

## Networks and Organizations

Tan Guocheng is hardly a self-styled labor leader. Age 23 and introverted, he grew up among rice paddies and orange groves far from China's big factory towns. But last month, an hour into his shift at a Honda factory in the southern city of Foshan, Mr. Tan pressed an emergency button that shut down his production line. "Let's go out on strike!" he shouted. Within minutes, hundreds of workers were abandoning their posts (*New York Times*, June 14, 2010, p. B1).

China is hardly a place where we would expect to find widespread labor insurgency. And, indeed, Tan was fired soon after leading the strike in Honda's transmission plant and went back to his native Hunan. But the action at the Foshan Honda factory triggered strikes all over the Eastern Chinese industrial zone, especially in Japanese-owned firms, which had come to China to take advantage of its cheap and, until recently, docile labor force. Not only that: Unlike most Chinese industrial actions before 2010, which had focused on poor working conditions and wages, this one made a new demand – the right to form a labor union independent of the party-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Similar to the Solidarity union in Poland, which we will turn to later, Chinese workers were beginning to understand that without representation, their material demands would go unanswered.

Tan Guocheng was not alone; realizing that his monthly salary of \$175 was inadequate to allow him to find an apartment and marry, he tried to recruit fellow workers in secret talks on the factory floor during breaks. "A week before the strike," the *Times* continues,

15 or so workers from Mr. Tan's workshop had a meeting outside the factory one night to discuss the plan. . . . A 20-year-old worker named Xiao Lang, also from Hunan, agreed to help lead the strike". . . . By agreement, when Mr. Tan hit that emergency stop button at 7:50 a.m., Mr. Xiao was doing the same thing on a separate, nearby production line. Within minutes, workers were marching through the factory rallying others to join the strike (p. B10).

Honda, with orders to fill and in the midst of a shortage of skilled labor to run its technologically advanced transmission plant, quickly gave in to the workers' demands and ultimately agreed to a large pay raise.

#### WHAT WAS HAPPENING HERE?

No one should expect that the Communist Party–controlled industrial labor system in China will transform into a free industrial relations system in short order, or that striking workers elsewhere would get the same deal as the Honda workers in Fonshan. (Indeed, in the city of Zhongshan, Honda workers who tried to copy the Fonshan example went back to work after receiving minimal concessions, and many were replaced.) But the story of the success in Fonshan is interesting for what it tells us about networks, organizations, culture, and opportunities:

- First, Tan Guocheng trusted another Hunanese immigrant to launch the strike simultaneously in another workshop. This pattern of native-place solidarity, familiar from Chinese labor history (Perry 1993), builds on cultural affinities, as well as on workplace solidarity.
- Second, the two Hunanese workers acted only after forming a network of 50 workers – many of them also from Hunan – who had agreed to support the plan (*New York Times*, p. B10).
- Third, as the workers quickly realized, the solidarity of a small and provisional network of activists would not be sufficient to guarantee their gains; they called for an independent union to bargain on their behalf in the future.
- Finally, it was not through fear or generosity that Honda management gave in to the strikers; the outcome was a result of the opportunity structure provided by (1) a shortage of skilled workers, (2) the new industrial relations laws that the Chinese government had passed in 2008 and was attempting to impose on reluctant factory managers, and (3) the fact that the local authorities were often their shareholders (*New York Times*, June 21, 2010).

In the last chapter, I showed the variety of ways in which social movements engage in collective action. I argued that they do not invent forms of contention out of whole cloth but instead innovate within and around culturally embedded repertoires. In this chapter and the next two, I will turn to the three other powers in movement:

- How challengers build on and appropriate social networks and organizations
- How they combine emotions and identities with cultural repertoires and make meanings around them
- And how they attempt to seize and transform political opportunities.

None of these powers in movement alone ensures the emergence or the outcomes of social movements. But taken together, they produce the movement campaigns, the cycles of contention, and the outcomes that we will turn to in

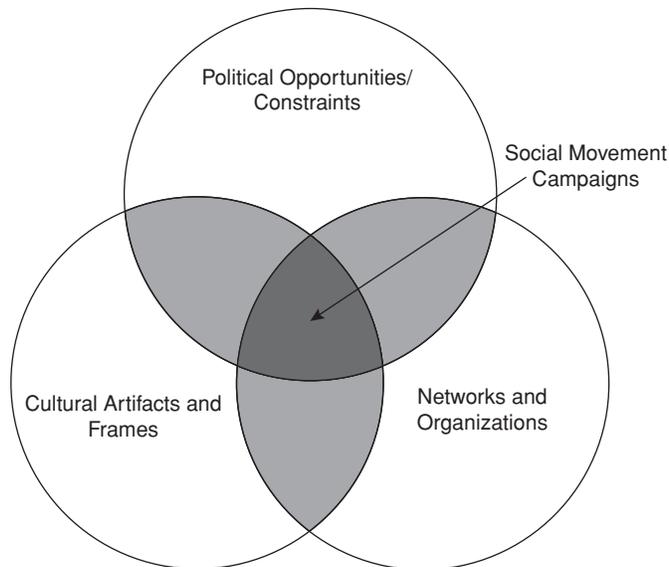


FIGURE 6.1. The Intersecting Elements of Social Movements

Part III. Though I will deal with them here in separate chapters, the three resources overlap considerably (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996). [Figure 6.1](#) maps the intersections of these three powers to lay out the agenda for the rest of this section and to emphasize their interactive nature.

### The Bases of Movements

Organizing contention draws upon cultural artifacts, historical memories, and political traditions. But note the ambivalence in the very term “organization” (Clemens and Minkoff 2004: 156). If we looked only at formal modes of organization, we would miss seeing how episodes such as the strike at the Honda factory in Foshan arose and, more generally, how organizational forms grow out of the initial interaction between protesters and opponents, as the following episode suggests.

#### SOLIDARITY AT THE LENIN SHIPYARD

On June 30, 1980, Polish Communist authorities announced an increase in meat prices, triggering a vast wave of contention that would ultimately undermine the country’s Communist system and pave the way for the collapse of the socialist bloc. As Jan Kubik tells the story:

The next day workers in several factories . . . went on strike. During July the strike wave engulfed several regions. On August 14, 1980, several dozen workers began an occupational strike in the Gdańsk Lenin Shipyard. As the strike in

the Shipyard grew and the workers from other plants joined in, the authorities agreed to grant wage increases and met some other demands, but only for the Lenin employees (Kubik 2009: 3073).

The chance always existed that the Gdansk workers would accept the wage increases and go back to work, but under pressure from their base, their representatives ultimately refused, and the strike spread. As Kubik continues,

During the night of August 16 the Inter-factory Strike Committee (MKS) was formed and immediately formulated a list of twenty-one demands, including a demand to create a trade union independent from the Communist Party. By the end of the month over 700 thousand people were on strike in about 700 enterprises in all 49 regions of Poland (ibid.).

The strike soon broadened beyond the confines of an industrial dispute, as intellectuals and artists, peasants and students, and even state workers lent their support, and Catholic clerics offered certification for the strikers by identifying the workers' claims with the country's deep religious beliefs (Kubik 1994). By September, more than thirty Interfactory Founding Committees had emerged along the lines of the original one, forming an independent trade union – “Solidarity” – with a National Coordinating Committee (KKP) as its governing body. By now, the new union had about three million members.

Of course, an independent trade union and a state socialist regime could not coexist for long. With each move forward by the union, the state intervened with delays, challenges, and occasional repression (Kubik: 3074). On December 13, 1981, martial law was declared, Solidarity's leaders were rounded up, and the regime survived for eight more years. But although the struggle for a free trade union movement changed its form, it was far from over. As Kubik writes, “A multi-faceted ‘underground society’ emerged, whose activities ranged from clandestine publishing and private theater performances to spectacular rallies and marches often dispersed by the special riot police units” (ibid. p. 3075). Slowly, but with increasing determination, Solidarity emerged from its secret networks and formed a National Council in 1987. After a new wave of strikes, a series of roundtable discussions was held in January 1989, and national elections were mounted in June – elections that Solidarity candidates won with overwhelming support. What had begun as an isolated strike of shipyard workers on the Baltic coast produced the first noncommunist government in a state socialist regime.

This story has been told and retold in many versions, but for students of contentious politics, it offers three main lessons:

- *First*, it shows how organizations emerge out of episodes of contention through interaction with authorities, allies, and third parties.
- *Second*, it shows that these organizations begin as local networks, spread through the diffusion of contention, and ultimately either disappear or scale upward to regional and national levels.

- *Third*, it shows that the key to organizational survival is not the formal properties of organizations, but the interpersonal networks within them, which can survive even when the formal organization has disappeared.

### Modes of Organizing

Ever since social movements became a force for change in the modern world, observers and activists have puzzled over the effects of organization on movements' capacity for contention. Some theorists argued that without leadership exercised through organizations, rebellion remains "primitive" and soon disintegrates (Hobsbawm 1959). Support for Hobsbawm's position comes from William Gamson's *The Strategy of Social Protest* (1990), which was based on research on 53 American challenging groups and showed that the groups that were most successful in achieving policy outcomes developed centralized and hierarchical forms of organization.

Yet others are persuaded that, far from inspiring people to action, organizational leaders can deprive them of their major power – the power to disrupt (Piven and Cloward 1977). This is what Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward found in their analysis of the welfare rights movement that emerged in the United States in the 1960s. Theoretical support for Piven and Cloward's position came from Robert Michels' famous "Iron Law of Oligarchy," which held that, over time, organizations displace their original goals, become wedded to routine, and ultimately accept the rules of the game of the existing system (Michels 1962; Clemens and Minkoff 2004, Rucht 1999).

As must be obvious, some leaders, working through certain kinds of organizations, in particular situations, *do* transform contention into successful movements and sustain conflict with opponents, but others do not. Equally obvious, some movements emerge without formal leadership, often producing leaders out of the experience of struggle – or from cognate groups from which they borrow resources or organizational forms. Organizations provide movements with strategic and tactical leadership, and with a focal point for the interaction of activists – a mechanism for framing how events and relationships are interpreted (see Chapter 7) and a source for recruiting new members and identifying future leaders.

How are we to explain this diversity of organizational roles? The first task is to distinguish among three different meanings of movement organization:

A first meaning is *the organization of collective action at the point of contact with opponents*. They can be controlled by formal organizations, by coalitions of organizations, or by no one in particular. We saw this in the organization of the strike and factory occupation of the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk. A second, more common meaning of the term is the *advocacy organization* – or formal associations of persons "that make public interest claims either promoting or resisting social change that if implemented would conflict with social, cultural political or economic interests or values of other constituencies or groups" (Andrews and Edwards 2004: 483). We saw this in the formation of

the national Solidarity union in Poland. The third meaning of organization refers to the *connective structures or interpersonal networks* that link leaders and followers, centers and peripheries, and different parts of a movement sector with one another, permitting coordination and aggregation, and allowing movements to persist even when formal organization is lacking. We saw these in the underground structure of Solidarity activists during the period when the union was declared illegal under martial law.

**Interpersonal networks are the most basic structure:** They socialize and build movement identities; they offer participation opportunities to individuals sensitive to a particular issue; and they shape individual preferences before individuals join a movement (Passy 2001). They can also exercise a social control function for individuals with low levels of commitment. **Most important, they are the sites for the normative pressures and solidary incentives out of which movements emerge and are sustained.**

Movements are not based on networks alone; **without some degree of formal organization, movements frequently fade away or dissipate their energies.** The problem for movement organizers is to create organizational models that are sufficiently robust to structure contention but are flexible enough to reach out to the informal networks and communities of protest (Diani 2009) that connect people to one another. The following cases from the nineteenth century history of European contention illustrate the importance of all three factors in the history of social movements.

#### THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC MODEL

In the decades that followed the 1848 revolutions, and as the Industrial Revolution took hold in continental Europe, **a new social actor appeared – the industrial proletariat – forming out of capillary structures in the factory and linked to a new set of labor organizations.** Mainly middle class organizers and intellectuals took charge of the socialist and labor parties that formed at the summit with links to trade unions, cooperatives, mutual insurance schemes, and even recreation centers. **In the most well developed case, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), these sprawling structures gave the imposing impression of a “state within a state” (Roth 1963).<sup>1</sup>**

But between the centralized organizations of European Social Democracy and the informal networks of workers at the base, no natural or social set of connective structures was apparent. In some countries, such as France,

<sup>1</sup> Such was the prestige of the SPD that its organizational model was imitated to different degrees in Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe, and even, for a time, in the United States. On the formation of the Swedish Socialist Worker's Party (SAP), see Donald Blake, “Swedish Trade Unions and the Social Democratic Party: The Formative Years” (1960). On the Austrian Party and its relation to the German model, see Vincent Knapp, *Austrian Social Democracy, 1889–1914* (1980: Chapter I). On the influence of German Marxism on the development of Russian Social Democracy, see John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism* (1954: 317–329).

the distance between syndicalist-oriented workers and reformist parliamentary socialists was so great that competing organizations were formed. In Britain, the unions were stronger, and the Labour Party took hold more slowly. In America, socialism found its natural home mainly among immigrants from Europe, and apart from a brief flowering around the turn of the century, was soon submerged by repression and nativism.

It was the German Social Democrats who, with characteristic determination, undertook to formalize relations between summit and base into a rigid hierarchy and to make them permanent. Discipline and dues paying were expected of those who joined, and collective actions were periodically organized to advance the movement's goals. From a scattered network of insurgent groups and secret societies, the workers' movement grew into a vast, formal, and hierarchical organization. The result was the creation of a single organizational structure that frightened the Imperial regime to the point of its temporarily banning the party for a time, but, ultimately, to vitiate the movement of its creativity and leave it incapable of facing the threat from Hitler's brownshirts in the 1930s.

This was the model of organization – the central European working-class party – that Michels had in mind when he formulated his “Iron Law of Oligarchy.” In such an organization, he argued, organizers became more wedded to the survival of the organization than to revolutionary action by the proletariat, with the risks it imposed. If the movement's militancy melted away once representation for the lower classes was achieved, no one should have been surprised. One group of competitors was anything but surprised; they had chosen a very different organizational model.

### The Anarchist Counter-Model

Even as German Social Democrats were building a “state within a state,” in other parts of Europe and in America, activists were developing competing organizational models. The most serious challenge came from the anarchists – whose political theory and practice were opposed to Social Democracy in every respect. Where the Social Democrats were led by politicians and intellectuals who aimed to take over the bourgeois state through elections, the anarchists distrusted politics and sought to create producers' cooperatives from below. Where Social Democrats organized over the long haul and eventually turned to parliamentary means, anarchists hoped for an explosive moment that could be advanced through the mechanism of the general strike.

The anarchists resisted the tendency to become a party. Their instinctive organizational model was provided by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who had theorized that a network of workers' associations, democratically organized and loosely linked in a voluntary federation, could eventually replace both the state and capitalism.<sup>2</sup> But lacking an organizational template similar to that of their

<sup>2</sup> Basic materials on this poorly understood movement will be found in Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (1970).

opponents, they surged into different forms in different parts of Europe in close approximation to different local economic and political conditions.

It was in Eastern and Southern Europe that economic conditions were most backward and political organization least developed, and it was here that anarchism became a mass movement. The Russian *narodniki* (populists) had first hurled themselves at the Czarist power structure, imagining that their personal courage and bravery would unleash the rebellious potential they thought lay hidden in the peasants. The latter responded with indifference, if not hostility, and long prison terms and doleful memoirs were the lot of many of these activists.

In Italy, the story ended just as badly. Hounded by the police and the authorities, the Italian anarchists encapsulated themselves into tight cells in which they hatched utopian schemes and plotted the overthrow of the state. As Daniel Guérin writes,

Free rein was given to utopian doctrines, combining premature anticipations and nostalgic evocations of a golden age. . . . The anarchists turned in on themselves, organized themselves for direct action in small clandestine groups which were easily infiltrated by police informers (Guérin 1970: 74).

Whereas the hierarchical model of Social Democracy turned movements into parties, the anarchists' obsession with action and their allergy to organization transformed them into a sect and, ultimately, to the world's first terrorist network.<sup>3</sup>

### Competitive Legitimation and Diffusion

These two models of organization – hierarchical national organizations and decentralized cells of militants – grew out of particular political-historical configurations, with their centers, respectively, in the rapidly industrializing German Empire and in the less-developed Southern and Eastern peripheries of Europe. But the durability of the former and the militancy of the latter led to imitation throughout Europe and the Americas. For regardless of their rooting in particular settings, organizational forms tend to become legitimized as cultural artifacts. As Debra Minkoff writes,

Those organizations that prove themselves able to take advantage of environmental opportunities and overcome competition for scarce resources serve as models for future action by other groups. As models become established, they secure the legitimacy of this type of collective response (Minkoff 1995; also see Hannan and Freeman 1989).

But the “legitimacy” of organizational forms does not depend on their inherent appeals alone. For one thing, they intersect with different societal traditions of organization; for another, their actions trigger different combinations of

<sup>3</sup> The parallels to today's transnational Islamist terrorist network are tempting, but the anarchists were far less connected transnationally and appear to have been more susceptible to police infiltration.

governmental facilitation or repression, which, in turn, reshape their forms; and for a third, their competition leads to greater success for some forms of organization than for others (Clemens and Minkoff 2004: 164; Minkoff 1994). Movement organizations develop in interaction with cultural artifacts, power holders, and other movements. **The success of these two models led to recurring polarities of organization in social movements around the world.**

### Recurring Polarities

Although Social Democracy eventually lost its mass base in the working class, the new form that it invented – the class-mass party – endured through two world wars and a depression, and gave way to a new type – the professionalized cadre party – only after the 1960s (Muir 1997). **And although classical anarchism all but disappeared with the Bolshevik revolution, the urge to foster participatory decentralization was reborn in the participatory movements of the 1960s in both Europe and the United States, in the peace movements of the 1980s, and in the global justice movement after the Seattle anti-World Trade Organization (WTO) campaign of 1999.** Both models grew out of different cultural and ecological soils but, once invented, similar to the forms of collective action examined in Chapter 5, they became modular.

As in the past, **these organizational polarities were competitive.** By the early 1960s, most of the American Civil Rights movement had become institutionalized (Piven and Cloward 1977: Chapter 4). **From the streets of Selma, the battle for civil rights gravitated to the lobbies of Congress and to community organizations that were subsidized by government and foundations.** The movement was soon constrained by the rules of the game of ordinary politics (Piven and Cloward: Chapter 5). Not even the riots following the murder of Martin Luther King turned mainstream civil rights organizations away from their institutional frameworks, although it did shift their programs onto a more progressive path.

The same was true of **the new women's movement,** which – despite its enemies' image of wild-eyed “bra burners” – **was highly institutionalized from the start.** Groups such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) quickly became professionalized, maintaining a high level of organizational activity (Minkoff 1995: 40) and directing their activities mainly toward Congress and the Administration (Costain 1992). The same shift could be seen in the environmental organizations that grew out of the 1960s in Europe (Minkoff 1995; Dalton 1994). In both Minkoff's and Dalton's studies, only a very small proportion of the groups engaged primarily in protest. “As such organizations begin to dominate the movement sector,” write Clemens and Minkoff, “it becomes increasingly difficult for younger, smaller, and more decentralized organizations . . . to establish a national presence” (Clemens and Minkoff 2004: 264).

The positive result of such institutionalization was that the strength and numbers of the advocacy sector grew rapidly from the 1960s onward. Focusing on environmental organizations in America, Robert Brulle and his associates

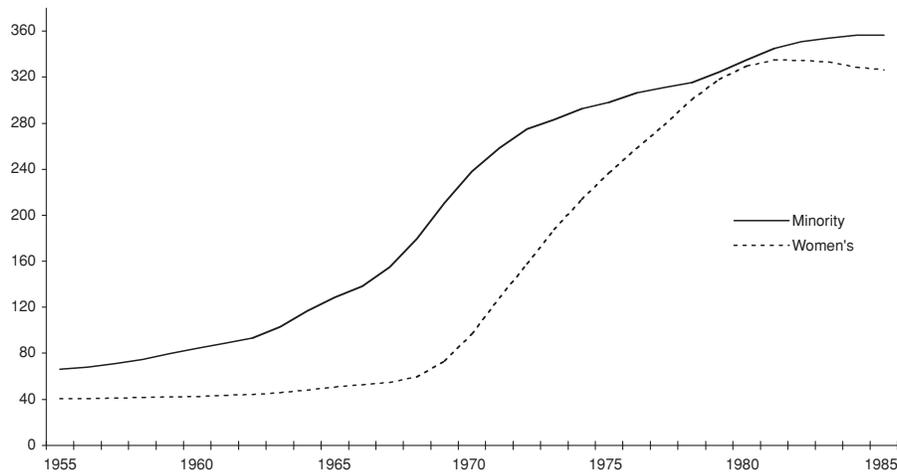


FIGURE 6.2. Total Number of Women's and Minority Groups in the United States, 1955–1985 (3-year moving average). *Source:* Courtesy of Debra Minkoff, from her *Organizing for Equality: The Evolution of Women's and Racial-ethnic Organizations in America, 1955–1985*. Rutgers University Press, 1995.

found a near tripling in their numbers between 1960 and 1970 and another doubling between then and 1990 (Brulle et al. 2007). Using data on women's and minority groups from the Encyclopedia of Associations, Minkoff found a sixfold expansion of these organizations from a total of 98 in 1955, to 688 thirty years later (1995: 61). The largest growth was seen in advocacy and advocacy/service-oriented groups, with smaller growth rates for groups specializing in cultural and service provision alone, and no growth at all for groups oriented toward protest (p. 62; Fig. 3.2). Figure 6.2, drawing on Minkoff's work, traces three-year moving averages for the growth in the total number of women's and minority group organizations in the United States over this period.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE NEW GRASSROOTS ALTERNATIVES

But at the same time as advocacy and service organizations were gaining a near-monopoly at the national level, a contrary tendency was at work. It grew out of dissatisfaction with the steady institutionalization of these mainstream organizations among a generation of activists who had experienced the failures of these groups and disliked the compromises they had made. Just as anarchism measured its progress in competition with European Social Democracy, radical American activists split off into or formed decentralized organizations to carry the fight to the heart of organized capitalism, white supremacy, and male

<sup>4</sup> Group data of Brulle et al. are based on a wider range of sources and will be found in their 2007 article, p. 265.

hegemony. In the civil rights field, Black Power and black nationalist groups challenged mainstream civil rights organizations. In the women's rights sector, splits took place over race and sexual preference, and some groups took on the same sect-like characteristics seen earlier in European anarchism. As for the New Left, elements of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) radicalized before giving way to the Weather Underground, a clandestine organization organized for armed struggle.

Similarly, in Western Europe, parts of the New Left that were critical of the "long march through the institutions" drew sharp lines between their continued militancy and the growing moderation of their opponents. Some – similar to their anarchist predecessors – ended up in clandestine cells from which they launched armed struggle (della Porta 1990; 1995: Chapter 8); others competed for worker support with the party-linked trade unions. Institutionalization and radicalization were contrary but symbiotic trends that fed off each other and led in opposite political directions, as we will see in Part III.

The same competitive polarization can be seen in the movement against neo-liberal globalization today. While sedate nongovernmental advocacy organizations (NGOs) navigate the corridors of national and international institutions on behalf of environmental, developmental, and climate change goals, radical direct action groups have taken to the streets around international summits, sometimes engaging in armed conflict with police and authorities. This division was already evident at the anti-WTO countersummit in Seattle in 1999, where two coalitions of activists opposed this expression of global neo-liberalism (Levi and Murphy 2006). It was also evident at the Copenhagen UN Climate Change Conference in 2009. There, thousands of activists represented two competing networks: on the one hand, social movement groups that challenged delegates to put the welfare of the planet ahead of their national interests and, on the other, representatives of nongovernmental organizations anxious to work with the official delegations to hammer out agreements to control the climate. (Hadden 2010; Reitan 2010). Each move toward institutionalized movement organizations triggered contrary moves in the direction of grassroots models of organization.

### Amending the Iron Law: Organizational Hybrids

Social Democracy and anarchism were not the only forms of social movement organization that developed in the nineteenth century. Nor does the polarity between bureaucratic organizations and grassroots radical groups exhaust the varieties of movement organization today. In both periods, movement entrepreneurs built hybrid forms of organization shaped by their evolving goals, their organizational cultures, and the patterns of political opportunity and constraint they faced in their environments (Campbell 2005; Clemens and Minkoff 2004; Bennett et al. 2008). In fact, the variety of organizational forms today is, if anything, even broader than in the past, because they include a range of local, regional and national, centralized and decentralized, and membership

and nonmembership organizations, and they draw on the new digital forms of media.

John McCarthy has identified a wide variety of action types of social movement organizations (2005: p. 196). They range from the classical federated structure we met in European Social Democracy all the way to free-standing local groups, through a variety of regional and networked organizations. In addition, the advent of online recruitment and mobilization has created a gamut of new kinds of organizations and quasi-organizations that Michels could never have imagined. The broad variety of types of movement organizations identified by McCarthy suggests that we may need to soften Michels' "iron law."<sup>5</sup> For example, focusing on peace organizations in the United States, Bob Edwards and Michael Foley divided the universe of social movement organizations into four types that differ in size and in taxable status, as well as in organizational form, membership, tactics, and issue focus (Edwards and Foley 2003).<sup>6</sup>

This is no new development: Nineteenth century American civic organizations had already developed **organizational hybrids**. Corresponding to the structure of American federalism, many national umbrella organizations were linked to networks of local affiliates through traveling agents (Skocpol et al. 2000). In fact, what Tocqueville saw as self-generated grassroots associations were often started by national agents who would travel around the country creating local affiliates. This allowed local trust networks to be built into national organizations and provided the "free spaces" in which ordinary citizens could take initiatives that more centralized organizations could not have mounted on their own (Evans and Boyte 1992). It also freed umbrella organizations from financial responsibility for their local affiliates, through a pattern that has grown into the "franchising" of not-for-profit organizations in our generation (McCarthy 2004: 221).

In the 1960s and 1970s, in both Western Europe and the United States, such loosely coordinated hybrid organizations were theorized by both scholars and activists (Rosenthal and Schwartz 1989; Evans and Boyte 1992; Zald and Ash 1966). Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine called this wave of movement organizations "decentralized, reticulated and segmented," "composed of a great variety of localized groups or cells which are essentially independent, but which can combine to form larger configurations or divide to form smaller units" (1970: 41). For example, Elizabeth Armstrong shows how gay-lesbian

<sup>5</sup> The durability of Michels' imagery – if not agreement with his theory – can be illustrated by the titles of two of the essays on which this chapter draws: Elisabeth Clemens' and Debra Minkoff's "Beyond the Iron Law" (2004) and Dieter Rucht's "Linking Organization and Mobilization: Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy Reconsidered" (1999). A Google search for "Iron law of oligarchy" produced an astonishing 1,020,000 hits!

<sup>6</sup> Edwards' and Foley's four types include numerous, but generally quite small groups that operate without tax-exempt status; small non-national groups of the same type; large, non-national tax-exempt groups; and national organizations (2003: 87). Their point is that most research has been based on the highly more accessible large national organizations, and this produces a skewed picture of social movement organizations.

activists in San Francisco shaped new organizational forms that coupled identity building with concrete activities such as biking or music (Armstrong 2005). As Evans and Boyte argue, at the heart of successful democratic movements are “environments in which people are able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue” (pp. 17–18).

American community organizers extended the model of decentralized, segmented, and reticulated organizations into the city. First theorized by activists such as Saul Alinsky (1971) and Harry Boyte (1980), community action organizations took a variety of forms, including individual membership organizations (like the recently disbanded organization ACORN), coalitions, and church-based organizations (McCarthy and Castelli 1994). The most successful are affiliated with federations of religious congregations. Linked nationally by well-organized “networks,” faith-based community organizations of both left and right are significantly more effective than other types of urban movements in gaining organizational power, imparting skills and a sense of efficacy to members, and building cross-race coalitions, because they are able to transform religious identities into activism (Swarts 2007).

#### THE TYRANNY OF DECENTRALIZATION

However, such loose patterns of organization as those described earlier have the defects of their virtues. While encouraging the autonomy of the base and exhilarating activists with a sense of participation, they permit – and indeed encourage – a lack of coordination and continuity. For example, although the women of the Greenham Common peace camp kept the British army at bay for months during the peace movement of the 1980s, their devotion to internal democracy permitted conflict to break out over the issue of whether to allow male comrades to spend the night there (Rochon 1988: 82). Similarly, in the women’s groups that Judith Hellman studied in Italy, personalism became a kind of “tyranny” that made formal decision making difficult and left non-initiates feeling excluded (1987: 195–196). More recently, conflicts broke out among the planners of the Northwest Social Forum in Seattle and minority groups that complained that their issues were being sidetracked by organizers’ global justice commitments (Hadden and Tarrow 2007).

Nor can these organizations always maintain themselves as easily as their predecessors did through churches, cooperatives, or trade unions – what Verta Taylor (1989) has called “abeyance structures.” For one thing, twenty-first century social life, organized around the family, the TV screen, and the cellphone, does not offer as many opportunities for sustained interpersonal interaction as our ancestors found in the pub, the parish church, and the bowling league; for another, the sheer density of formal associations in contemporary society offers numerous alternatives for individuals in search of organizations to join. And as the result of the looseness of control in such decentralized organizations, they easily break into factions (Meyer 1990).

Where European Social Democracy solved the problem of coordination by encapsulating the working class into permanent organizations, and anarchists tried to inspire mass revolt by mounting dramatic attacks on authority, today's hybrid movements thrive because they need no special organized efforts to maintain them over time and across space. But their weakness is that autonomy at the base sometimes excludes strong connective ties between center and periphery, making it difficult for leaders to implement coherent strategies or control their membership.

### Networks within and beyond Organizations

Formal organizations rise and fall with cyclical frequency, along with the waves of contention whose enthusiasms they reflect (see Chapter 10). Whether formal or informal, centralized or decentralized, they rest on networks of activists whose friendships, interpersonal trust, and shared perceptions are transformed into movement actions and programs (Diani and McAdam eds. 2003; Diani 2004). When they draw on existing social networks, social movement organizations (SMOs) can mobilize supporters rapidly and put pressure on opponents through established institutions.

Some networks are based on trust, others on information or resource exchange, still others on instrumental alliances. Charles Tilly focuses only on “networks of trust” (2005b), but Delia Baldassari and Mario Diani make a distinction between solidarity-based “social bonds” and instrumentally driven “transaction” networks (2007). Sometimes networks are horizontal; at other times they are vertical. Movements form between initiates within movement clusters, and sometimes between the leaders of adjacent organizations. Networks can link leaders across organizations and can link activists within movement clusters. Sometimes ties are strong, as in Tilly’s networks of trust, but often they are weak (i.e., information or resource generating). They can also be based on co-participation in events, in which case they may be shifting and short-lived (Mische 2008: Chapter 5).

Mark Granovetter (1973) has argued persuasively that weak ties can serve as better bases for mobilization than strong ones, because the latter are more likely to be exclusive and to exclude potentially useful allies. But much depends on the type of goal that links members of the network. While consensus movements such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and broad reformist movements such as Civil Rights prospered on relatively weak networks, high-risk groups such as the Italian Red Brigades depended on the extremely strong ties of family and close friends whose ties had been hardened in the heat of combat (della Porta 1990; 1995).

Not only do movement organizations build on networks; acting collectively can create networks. Mische describes how activists move through overlapping organizational networks, bringing with them identities, projects, and styles of work as they move through different organizational settings (2008). Situations of risk, excitement, or repression create trust among people who may not have

known each other beforehand or understood that they had claims in common. When reforms are accomplished, mobilization declines, or repression bites, activists without tight links to organizations tend to disappear into “abeyance structures” – inactive potential groups that can come to life when new crises or opportunities arise (Taylor 1989). We saw how this happened in Poland after martial law was declared and Solidarity was disbanded. But it also happens in liberal societies. When a new cycle of contention appears, informal contacts from the last wave of activism can be reactivated (Buechler 1986; Blocker 1989).

Social networks can form bridges both laterally and over time. *Laterally*, ties between individual activists can help create formal coalitions between contemporary organizations. In his work on Italian environmental organizations, Diani found that, even in Italy, where the gaps between Catholic and Marxist subcultures were deep, informal ties between members of different environmental organizations helped to develop a common collective identity among members and bridge organizational gaps (1995). *Over time*, bridges among activists can lead them from one organizational site to another. Over time, bridge building was evident in Paul Lichterman’s work on American community activists (Clemens and Minkoff 2004: 157). Lichterman found that “the individual activist’s sense of commitment is highly portable; it can be carried from group to group, in concert with other activists and imagined communities of activists who validate personalized politics” (1996: 34). This takes us to the trajectories of movement organizations.

### Organizational Trajectories

The density of movement organizations rises and falls in different historical periods. In America, the 1820s constituted a watershed for the creation of (mainly church-based) organizations. In Europe, the 1890s were a crucible for the formation of working-class organizations. The period since the 1960s has been a period of organizational innovation, both in the social movement field and more broadly. This occurred not only because those decades produced a tidal wave of new movements; the same period also saw the development of technical, managerial, and communications innovations that movement organizations could use to find members and maintain support. Two kinds of innovations were important for growth of movements: internal and external.

#### EXTERNAL INNOVATIONS

The most important external development was the enhanced availability of the media – and especially of television – in diffusing the influence of movement organizations. From Civil Rights marchers braving police dogs and hoses, to the New Left’s public draft card burnings, to the spectacle of gay or lesbian activists “coming out,” to Tea Partiers decked out as revolutionary militiamen, television’s appetite for dramatic visual images is a tool that is nurtured and

exploited by movement organizers. If movements can transmit their messages to millions of people across the airwaves – encouraging some to follow their example and larger numbers to take notice of their claims – it becomes possible to create a social movement without incurring the costs of building and maintaining a mass organization. The media thus play an important role in “co-producing” protest events (Walgrave and Manssens 2000).

A second set of external changes revolves around the increased amount of money, free time, and expertise available to young people since the beginning of the postwar boom years (McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977). Not only has disposable family income risen substantially, by the 1960s, young people were targeted as a choice market for consumer goods and as the center of a new youth culture (McAdam 1988: 13–19). Both in Europe and America, young people entered universities in much larger numbers, where they had more free time and were exposed to broader currents of ideas than in the past. If nothing else, this has produced many more “conscience constituents” to lend their numbers and skills to minority movements (Marx and Useem 1971). Young people are also more attuned to the cultural changes brought about by globalization, and thus are more likely than their elders to associate with causes beyond their borders (Jung 2009).

A third set of external changes consists of the financial and administrative resources available to movement organizations from foundations, from governments, and even, in some cases, from business and civic groups (McCarthy and Zald 1973; Jenkins and Eckert 1986).<sup>7</sup> Particularly for the Third World nongovernmental organizations that blossomed in the 1980s and 1990s, foundations, the United Nations, the European Union, and several international human rights groups are major funding sources (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Joachim and Locher 2009; Smith 2008). As we will see in Chapter 12, external support can be a mixed blessing; external support makes it tempting for local leaders to ignore relations with constituencies, leaving the door open to defection and fragmentation. But where repression or its threat constrains organizations from collecting funds or soliciting new members, external funding and sponsorship can provide a lifeline.

#### INTERNAL INNOVATIONS

Organizers have been quick to take advantage of the same advances in communication and fundraising as more conventional political and interest groups – first through the mimeograph machine, then through the use of direct mailing lists, and more recently, with the fax, the cell phone, and e-media. As a result of these changes, organizers can now mount and coordinate collective action rapidly across a broad sweep of territory in competition with parties, interest groups, and even the government (Bennett et al. 2008). Even in authoritarian

<sup>7</sup> Note that Jenkins and Eckert, in their “Channelling Black Insurgency” (1986), find that foundation support did not coincide with the most insurgent phase of the Civil Rights Movement, but with the more institutionalized, more moderate phase in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

China, where the Internet is closely controlled, news of the strike at Foshan was instantly communicated through cell phones to Zhongshan and other factories in the region.

Movement organizations have also learned to draw on the appeal of celebrities – the rock stars, folk singers, and movie stars who lend their names and their talents to movement campaigns (Meyer and Gamson 1995, Lahusen 1996) – and of professionals – for example, scientists and technical experts who lend their authority and their expertise to the ecological, antinuclear, and peace movements (Nelkin 1975). Similarly, the American women’s and gay movements in the 1980s depended on the professional services of feminist or gay lawyers, who lent a legalistic tone to much of their activity (Mansbridge 1986; d’Emilio 1992: 192). Finally, the peace and antinuclear movements have depended heavily on the expertise and prestige of physicists, and anti-genetic seed campaigners have used the expertise of soil biologists and ecologists.

#### PROFESSIONALIZING LEADERSHIP

Professionalization was nothing new for the large mass parties and movements of the past; this was what worried Michels most about the loss of the revolutionary drive of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). But what we see in movements today is a new type of professional, who is not dependent on mass membership but specializes in the diffusion of information and the construction of temporary coalitions among groups of activists. Possession of such skills makes it possible to mobilize a large reservoir of support at short notice, allowing movement organizations to be both small *and* professional.

Of course, this also means that movement organizations are likely to have smaller memberships than class-mass parties and trade unions in the past. Theda Skocpol (1999) and Robert Putnam (2000) have both argued that today’s movement organizations depend less on active memberships than on largely passive “checkbook” supporters. “Membership of this kind,” writes John McCarthy, “rarely provides the opportunity for widespread activist involvement for members, nor is it likely to provide any face-to-face contact among checkbook members or between them and SMO leaders” (McCarthy 2005: 195).<sup>8</sup>

Tradeoffs and tensions may result from professionalization (Staggenborg 1991) – for example, tensions between paid and volunteer staff; those between organizational maintenance and grassroots mobilization; and tensions between lobbying and protest.<sup>9</sup> In research carried out on civil society groups in the

<sup>8</sup> Evidence suggesting that European movement organizations have smaller memberships today than in the past comes from Hanspeter Kriesi’s work on new social movement organizations in four European democracies (1996). Kriesi finds that, with the exception of Greenpeace, organizations created since 1965 had much smaller memberships than those created before that date (p. 172).

<sup>9</sup> In a personal communication to the author, Ann Mische points out that this has been particularly important in Brazil, as many grassroots movement and party activists were drawn into

European Union, a great deal of tension was uncovered between the professional Brussels-based leadership of these groups and their mostly volunteer national affiliates (Imig and Tarrow 2001).

#### FRANCHISING, APPROPRIATING, AND BURROWING WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

In part in response to the problems of gaining broad support without bureaucratic membership organizations, many movements have “franchised” local organizations, which remain independent but use the name of the national organization and receive their publicity in return for financial contributions and cooperation in joint campaigns (McCarthy and Wolfson 1993: 4–6; McCarthy 2005). Franchises allow a small national umbrella organization to coordinate the activities of a broad base without expending scarce resources on maintaining the formal connective structures of a large mass organization. A successful case of such “franchising” was the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in Britain in the 1980s (Maguire 1990). Another is MADD (Mothers against Drunk Driving) in the United States (McCarthy and Wolfson 1993). A third are the loose and evolving relations between the national Tea Party movement and the congeries of local groups that supported right-wing candidates in local and state races around the United States in the 2010 congressional elections.

In addition to franchising, many contemporary movements draw upon the resources of organizations and associations not created primarily for collective action. This is what Doug McAdam has called “social appropriation” (1999 [1982]). This practice allows movements to use the infrastructures of more stable organizations and to mobilize into movement campaigns people who would not be interested in permanent movement activity. In her comparative study of coalitions to oppose free trade in the Americas, Marisa Von Bülow found that those Latin American networks that had found homes within national organizations were the coalitions most likely to survive (Von Bülow 2010).

Movements often develop *within* institutions, when their structures and ideologies are used to develop contacts among networks of dissidents and those espousing their ideologies – literally conceived – against their official bearers (Zald and Berger 1978). With its sprawling structures and official dogma, the Catholic Church has long provided a home for such heterodox movements. In the 1960s and 1970s, Christian “base communities” developed in Catholic Europe (Tarrow 1988) and supported insurgencies in Latin America (Levine 1990). More recently, a movement for gender equality has developed within

professional roles as the Workers’ Party took power, or into nongovernmental advocacy organizations (NGOs), which receive foreign assistance and thus can support a paid staff. I am grateful to Professor Mische for this comment, as well as for other suggestions that have improved this chapter.

the female monastic orders of the Catholic Church in America (Katzenstein 1998).<sup>10</sup>

### Digitizing Movement Organization

Finally, perhaps the most dramatic change in social movement organizing in the last few decades has been the impact of the Internet and, more generally, of electronic communication. From “hactivism” to “meetups,” from using the Internet to diffuse information and propaganda to employing it to bring people to international sites of protest over great distances, the Internet has rapidly become a basic tool of movement organizers and has given rise to enormous excitement among both activists and publicists.

The Internet and the many interactive communication and social networking technologies that now operate over it serve not just communications functions; they serve many other purposes as well. For example, when Edna Reid and Hsinchen Chen coded the Web sites of 84 extremist groups in the United States and the Middle East, they found that in addition to their communications functions, these sites worked to increase fundraising, share ideology and propaganda, provide training and recruitment opportunities, and overcome environmental challenges from law enforcement and the military (Reid and Chen 2007). Internet links also connected members of these “families” of extremist movements – for example, Reid and Chen found hyperlinks with different extremist American groups in the neo-confederate, the Christian identity, the white supremacist/neo-Nazi, and militia clusters, but found fewer links between these extremist families (p. 182).

Technologies that operate over the Internet offer so many different kinds of support to social movements that it may be reductive to regard them as simply vehicles for “message transmission.” When combined with their social implications, digital media have become a partial substitute for traditional forms of social movement organization as well. Writing of the transnational “global justice” movement, for example, W. Lance Bennett and his collaborators note that “electronic networks . . . constitute *organizational structures* (such as decentralized campaign networks, interactive protest calendars and planning sites, and social forums) joining diverse and often widely dispersed activists” (Bennett, Givens, and Willnat 2004).

Bennett has made a powerful case that the digital media are changing the nature of activism in important ways, including extending the range of social networks transnationally; diminishing the relative importance of local and national “off-line” organizations as bases for activism; increasing the advantages of resource-poor organizations within broader movements; making it easier to link specific targets in faraway places to ongoing campaigns; and combining face-to-face interactions with virtual performances (Bennett 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Ann Mische reminds me that nuns sometimes describe themselves as “the original uppity women.”

The few empirical studies we have of the Internet's influence on political participation and activism tend to support Bennett's claims (Fisher et al. 2005; Nah, Veenstra, and Shah 2006; Reid and Chen 2007; Rohlinger and Brown 2009).

Some technological enthusiasts have seen these new technologies entirely remapping social movement organization and strategy (Rheingold 2003), but we should be cautious before drawing so far-reaching a conclusion (e.g., see Hellman 1999, on the Zapatista rebellion). Rather than displacing traditional organizations, access to the Internet combines with personal networks and organizations in recruiting people to take part in demonstrations. And similar to earlier forms of communication, access to e-media varies by country and by social power. Assessing Internet access internationally, Charles Tilly and Lesley Wood found that Internet hosts per thousand varied from 295.2 in the United States to a mere 0.02 in Paraguay. "To the extent that internationally coordinated social movements rely on electronic communication, they will have a much easier time of it in rich countries than poor ones" (Tilly and Wood 2009: 104–105).

Nevertheless, the Internet has opened up new windows of opportunity to movement groups with the strategic vision and the tactical skills to use it effectively. It is interesting to note that conservative groups seem to have been slower off the mark than progressive ones in taking advantage of it. Perhaps because of their structural advantage in power and their greater financial resources, the American neo-conservative movement has been slow to build an online infrastructure (Karpf 2009a). Not so their progressive opponents: The progressive group MoveOn.org was quick to turn the methods of electronic communication to their purposes and to help to elect Barack Obama in 2008 (Karpf 2009a and b, Streeter 2007).

#### CONCLUSIONS

There is no single model of movement organization and no single organizational trajectory. In fact, heterogeneity and interdependence are greater spurs to collective action than homogeneity and discipline, if only because they foster interorganizational competition and innovation. Encapsulation of the European working class into mass parties and unions was a solution for the long term that left workers unprepared for contention when crises struck. **The anarchist countermodel was an organizational weapon for the short term that led to sectarianism and isolation.** Contemporary innovations of transitory teams, professional movement groups, decentralized and differentiated organizations, and e-media-bolstered protest campaigns are variations on and combinations of these experiences. What underlies the most successful of them is the role of informal connective tissue operating within and between formal movement organizations.

**The dilemma of hierarchical movement organizations is that if they permanently internalize their bases into organizations, they will lose their capacity for disruption. But if they move in the opposite direction, they will lack the**

infrastructure to maintain a sustained interaction with allies, authorities, and supporters. The new hybrid forms of organization that have developed since the 1960s offer partial solutions to this problem. While umbrella organizations at the summit offer general guidance, financial support, and the use of their “name brands,” decentralized units at the base can absorb or create networks of trust that are free to develop their own programs and engage in forms of action appropriate to their settings.

Campaigns run by such hybrid organizations are not limited to their own activists; through loosely coupled social networks and the media, they can periodically activate broader “protest communities” – sets of activists sharing a bedrock willingness to engage in sustained participation in protest activities (Diani 2009). These communities of activists bolster small organizational cores and diffuse information about protest events to those they may have met in other organizational settings (Bennett et al. 2008). At the extreme end of the continuum, Internet-based movements have practically no permanent organizations and depend on “virtual networks,” which offer complete autonomy at the base but no mechanism to ensure their continuity or survival.

Hybrid forms of organization have the vices of their virtues. Slogans such as “a movement of movements” make good copy among activists who treasure autonomy, but, lacking mechanisms to control their base, organizers may see their supporters go off in all directions. Peaceful demonstrations organized in their name can be infiltrated by violence-seeking outsiders; programs designed to cast a wide net can be undercut by radical fractions determined to provoke opponents; small groups with particular claims may be diverted from the organization’s broader goals. In the case of Internet-based movements, umbrella organizations lack even the ability to monitor the activities of their supporters. In such decentralized and loosely coupled movements, the center of gravity of decision making descends to the lowest level at which activists possess the skills to create a new Web site.

Yet a certain vitality is evident in the new forms of hybrid organization that was lacking in their more disciplined and centralized predecessors. For decentralization and looseness are not merely structural properties; they bring with them a code of diversity and inclusiveness that Donatella della Porta, in her work on the European Social Forum (2005), has referred to as “multiple belongings and flexible identities.” We will turn now to how these belongings and identities are constructed.

## Making Meanings

### DEMOLISHING A MOSQUE<sup>1</sup>

At 11 AM on December 6, 1992, in the holy city of Ayodhya, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a group of young men carrying hammers and iron rods erupted into the Babri mosque. This mosque, which was built during the Moghul (i.e., Muslim) domination of India, stood on land that had supposedly held a temple to the Hindu god Ram. The young men, or *kar sevaks*, were volunteers loosely affiliated with three Hindu nationalist groups: the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and the rapidly rising Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had gained almost a third of the votes in the 1991 elections and governed the state (Jaffrelot 1996: 558). Although Hindu nationalism was on the rise all over India, it was particularly volatile here in the North (Brass 1974, Jaffrelot 1996, Mehta 1993).

By lunchtime, as the police stood by, the mosque's idols, collection boxes, and portraits were carried off by the crowd. By 2:55 PM, the left dome of the building had caved in; by 4:35, the right one fell too, and the central one followed a few minutes later. "Even before that," continues Christophe Jaffrelot, "Muslims were attacked in Ayodhya town and many houses whose inhabitants had fled were set ablaze." After the demolition was complete, the *kar sevaks* constructed a temporary temple in which Hindu images were placed (p. 455).

That day's carnage was not an isolated event. Even under the British Raj, to avoid communal violence, the British had divided the space inside the mosque between Muslims and Hindus. But from partition of the subcontinent in 1947

<sup>1</sup> My all-too-brief account of this long and tangled story is based on the accounts of Ved Mehta, "The Mosque and the Temple: The Rise of Fundamentalism" (1993); Pradeep Chhibber and Subhash Misra, "Hindus and the Babri Masjid: The Sectional Bias of Communal Attitudes" (1993); Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (1996); and Ashis Nandy et al. *Creating a Nationality: The Ramjanmabhumi Movement and Fear of the Self* (1998); and on the kind advice of my colleagues, Ron Herring and Mary Katzenstein.