eight themes through stakeholder interviews and an examination of case studies.



FRAMING

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN BRINGING PARTICULAR ISSUES TO THE SPOTLIGHT AND PRIORITIZING THEM IN THE PUBLIC EYE.



Framing refers to processes of meaning-making that shape how actors understand and interpret the world around them. Framing thus informs how problems in society are identified and prioritized, how solutions are presented and which ones are considered viable, and what kinds of events or contexts are considered political opportunities.⁴

Framing is especially crucial in democratic transitions. Social movements have an important role to play in framing how people understand democratic principles, values, and goals. Movements must emphasize that meaningful democracy means more than free and fair elections, and remind both those in political office and the general population that civil and social rights must also be protected. The struggle does not end when the old regime is replaced.

An important part of framing is agenda-setting. Lots of things will need to get done. Social movements play an important role in bringing particular issues to the spotlight and prioritizing them in the public eye. This is especially important as democratic procedures often take longer than autocratic decrees and may need extended public vigilance. Exclusionary elites will often try to dribble out demands through long and complicated procedures hoping that people will forget, or distract from pressing problems by creating scandals or manufacturing enemies.



⁴ See Kurzman, C. (2008). Meaning-Making in Social Movements. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 81(1), 5–15. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30052738>; Snow, D.A. (2013). Framing and Social Movements. In *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements* (eds D.A. Snow, D. Della Porta, B. Klandermans and D. McAdam). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470674871.wbespm434>; Benford, R. and Snow, D. Framing "Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment" *Annual Review of Sociology* 2000 26:1, 611–639.



STRATEGY, SPECIAL BODIES AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS



Social movements can and should be a part of determining the processes that comprise the overall strategy to guide the immediate political transition, as well as a country's overall roadmap to democratization. There are a number of transition processes that social movements can insist happen and that they participate or have influence: The formation of caretaker governments: Caretaker governments run the country until the first elections can be held. These governments are often the result of negotiations, not elections, and thus have limited legitimacy. As a result, their mandates should also be clearly limited, in terms of both time and power. Caretaker governments should not be able to make drastic changes to institutions or systems and should prevent any particular party or group

from using state institutions to their advantage in the subsequent elections.

Representation in constitutional framing: There may be a need to write a new constitution or heavily amend the existing one. Typically, this is done through a constitutional convention, or a group of people who have different areas of expertise and/or represent different groups in society. Social movements should try to participate in this process or, in cases where they cannot participate directly, forge an alliance that can represent their interests. The development of the new constitution is also a time when social movements must pay close attention to the process, frame and share information with their members and the public, and, when necessary, mobilize to pressure convention members to include beneficial provisions and exclude extreme provisions. If the draft constitution is acceptable to the movement, it can campaign for the constitution's acceptance to further contribute to the movement's legitimacy as a contributor

towards democratic stability. Truth commissions and Transitional justice processes: In situations where the previous regime perpetrated human rights abuses, especially state-sponsored violence, truth commissions and transitional justice processes may be desirable. Truth commissions uncover the often clandestine ways that old regimes structured and perpetrated the abuses and identify the most responsible individuals. They may also suggest how societies deal with these abuses, including the prosecution of the most responsible individuals, providing platforms for victims and their loved ones to share their stories and have them acknowledged, peace-building dialogues between groups previously in conflict, reparations, and institutional reforms to minimize the possibility that abuses can be repeated. An important goal of both truth commissions and transitional justice processes is creating a national narrative and collective memory that acknowledges that abuses happened and that these abuses are incompatible with the nation's values.⁵

⁵ The International Council on Transitional Justice. ictj.org





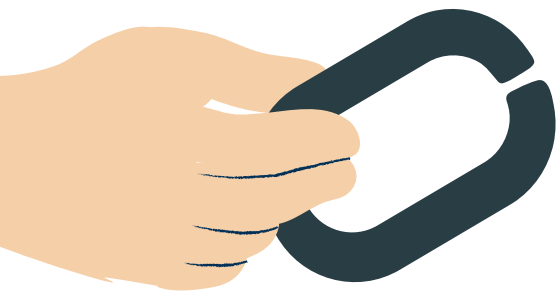
ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Dealing with the economy is critical for building socio-economic interdependence and to foster political and economic stability post-revolution. Countries that have undergone revolution and appear to be stabilizing will often initially receive a massive influx of aid for the private sector as well as civil society development. While it is positive for civil society to receive resources to build itself up, there also exists the danger of civil society becoming over-reliant on foreign aid, thus losing its autonomy. Establishing state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can also be an effective developmental tool when the private sector has a tendency towards monopoly, significant government investment is needed to develop the industry, or a service is considered too important to citizens' well-being and dignity to be left to the whims of the private sector or the logic of

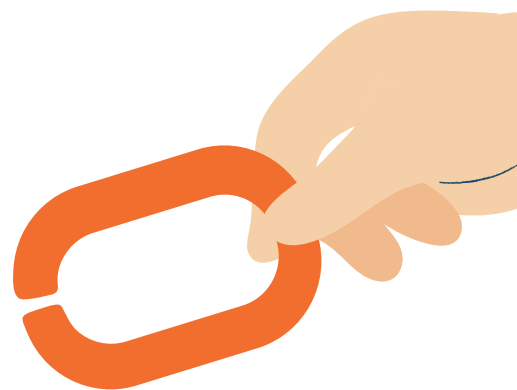
profit maximization. On the other hand, SOEs can be a source of corruption, clientelism, and inefficiency when left unchecked. SOEs are often used to fund political campaigns or serve as "post-election rewards for political backers", which, in turn, contributes to democratic backsliding in the long run. It is critical to create effective mechanisms for monitoring and sanctioning SOEs and those responsible for their conduct for long-term democratic stability. Decisions about the nationalization or privatization of industries as well as the extent of property rights guarantees (especially for political actors e.g. the military) should be addressed during transition negotiations. Ignoring or delaying addressing these economic concerns could render problematic in the future and aid political instability.⁶

⁶ Volintiru, Clara, Toma, Bianca and Damian, Alexandru (2018) How the political capture of state owned enterprises is damaging democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog (05 Mar 2018); Friedheim, D. V. (1993). Bringing Society Back into Democratic Transition Theory After 1989: Pact Making and Regime Collapse. East European Politics and Societies, 7(3), 482–512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325493007003005>





NEGOTIATION AND COALITION BUILDING



Negotiating and coalition-building are important – and often among the most difficult – parts of any successful revolution. The task often becomes even more difficult post-transition as social movements may need to negotiate and form coalitions with groups that have historically been on the opposite side and with whom movements may have deep and justified grievances. However, not participating in coalitions is likely to mean that the same old, elite personalities will continue to dominate power and remain detached from the needs and desires of the people. In many cases, pro-democracy elites without social movement support will be weak, providing anti-democratic forces with ample opportunity to shift the country back to authoritarianism. This participation can take several forms:

Conditional alliances with political parties:

Social movements may throw their support behind particular candidates or political parties with the understanding that those parties pursue democratic or issue-based reforms.

Forming parties from the movement:

Parts of social movements may form their own political parties in order to participate in elections. This is an especially salient option when existing political parties do not provide avenues for meaningful participation or representation of movement constituencies.

Placing movement members in key government positions:

Movement participants themselves are often experts in their own right and excellent at management and organization. This makes them extremely qualified candidates for government positions.

Creating alliances with other social movements to pressure parties and the government:

Horizontal coalition-building does not stop after the revolution. Even other groups and movements that did not participate in or support the revolution may have shared interests with you when it comes to democratic stability and particular issue area reforms.

While engaging with coalitions is important, civil society must take special care to remain strong and autonomous and not be wholly usurped into party politics. Stefes and Paturyan (2021) argue that “brain drain” of civil society leaders into a leading faction of post-revolutionary government allows for the dangerous concentration of formal and informal power in the hands of that single faction. To the contrary, in the cases where civil society actors: a) representative and connected to the wider general public and b) are able

to keep “a safe distance” from the new government or assume informal advisory roles; the civil society is able to preserve the position of “institutions of vertical accountability”.

Finally, it is important to find balance between making substantive demands with avoiding high maximalism. While you do not want to merely accept positions without question or criticism, taking an all or nothing stance can come with high risks for the transition. Pickney (2020) illustrates how high maximalism can result in poor outcomes for democracy depending on how much your supporters mobilize. Remember that the best should not always be the enemy of the better.⁷

⁷ Pickney, J. (2020), Oxford: *From Dissidence to Democracy: The Perils of Civil Resistance Transitions*





MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A functioning democracy requires an active and engaged citizenry to ensure that government officials are doing what they are supposed to and that they will suffer consequences if they do not deliver. The struggle does not end with elections and meaningful citizen participation means more than campaigning or voting every election cycle. Social movements and civil society provide a way to organize and rationalize monitoring and accountability.

What does accountability look like?

- Ensuring the creation of laws that guarantee universal human rights and that they are implemented and enforced in a way that is fair, inclusive, and reflective of social values
- Guarding against corruption
- Representing the people and the revolution's values as a body outside the government
- Normalizing civic participation

We can think of our monitoring and accountability activities along two broad categories: institutional mechanisms and substantive issues. Institutional mechanisms refers to demanding and establishing systems for transparent information-sharing with the public and relevant stakeholders. Without institutional mechanisms, we cannot hope to effectively carry out substantive monitoring and evaluation. This refers to the tangible issues we care about like corruption, basic services, and human rights.

Monitoring as a civil society organization/movement means acting as a watchdog. In this role, both top-down and bottom-up monitoring and accountability are important. Top-down is when social movements monitor what public officials are doing and make their activities known to the public. Bottom-up is when social movements monitor how public policies are affecting the people - especially groups in society that public officials rarely consider like ethnic or regional minorities and the economically disadvantaged - and raise these concerns to public officials.





Watchdog acts include:

- Election monitoring
- Following and educating stakeholders on policies key to the movement, including the performance of individual policymakers
- Following and educating stakeholders on nominees to important government positions
- Following the trail and influence of money on politics
- Investigative journalism

An often overlooked principle is to engage in both negative and positive monitoring and accountability. Oftentimes, movements engage overwhelmingly in negative monitoring - criticizing things the government gets wrong and demanding sanctions or the prosecution of particular officials. It is important, however, to also engage in positive accountability - to express support for officials who are allies or pursue policies that are in line with the

movement's values. Support for movement veterans should by no means be unconditional; however, it is important for movements to remember that allied politicians will constantly face vestiges of the old regime and powerful interests that are in contrast to the movement's interests. These allies thus need popular support to withstand attacks from movement opponents. There have also been instances of movements electing allies, but then failing to

publicize the gains achieved by that ally while in office, allowing old regime figures to come back into power. Finally, it is important to remember that a public official does not need to be an ally in order to act for the benefit of the movement and its constituency. If a movement is effective at both negative and positive monitoring and exacting accountability, politicians should find it in their self-interest to bow to movement demands.



CIVIC PARTICIPATION



Democracies benefit from deep social ties and a culture of civic participation. There are several ways civic participation can encourage better quality democracy. Civic communities can bring people out of their private concerns to engage with broader social concerns. As a result, communities demand better governments and public officials are held to higher accountability standards. Civic communities create obligations and expectations whereby people draw on each other for resources and favors, building trust and pluralism while also creating common norms and sanction regimes. Civic communities can also act as information channels where issue-framing and deliberation can occur. Civic participation can take the form of either overtly political activity (such as advocacy groups or labor unions) or non-political activity (such as interest groups or soup kitchens), but it is debated wheth-

er the latter inherently contribute to better democratic outcomes without being activated for some explicitly political purpose.⁸

There remains the difficult question of how to balance community service that empowers people and that which takes responsibility away from the state. For example, Solano observes that young, urban Brazilians want to contribute to improving their countries and are very active in civic organizations and charity work, but are also turned off by direct political work.⁹

Strengthening an independent civil society is important and any civic participation is better than none, but it is also important for civic organizations not to depoliticize people. Organizations can do this by allowing for an alternative output that allows citizens to feel they are contributing to the community while being agnostic to democratic processes, gains, and threats.

TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS

Shifts to democracy and authoritarianism often occur in multi-country waves as both movements and dictators learn from the world stage. There is a demonstrated "contagion" effect of democratization - when one state becomes a democracy, there is a tendency for similar countries in the same region to pursue democracy as well. At the same time, we must keep the "dictator's learning curve" in mind, wherein dictators observe one another's wins and failures.

Maintaining solidarity with movements in other countries is important to encourage the spread and acceptance of democratic principles, which in turn can

strengthen democracy at home. Transnational solidarity movements have been shown to have positive effects through a "boomerang" effect - when activists in one country place pressure on their own government that then pressures the target government. Movements can also help others struggling for democracy through the sharing of strategies, tactics, and resources.¹⁰

Social movements can also benefit from looking to the world stage by targeting transnational and supranational organizations and treaties. Activists should encourage their countries to join international organizations and treaties, as means to quickly move the dial forward on human rights, to gain aid and set the economy up for success to grow.

⁸ Tocqueville, Alexis de, Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. 2000. *Democracy in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Putnam Robert D., Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1994. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton Ewing: Princeton University Press; Coleman, James S. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 95 - 120

⁹ Solano, Esther and Camila Rocha. 2021. "Falemos com nossos jovens." *Nexo Jornal* (2021): April.

¹⁰ Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt5hh13f>





STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over 20 interviews were conducted with social movement veterans in 12 countries with the purposes of:

1. Collecting narratives from activists' point of view about their experiences with regime transitions;
2. Triangulating lessons from the academic literature with practical, lived experiences;
3. Identifying common obstacles that activists and democratic social movements face during the transition process; and
4. Drawing lessons from the challenges that veterans felt they were unprepared to face during their own transitions.

These interviews were key to ensuring that training modules include concrete and practical lessons drawn from real-world experience, especially important knowledge about transitions that activists were not exposed to and wish they had known early on in the transition process. The interviewees represented a diversity of regions, experiences, and positions within and following their respective movements. There is also a wide variety in the kinds of political and social contexts they represent - some interviewees come from countries that have become relatively stable, if still low-quality, electoral democracies, while others come from countries that continue in conflict. Despite this diversity, some common themes cut across their experiences and reflections:

All interviewees expressed that following their countries' regime change, there were impossibly high hopes and expectations that could not possibly have been met. They struggled with the pressure of the high expectations for immediate and drastic change and what this implied for how they monitored, participated in, and evaluated the transition as it unfolded.



Most interviewees expressed that in hindsight, they wished their movements had paid more time and attention to fundamental institutional reforms rather than who would occupy public office following the regime change. In several cases, a lack of effective institutional reform meant that figures from the old regime were able to maintain significant influence or come back into power. Stronger institutions could have either prevented these figures from maintaining or re-obtaining power or limited the damage they can do.

In several cases, a serious source of tension within the movement was whether and who should join formal transitional bodies and the post-transition government. This became a distraction to pursuing institutional reforms and was a source of personal tension. In a few cases where the majority of the movement joined or was affiliated with the new government, the lack of an independent civil society translated to a lack of accountability for the government, which in turn enabled new abuses of power. On the other hand, in other cases where the movement activists did not participate at all in the transition process or new government, politicians from the old regime ended up dominating and completely excluding the movement and its values. It appears that a balance between participating in formal politics and having an independent civil society that can act as a watchdog must be found. However, even in cases where some movement actors went into formal politics, there was a time of adjustment as they tried to wear multiple hats and it was not always clear when they were acting as an official or acting as an activist. This relationship between moving from

extra-institutional to institutional political action is something that movements should study and prepare for before the transition whenever possible. This preparation must include both establishing clarity in terms of joining government or not, to what end, and in what roles, as well as increasing activists' technical capacity in substantive issue areas.

**SHORTLY AFTER THE TRANSITION,
VETERANS FOUND THEMSELVES
IN A BATTLE OVER NARRATIVE AS
REMNANTS OF THE OLD REGIME
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VIRTUES OF THE OLD SYSTEM AND
ATTACKING THE TRANSITION AND ITS
PERSONALITIES.**

Veterans also expressed that they were often unprepared to work with other actors in society. Prior to the transition, activists were accustomed to opposing all arms of the old regime, especially the security forces. During and after the transition, movements struggled to work with vestiges of the old regime and particular state institutions, although they acknowledged that doing so was necessary to establish a more stable and inclusive democratic order. In instances where activists did not work well with these forces, it either led to widespread discontent and thus instability, or the movement's exclusion from the transition. The veterans also acknowledged the importance of listening to other sectors in soci-

ety that were not part of the old regime but also not necessarily part of the movement (particularly rural and popular classes) throughout the transition.

Creating memory and changing political culture were also common obstacles. Shortly after the transition, veterans found themselves in a battle over narrative as remnants of the old regime did not end their propaganda efforts extolling the supposed virtues of the old system and attacking the transition and its personalities. Combatting narratives glorifying the old regime was especially difficult in the context of impossibly high hopes combined with fluidity and uncertainty that characterize transitions. Furthermore, several veterans expressed that the general population's political culture and attitudes was a hindrance to the transition. After many years of living under authoritarian regimes characterized by violence and corruption, educating and convincing ordinary citizens about voting and the true costs of participating in bribes and clientelism was difficult and frustrating.

Several veterans also expressed frustration over the actions of the international community, a chasm between international statements of support for democracy and concrete actions, and a lack of knowledge at the time about the international pressure factors that shaped their respective transitions.

Several veterans noted that even within their respective movements, the viewpoints of women and ethnic/religious minorities tended to be sidelined. This intensified during the transition period.



MODULES

Seven training modules and accompanying practical exercises were developed based on a review of the literature on social movements in transitions, common questions that arose from previous trainings with activists, and issues that activists that were in the midst of or had gone through democratic transitions indicated they had known more about earlier in the process culled through interviews.

The seven modules are:

INTRODUCTION - This module focuses on setting the stage for this new phase for social movement actors, including navigating the transition, setting expectations for internal and external change, and naming common paths to failure.

FRAMING THE TRANSITION - This module focuses on the importance of meaning-making, including how democratic value and stability can be understood and interpreted and the importance of framing transition goals in a way that increases the number of stakeholders.

STRATEGIC ROADMAP AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS - This module lays out the critical steps in the transition including the importance of having a roadmap, the timing and conduct of elections, a caretaker government, and the creation of special bodies to deal with urgent issues.

COALITIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS - This module reinforces the importance of being open to entering into coalitions and negotiations with groups outside social movements, potentially including previous opponents, for the benefit of democratic stability and establishing norms around institutional ways to overcome disagreements. Special attention is paid to the relationship between social movements, civil society and political parties and the importance of engaging political parties while maintaining independence.

SPECIAL BODIES - This module describes several special bodies that may be created during and following a transition to democracy in order to work towards addressing and reconciling abuses of the old regime while establishing a firmer and more inclusive base for a democratic government and society. These include transition councils, issue-specific and reform committees, national dialogues, transitional justice bodies, electoral commissions and constitutional commissions.

ACCOUNTABILITY - This module describes the key role social movements and civil society play in keeping government accountable to citizens. This occurs through both top-down accountability wherein social movements monitor what public officials are doing and make it known to the public and bottom-up accountability wherein movements monitor how public policies are affecting the people, especially groups in society that public officials rarely consider like ethnic or regional minorities and the economically disadvantaged, and raise these concerns to public officials.

TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS - This module focuses on the importance of transnational networks of solidarity as well as the resources international institutions and treaties can provide to incentive democracy.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



This report and its accompanying training modules but scratch the surface of the many challenges social movements will face in transitions to democracy. However, it is our belief and hope that by informing activists of these challenges and providing a structure and tools for how to understand and plan them as early in the transition as possible, that we can help minimize the risk of major omissions and help capacitate movements that are on the frontlines of democratic struggles.

It is important to note that while this report and its accompanying training modules were developed primarily with movements for democratic regime change in mind, the lessons herein are applicable to a wide variety of movements, struggles, and advocacies. Understanding how to engage in processes of framing and agenda-setting, presenting alternatives, demanding accountability, and building transnational support networks are important for any form of issue advocacy. In the many countries where the lines between government and civil society are not steel, but rather porous with individuals often moving back and forth, understanding how to balance institutional and extra-institutional forms of advocacy is both extremely important and underappreciated.

Few, if any social movements will be able to fulfill all the roles indicated in this report and its accompanying modules. Lots will need to be done that requires people, resources, and technical capability. Thus, it is important to emphasize that movements will need the support of networks of solidarity during transitions more than ever. Especially as, as we know, authoritarians learn and support each other as well. At CANVAS, we see ourselves as part of a global community of activist supporters, and as a community we too must demonstrate our own unity, planning, and discipline to resist a resurgence of autocratization.



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Annex A.

CASE STUDIES

FRAMING

The high price of prescription drugs is a point of controversy in many countries around the world. This is especially true in the United States with its private health system. Pharmaceutical companies claim that drugs are priced in a way as to enable them to conduct research to develop new medicines. A group of progressive economists and healthcare activists, however, released research showing that a great deal of medical research leading to newly patented drugs was paid for by taxpayers through government-funded research grants. The “We already paid” slogan became a frame for advocating for access to medicines, and an especially salient frame for advocating for free and low-cost vaccines during the Covid pandemic.¹¹

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa is largely credited with reducing AIDS denialism and getting the government to provide antiretroviral drugs. They framed HIV/AIDS not as an issue whose importance is limited to a specific population, but rather as an issue of human rights, effective budgeting and governance, and combating corruption in the form of government-drug company collusion.¹²

On February 26, 1986, Corazon Aquino was officially sworn in as president of the Philippines after Ferdinand Marcos attempted to legitimize his increasingly unfavorable dictatorship through snap

elections. Although the national assembly had announced Marcos as the winner, the widespread knowledge of election fraud and intimidation allowed Aquino to declare victory with popular support. Parts of the military and the Catholic Church withdrew their support for Marcos’ regime and recognized Aquino as the rightful president. Marcos and his family fled the country. Five months later, Marcos loyalists attempted to establish a provisional government by taking over the Manila Hotel but soon surrendered after being outnumbered by government forces. Then, in November of 1986, the Defense Minister, Juan Ponce Enrile, who had previously backed Aquino, attempted twice to take over the government but failed. Marcos loyalists and military factions unsuccessfully tried four more times in 1987 to wrest control from the Aquino government by mounting attacks on key military and public targets. A key feature that contributed to the failure of these coup attempts to gain popular support was a narrative that framed Aquino as a legitimate democratic leader chosen by the people through elections and popular revolution while framing Marcos as a personalistic dictator interested in personal power and corruption. The legitimacy of Aquino’s presidency and the democratic regime was further solidified by the reestablishment of democratic institutions, especially the passing of the 1987 constitutional referendum, which

even Enrile had to accept as “the will of the people.”

The Tatmadaw coup on February 1st, 2021 shifted the Burmese people’s perceptions toward ethnic minorities as the military’s violent repression of protestors sparked empathy in people who had previously dismissed the atrocities committed against the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities. Until then, the military’s propaganda campaign claimed that the Rohingya were inciting violence among themselves and threatening to replace Myanmar’s Buddhist majority with Islam. After the Tatmadaw takeover, the Bamar ethnic majority began organizing protests and strikes and formed the National Unity Government (NUG) as a parallel citizen administration in opposition to the Tatmadaw. The NUG established the People’s Defense Force (PDF) to aid in the resistance but this splintered into local, independent chapters without any oversight. And while the NUG has political power on the national level, their recent hand in disenfranchising ethnic minorities and defending violence against them has hurt their place as leaders in the resistance. Still, there have been many attempts by the NUG and PDF to negotiate and cooperate with the many Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) but a broad range of interests, capabilities, commitments, and conflict between groups prevented the formation of a united resistance.

¹¹ Ledley, F. et al. 2020. “US Tax Dollars Funded Every New Pharmaceutical in the Last Decade” Institute for New Economic Thinking. Retrieved 20 Feb. 2023 at <https://www.ineteconomics.org/perspectives/blog/us-tax-dollars-funded-every-new-pharmaceutical-in-the-last-decade>

¹² Goodwin, J., & Rojas, R. (2015). Revolutions and Regime Change. In D. D. Porta, & M. Diani (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements* (pp. 793-804). Oxford University Press; Colvin, Christopher. (2009). Positive Men in Hard, Neoliberal Times: Engendering Health Citizenship in South Africa. 10.4324/9781315583907-10.





Some EAOs have attacked military bases or offered protection to activists while others have negotiated ceasefires with the military as part of the State Administration Council's effort to minimize EAO involvement. The military's brutal crackdown woke the country up to its history of marginalizing and abusing ethnic minorities, but the very diversity the nation is trying to embrace is also the reason why there is no unified opposition front.

George Floyd's murder at the hands of police officers in the United States sparked a wave of racial justice protests around the country as well as the world in 2020. Black Lives Matter (BLM) and other movement leaders made careful and intentional efforts to connect Floyd's murder to the long-standing existence of disproportionately higher rates of police violence against black people than their white counterparts. This not only enabled BLM to counter the narrative that these acts of violence were isolated incidents perpetrated by "bad ap-

ples," but also enabled them to push beyond demands for the prosecution of individual police officers and create a constituency for systemic reforms to the police and criminal justice systems.

The environmental movement went through a major shift in framing that broadened its base and shifted the way solutions have been considered and prioritized. Prior to the 2000s, the "science-based" approach dominated. This approach focuses on using data to demonstrate a scientific crisis. Examples include the documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, which presents carbon emissions data, as well as slogans about the ice caps melting and polar bears losing their habitat. There is evidence that this framing approach was de-motivating for movement-building, partially because it presented the problem as one so big and catastrophic that it could only be solved by a top-down technocratic regime where ordinary people had little to contribute. By the late 2000s, however, many activists began framing climate

change according to the "justice-based" approach, which focuses on how the negative effects of climate change and efforts to mitigate it often have the worst effects on people that are already poor and marginalized. For example, poor farmers tend to be hit the hardest by droughts, those with informal and poor quality housing are hit the hardest by cyclones, hurricanes, and floods, and poor countries' development may be hampered by regulations on energy production and expenditure when rich countries were able to develop freely without limitations on energy. Shifting to justice-based framing has helped the environmental movement expand its constituency and make alliances with other social movements as well as to bring concerns of social equity and colonial reparations into policy debates.¹³

¹³ Haddadn, K. 2015. From Science to Justice: What Explains Framing Shifts in Climate Activism? | Mobilizing Ideas; "Climate Change and Environment" Frameworks Institute. Accessed 20 Feb 2023. Available at <https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/issues/climate-change-and-environment/>



NEGOTIATING AND COALITION-BUILDING

In Porto Alegre, Brazil, the Union of Neighborhood Associations (UNA), a conglomeration of local civil society organizations, lent their support to a candidate from the center-left Worker's party with the expectation that upon election he would be amenable to their calls for a more transparent and responsive municipal budget. Once elected, the new mayor and UNA worked together to design the country's first participatory budgeting process in 1989, an innovation in democratic practice that later spread to other cities and countries.¹⁴

Studies of feminist social movements across Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America by Kindervater and Meintjes (2017) and Viterna and Fallon (2008) find that transitions to democratic regimes were not enough to improve situation of women or their access to political power because of a number of factors including institutional constraints, historical political conditions, and cultural norms. However, forming coalitions between grassroots women movements, politically elite women, and sympathetic male political figures has been effective at achieving women's movement demands.

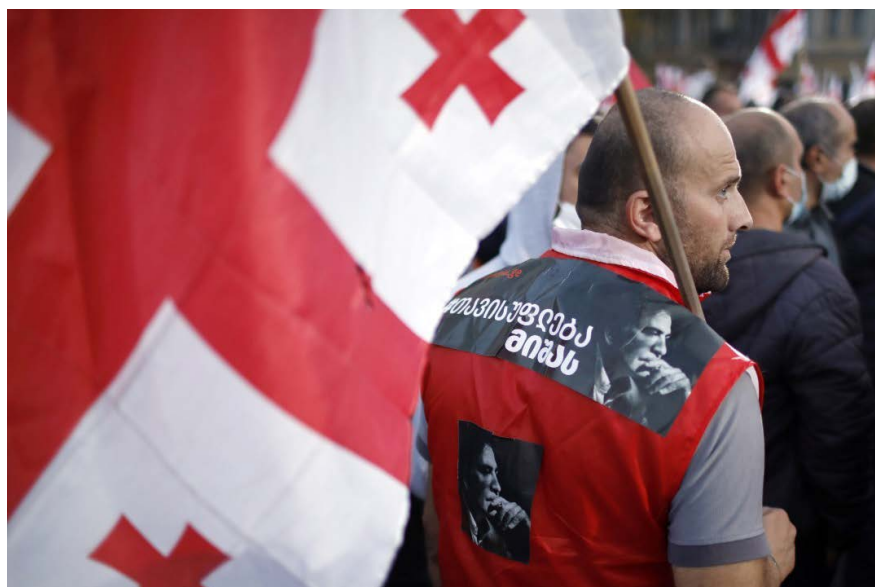
The cases of post-"color revolution" Georgia and Armenia illustrate the importance of an independent civil society. Armenia's civil society in the wake of the 'Velvet Revolution' could be described as largely separated from the government and the political opposition and representative of varying segments of the country's population. Though Nikol Pash-

inyan has often been portrayed as the sole leader of the revolution, the movement's success resulted from a collective effort by his supporters and the unified civil society opposition. Following Pashinyan's political success, most participants of the revolution have shown away from "formally" joining the government or forming a political party. Their decision to remain separated from the government and maintain the role of a political watchdog is often believed to aid Armenia's ability to remain on the path of democratization.

On the other hand, in Georgia, the elite organizations of the revolutionary movement, such as Mikheil Saakashvili's National Movement, the Liberty Institute, and the Rustavi-2 TV station have become the backbone

of the post-revolution government. Unlike in Armenia, many vital participants of the revolution instrumentalized its success for personal gains and moved on to assume government positions, which further jeopardized civil society's ability to act as an effective government watchdog and effectively mobilize in the face of democratic backsliding.¹⁵

During- and post-revolutionary coalition building can be observed in Ukraine's 1990 transition, which is also known as Ukraine's First Maidan or the Revolution on Granite. Prior to the events of the revolution, some members of the revolutionary movement, the People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh), chose to use a narrow window of the opportunity offered by the communist regime and run in the March



¹⁴ Talpin, Julien, 'Democratic Innovations', in Donatella della Porta, and Mario Diani (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements* (2015; online edn, Oxford Academic, 4 Aug. 2014).

¹⁵ Stefes CH and Paturyan YJ (2021) After the Revolution: State, Civil Society, and Democratization in Armenia and Georgia. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 3:719478; Wheatley, J. (2010). Civil Society in the Caucasus: Myth and Reality. *Caucasus Anal. Dig.* 12, 2–6.



1990 election for the Ukrainian legislature. Given that the Soviet electoral laws still did not permit democratic parties to stand for the election, members of Rukh ran as independent candidates united under the umbrella of the Democratic Block (DB). Despite the obstacles erected by the ruling Communist Party (CPU), DB managed to obtain 25 percent of the seats (Sadowski and Pohorila, 2018; Semenova, 2012).



While some perceived the Rukh's split into "formal" and "informal" politics to be detrimental, it eventually played to the movement's advantage during and after the revolution. The entry of democratic forces into the parliament opened more direct channels for negotiation, which, in turn, fostered divisions within the elite and prompted some CPU members to defect to the pro-democratic, pro-movement camp. The in-parliament forces were able to use the ever-growing threat of street protests staged by the "radical" wing of Rukh to increase their formal bargaining power and encourage further defection from the Communist camp. Their formal position also allowed them to encourage legislation in support of protesters and further democratic moves, such as the Kyiv City Council's resolution that allowed

protests to be held in the capital's central square, which was passed on the first night of the student strike. Later on, the in-parliament members facilitated the resignation of hard-liner Prime Minister Masol and passage of the landmark agreement to proceed with the draft law on the return of conscripts to Ukraine, as well as the further steps towards the 1991 independence referendum.

The Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) grew directly out of progressive social movements opposed to the country's military dictatorship, particularly the union movement and community-based Catholic formations. Other social movements, including parts of the landless workers' movement and Black movement also came to be allied with the party. The PT is currently the largest political party in Brazil by mem-

bership and has won five presidential terms. Although not without controversy, PT mandates have effected drastic reductions in poverty, expanded access to health, education, and housing, and increased the independence of court institutions, among other democratic gains. Another Brazilian party, the Party of Socialism and Liberty, also has strong ties to the urban housing and racial justice movements, and regularly advocates for these and other social justice policies. Other parties in Latin America that were borne of or are the result of coalitions with social movements and have gone on to win presidential office and institutionalize democratic reforms include the Movement of Popular Participation of Uruguay and Social Convergence of Chile, both of whom became members of Broad Fronts in the electoral arena.



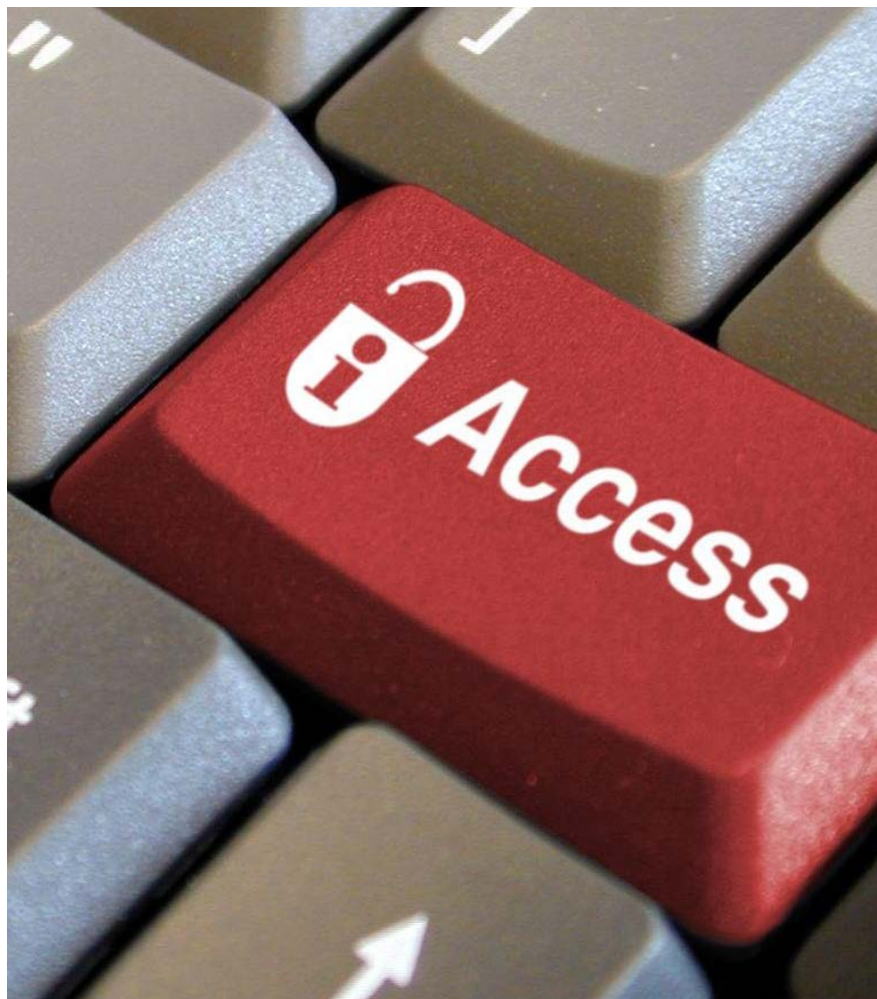
MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Examples of Institutional mechanisms for monitoring and accountability:

In the Philippines, the 1987 constitution established the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), an agency tasked with recovering the wealth stolen by the Marcos dictatorship. This should have acted as a transparency and accountability mechanism as part of the transition to democracy to check the old regime's corruption and hold it accountable. In practice there was mixed success. The PCGG was able to recover about US\$5 billion of the estimated US\$10 stolen by the Marcos family and allies. However, despite losing several court cases in the Philippines and abroad, no member of the Marcos family has successfully been jailed. The complicated nature of the Marcos corruption network and dilatory legal tactics meant that cases often took decades to resolve. The PCGG was also more focused on recovering the wealth than contributing to the national narrative, and in hindsight lost an opportunity to contribute to framing the national understanding of corruption under the Marcos years through public outreach and education about its investigations.

Colombia and Serbia are among the countries where social movements successfully lobbied for constitutional provisions that require asset and conflict of interest declaration requirements from public officials.

The United States passed the Freedom of Information Act in 1967, requiring full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased or uncirculated government information and documents to any citizen that submits a request. Since then, over 125 countries have passed their own Right to Information laws.¹⁶



¹⁶ "UNESCO Finds 125 Countries Provide for Access to Information" 2014. International Institute for Sustainable Development. Accessed 20 Feb 2023. Available at <https://sdgi.iisd.org/news/unesco-finds-125-countries-provide-for-access-to-information/>



Examples of substantive monitoring/watchdog activities

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa engaged in both negative and positive monitoring and accountability in order to expand access to HIV treatment and medicines, especially to the poor. The TAC organized campaigns exposing and opposing the government's denialism and lack of action to address the HIV crisis through a combination of actions including massive public education campaigns, filing lawsuits against the South African government, and mobilizing public demonstrations. When the government subsequently passed a law lowering the price of HIV medicines, Pfizer, one of the drug manufacturers, sued the government. TAC shifted its tactics to support the government and shame Pfizer through the submission of legal briefs and public outreach campaigns.¹⁷

When Donald Trump was elected president of the United States, he indicated his desire to appoint Betsy DeVos, who was known to advocate for the dismantling of public education and whose family had direct financial interests in private education. Her nomination was immediately lambasted by teachers' unions and others in the education field. Although they

were unable to prevent her appointment, strong and sustained opposition to DeVos's desired changes to education policy continued through public statements, lawsuits, and lobbying. This arguably contributed to DeVos's inability to accomplish her desired overhaul of the education system that would switch students from public to private institutions.¹⁸

Indonesia, the Marshall Islands, Pakistan, and Brazil are among the countries that have legal provisions for budget transparency and civil society participation in budget design at the local level. Studies show that when an active civil society takes advantage of these provisions to design and monitor expenditures this can result in better quality governance, more trust in government, and better development outcomes.¹⁹

After mass protests in Bolivia brought reformer Evo Morales to the presidency, his administration institutionalized civil society's role in the Bolivian government, stating that the goal was to include "organized civil society" in state bureaucracy at every level. Their actual role, however, was left vague, and the administration carefully picked specific move-

ment leaders to join the administration with only limited channels to impact government decisions. Many analysts saw the institutionalization of Bolivian movement actors into the government as de-fanging them. The MAS, the ruling party, was a movement party, and its institutionalization served to co-opt civil society. As a result, civil society was less active in the first years of Morales' rule as a monitoring force. In 2010, when protests broke out across the country in response to proposed legislation to increase gasoline prices, these handpicked movement leaders defended the government's decision, despite the devastating financial impact it would have on communities across Bolivia. Movement actors seemed less willing to challenge "their" government than they had previous administrations. As protests continued into 2011 and grew in impact and reach, it became clear that a different corps of civil society actors were picking up the mantle left by the previous movement that had been co-opted. The monitoring role of CSOs was weakened by inclusion into the government, but restored by continuous grassroots activism.²⁰

¹⁷ Ahmad H. The Treatment Action Campaign and the three dimensions of lawyering: reflections from the rainbow nation. *SAHARA J.* 2013 Mar;10(1):17-24. doi: 10.1080/17290376.2013.807067. Epub 2013 Jul 2. PMID: 23819672; PMCID: PMC3914500.

¹⁸ Belsha, K. and M. Barnum. 2020. "Betsy DeVos is on her way out. What will her legacy be?" Chalkbeat. Available at: <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/11/9/21557678/betsy-devos-legacy>; Tuner, C. 2020. "How Education Secretary Betsy DeVos Will Be Remembered" NPR. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2020/11/19/936225974/the-legacy-of-education-secretary-betsy-devos>

¹⁹ Ahmad, Raza; Weiser, Erin Thébault. 2006. "Fostering Public Participation in Budget-making: Case Studies from Indonesia, Marshall Islands, and Pakistan" Asian Development Bank. Available at <https://www.adb.org/publications/fostering-public-participation-budget-making-case-studies-indonesia-marshall-islands>

²⁰ Salman, T. (2015). A Democracy for "Us"—or for All?: The Ambivalences of Bolivia's Social Movements since Their Triumph. In B. Klandermans & C. Van Stralen (Eds.), *Movements in Times of Democratic Transition* (pp. 108–137). Temple University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvrf893j.8>



ALTERNATIVES

Following the massive protests across the United States following the murder of George Floyd by police, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) was careful to move demands beyond demanding the prosecution of the police officers responsible. They also presented proposals for alternative forms of policing, including diverting security budgets away from punitive policing to mental health and conflict resolution personnel.

Housing movements in the Philippines innovated the “people’s plan” approach. Government-provided housing for urban poor communities facing demolition would often be far from employment opportunities, schools, and accessible transportation. Furthermore, corruption also resulted in many of these housing sites lacking water or electricity. As a result, residents would often abandon these resettlement sites and move back to informal settlements in the city. Housing activists innovated an approach whereby instead of the government spending to build relocation sites, the government would loan this money to residents’ associations who would themselves identify a relocation site, and engage architects and engineers to build housing developments according to their community needs. The results were win-win on many sides: residents were able to legally own homes in urban areas that had access to employment, schools, and transportation, that had features that government planners would not

**GENERATING POLITICAL
ALTERNATIVES CAN SOMETIMES
MEAN REIMAGINING WHAT
DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES
THEMSELVES CAN LOOK LIKE.**



have thought of, like space for cooperative-owned markets, and that had working water and electricity (since the money was being controlled by those who were actually living there, the incentive to steal money from basic service provision was minimized). Developers were often eager to sell to the residents because the purchase was made in a lump sum - the government paid for the land up front and the residents pay the government back over time.²¹

The Movement of Houseless Workers (MTST) in Brazil maintains an inventory of the many abandoned industrial and commercial buildings. Their data demonstrates that in many areas, including the City of São Paulo, the largest and richest city in the country, homelessness can be solved without needing to build extra housing, but by merely allowing those without homes to live in and care for these buildings.

Generating political alternatives can sometimes mean reimagining what democratic processes themselves can look like. The Global Justice Movement, through their commitment to deliberative and participatory democratic expression within the movement itself, has created what sociologist Donatella Della Porta refers to as “deliberative norms” that rework decision making processes. By relying on consensus-based deliberation and implementing a proprietary system of hand signals and verbal idiosyncrasies, the GJM envisions a different form of democracy, one that emphasizes discussion, argument, and ultimately consensus.²²

²¹ Lero, C. (2018) Social Movements in New Democracies: Specialization and Ownership. Doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, IN, US.

²² Della Porta 2015 “Democracy in Social Movements” in Diani and Della Porta The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements



CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The American Black Civil Rights movement relied on networks of Black churches to provide infrastructure for recruitment as well as for discussions and training sessions, thus framing issues, priorities, and action points. Similarly, church-based study groups in South Korea became the bases for radical pro-democracy organizing.²³

A study by Daniel Sabet finds that those who attempted to “make democracy work” following democratic regime change in Mexico were highly dependent on already existing social infrastructures - particularly those organized around water rights - to mobilize human, organizational, and financial resources.

Breakfast programs were a key component of the Black Panther Party's activities, and functioned to address poor students' immediate needs, create networks in target communities, and draw national attention to the problem of access to nutritional food in majority-black neighborhoods. Relatedly, there is a rich history of urban gardening projects around the world as a form of addressing hunger while also striving to encourage community empowerment and solidarity.²⁴

The lack of civic organizations in Egypt (as described in section I) helps explain the ease with which the Muslim Brotherhood took power following the Arab Spring.



THE AMERICAN BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT RELIED ON NETWORKS OF BLACK CHURCHES TO PROVIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RECRUITMENT AS WELL AS FOR DISCUSSIONS AND TRAINING SESSIONS



²³ Gates Henry Louis. 2021. *The Black Church : This Is Our Story This Is Our Song*. New York: Penguin Press.; Coleman, James S. "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital" *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 95-120.

²⁴ Ganaway, A. "Black Communities Have Always Used Food as Protest", *Food and Wine* (2021): January 5; Noll, Samantha. "Growing Resistance to Systems of Oppression: An Exploration of the Transformative Power of Urban Agriculture" *Open Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2020): 566 - 577



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