Democracy and Social Movement Learning in Ghana: Reflections on 15 years of learning in the democratic terrain by Ghanaian Activist-Educators

“No Way!” Demo, Ablade Glover (1999)

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ABSTRACT

Ghana’s democracy is a widely-known African good news story. What is not known about this story is how this democracy’s dynamism is fundamentally grounded on ongoing social movement activism that is constantly pressurizing the largely elite democratic institutions to better respond to the everyday needs of average Ghanaians. Critical to this pressurization is not only activism around domestic policies, but also a wide-spread ongoing questioning of the forces of transnational neoliberal governmentality that discipline, contain, and subvert the potential of African states to place the needs of their populace in-front of the needs of transnational capital. This is the alternative story of Ghana’s democracy told by this study, where Ghanaian activist-educators embedded in the country’s various contemporary social movements have come together in a participatory research endeavour to critically analyze Ghana’s current democratic terrain. Key to this analysis is the connection between Ghana’s social movement activism, and learning within these movements, to this reconstituted story of Ghana’s democracy. According to our participatory research group, it is the intersection of the ways movements learn and communicate with the ways these movements stay rooted in the needs of their wider membership that concomitantly determines their impact on the range of democratic possibility. Instrumental to this intersection, according to this study, are the informal processes through which movement members learn in, through, and to struggle. It is from our mutually-constituted understanding of these processes that our participatory research is now leading to action.
RESUMÉ

La démocratie du Ghana constitue une bonne nouvelle africaine. Ce qu’on ne sait pas au sujet de cette nouvelle, c’est la façon dont le dynamisme de la démocratie est fondamentalement basé sur l’activisme continu des mouvements sociaux qui exercent une pression constante sur les grandes institutions démocratiques d’élite afin qu’elles répondent mieux aux besoins quotidiens des Ghanéens. En plus de l’activisme relatif aux politiques intérieures, le questionnement constant et répandu des forces de la gouvernamentalité néolibérale transnationale qui contrôlent, limitent et minent le potentiel des États africains à placer les besoins de leur population avant les besoins de la capitale transnationale, s’avère essentiel à cette pression.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Rawlings says, “boom boom boom,”
Kufuor says, “wa wa waaa”
dem belly full, but still de people is hungry
- Sasha Marley (2008)

So much of Ghana’s recent democratic history is captured in Sasha Marley’s lyrics above. It is a history, seemingly, of two personalities, of two political parties, one could even say of two political traditions in the Ghanaian context. On the one hand, Rawlings – the charismatic military leader turned President – and his party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), won the first two elections following the return to democracy in 1992. On the other hand, Kufuor and his party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP), won the 2000 and 2004 elections, clearly establishing the two-party nature of the current political terrain. In the recent 2008 elections, it was the NDC that returned to power, yet this time with Rawlings’ former Vice-President as the new President. In the background of these contests, there is also the specter of two political traditions in Ghana, established in the run up to independence, where a leftist and populist front led by Kwame Nkrumah took power despite the efforts of the United Party tradition that brought together the Ghanaian status quo – the educated elite and the traditional rulers. Since this time, it can be argued that any democratic contest has been between these two traditions – with the NDC representing the Nkrumahist tradition of today, and the NPP representing the UP lineage (Baofur-Arthur, 2007). Of course there are also many that would argue that connecting Rawlings to Nkrumah is sacrilege (Yeebo, 2007). Yet, irrespective of your point of view on these issues of lineage, it is clear that these personalities and the parties and traditions they seem to represent have dominated the political terrain in Ghana since 1992. Certainly, in the vast majority

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1 John Evans Ata Mills. Strangely, since the return to democracy in 1992, every President has been named John.
of scholarly writing about Ghana’s democracy, it is the interplay of this duality that dominates analysis (c.f. Baofur-Arthur, 2007; Frempong, 2007; Carothers, 2002).

Yet, as this study will describe, there is another story to tell about Ghana’s current democracy besides the back and forth of partisan politicians. For despite the fact that both of these two personalities have had their say – from boom boom boom to wa wa waaa – many contemporary activists and scholars agree with Sasha Marley’s analysis that average Ghanaians are still suffering (Ninsin, 2007; Abrahamsen, 2000; Yeebo, 2007). In a country where, as this study will explore, democracy is largely understood as “you speak and then I speak,” it is meaningful that Sasha Marley is indicating that though both the main political parties in Ghana have had their turn to speak, “still de people is hungry.” Yet, it cannot be ignored that Ghana’s democracy matters to Ghanaians, and that unlike many of its counterparts around the table of the African Union, Ghana can boast of a healthy democracy more than a decade and a half old, where ballot results are (mostly) not stolen and lead to real changes in power – even if these changes are merely from boom boom boom to wa wa waaa. There is something rich and important that is at the heart of Ghana’s democracy, and as the 3rd chapter of this study will argue, it is largely despite political parties and personalities rather than because of them. Despite the disappointments of partisan politics, Ghanaians have shown a strong and active desire to maintain this form of governance; and they have shown this through the same methods that brought about the return to democracy 17 years ago: large scale activism, otherwise known as movements. Most recently average Ghanaians across the country sat in front of polling booths recording each ballot counted deep into the night, crying foul when reported results did not match counts; similarly, in the early 1990s Ghanaians from across the country defied the military rule of the day to demand a return to democracy.

This activism is the heart of the other story to tell, and it is exemplified by the “No Way Demo” (1999) painting reproduced on the inner cover of this dissertation, where Ablade Glover has captured the vibrancy of Ghanaian street activism. This painting speaks to that period leading up to Ghana’s first
democratic transition of power in 2000, where so many had become disenchanted with the Rawlings regime, but also, as the story in chapter 2 will explain, with the privileging of foreign ideas, needs and capital over the needs and desires of Ghanaians. This disenchantment led thousands to hit the streets in both spontaneous and organized ways. A recent example of this type of street activism is pictured below (Figure 1). The similarities between this and Glover’s painting are obvious (reproduced again below as Figure 2).

*Figure 1: Committee for Joint Action (CJA) street activism in Ghana
(Photo: Patrick Flynn, Daily Graphic, Dec 13, 2007)*
In many ways, it is this living history of Ghanaian spontaneous and organized activism that is at the center of this research study. As such, it shouldn’t be surprising that it has also been at the center of the lives of all of us involved in the research presented here. It is a living history that we all have a relationship with, yet our relationships to it are as different as our experiences in the movements we have been a part of or supported from a distance. To explain, this research takes as its focus the social movements that both helped return Ghana to its current democratic state, and also have been pushing at this notion of democracy since its return – stretching, negotiating, and/or redefining it in ways beyond the simplicity of “boom” or “wa.” Yet, importantly, this research does not
just take these movements as objects of study, but rather begins to build an architecture of participatory inquiry around them. This is where our multiple backgrounds come in, as this is a participatory research (PR) study of Ghanaian social movements and their learning since the return to democracy, as it is understood by activist-educators embedded in these movements. For instance, our PR group whose analysis, voices and decisions populate the pages that follow, is and has been entrenched in the women’s movement, the socialist movements of the 1980s, the democracy movement, various student movements, the anti-privatization of water movement specifically and the local anti-neoliberalism movements more generally. Likewise, we have also been involved in and supportive of local natural resource defense movements, and the people with disability movement. In this sense, we all have some ties to the activist spirit in Ghana, though the way these ties manifest themselves is different. These ties manifest themselves differently for me, Jonathan Langdon, the main author of this piece, since I grew up not in Ghana, but in Kenya and Canada – something I will discuss more at length in a moment. Likewise, these ties are different for the other members of our group – Kofi Larweh, Al-hassan Adam, Gifty Emefa Dzah, Tanko Iddrisu and Coleman Agyeyomah – whose various backgrounds are detailed in the next chapter.

Speaking of authorship, it is necessary for me to pause here and explain more clearly why there is both a we and an I in this text. While it may seem strange to have both a singular and plural subject, especially in a doctoral dissertation – a form traditionally reserved for the singular researcher aiming to display newly acquired expert knowledge – invoking both voices here is done for two reasons: one to underscore the collective nature of the knowledge that has been produced in this research, and is re-presented here; and, two, to undermine appeals to singular expressions of expert and authoritative knowledge, especially from me as the main author of this work. Instead, this work is grounded in the notion of co-construction of knowledge (Heron, 1994; Reason, 1994; Harding, 1998) and is informed and inspired by the tenets of participatory action research (PAR) but with the understanding that this is participatory research that is leading to action.
rather than a full PAR process – expanded upon in the next chapter. Along these lines, our PR study takes inspiration from the collective PAR work of Michelle Fine, Maria Elena Torre, Kathy Boudin, Iris Bowen, Judith Clark, Donna Hylton, Migdalia Martinez, “Missy,” Melissa Rivera, Rosemarie A. Roberts, Pamela Smart, and Debora Upegui (2004), who remind us all knowledge is co-construction, and as such PAR, and participatory research, is merely making visible and accountable what is invisible and unaccountable elsewhere:

So to the question “What is to be gained from PAR?” we answer that all research is collaborative and participatory, even though typically respondents are given code names and rarely acknowledged as coauthors. (p. 119)

My aim is to present in this work two voices, one using the singular that represents my own reflections and contributions to this co-construction (something I realize is important for the conventions of the dissertation genre), and a second and more frequent plural voice where our collective analysis and our collective decisions are explored and expanded upon. By using these two voices our mutual aim is to create a document that at once fulfils the needs and norms of the dissertation requirements, but also a document that responds to our wider concerns of producing collective knowledge useful not only for the action our PR group has articulated, but also to share with the wider Ghanaian activist community in various ways. These wider intentions will be discussed further in the concluding chapter of this document.²

But even as I speak of authorship, it is also necessary to reflect on where the relationships that permit this co-construction originate. However, before turning to introduce the origins and relations behind this study, it important to

² Here I want to make it clear that the flip in writing perspective in this paragraph is strategic, and is intended to invoke the tension at the center of a dissertation based on collective knowledge, yet written by one author – a white Canadian author who also has not been as embedded in movements as any of my colleagues. It invokes this layered convergence of tension, but does not try to resolve it. At other points in the text, this same dissonance will be re-invoked to remind readers of this unresolved tension.
share one last stylistic note. In the pages and chapters that follow, there will be moments such as these that speak more to the structure of this document – where an intertextual commentary is provided, largely in *italics*, that helps connect the various components of this study together.

“Making the Road together through Walking”: relationships behind the research

Paulo Freire and Miles Horton (1990) suggest we make the road of social activism and collective change through walking. In a very concrete way, each of us involved in this study has made our own road through walking, yet we have also started a new path in beginning to walk together. In the next chapter, a further description of each of our backgrounds and experiences will be laid out. It is also important to share how we came to walk together rather than the separate paths that led us here. There is a strong background of collaboration between us, even as we have had our own set of relations with social activism in Ghana and elsewhere, that needs to be historically contextualized – especially as it connects to the notion of being activist-educators.

The term activist-educator is derived from the work of Michael Newman (2006), where he describes activists in particular struggles or movements that take on educationist roles, or educationists that become involved in activist struggles. This categorization is apt for both the groups of activist-educators involved in this study: those of us participating directly in this research as well as mutually directing it – described throughout as the PR collective or group – as well as a wider group of activist-educators interviewed for the research in order to articulate both the baseline of information about social movements in Ghana and the learning of these movements since the return to democracy. In most cases, those in this wider group of activist-educators have been involved in multiple struggles throughout the democratic era, and have been sharing their wealth of experience mobilizing for change with others involved in these struggles. In this sense, those interviewed in the wider set of activist-educators are generally from
an older, more experienced generation. In my experience as an outsider to Ghana, I have come to understand over time that there are many ties, both historical and contemporary, that link those who fall into this wider grouping, and most of these ties are embedded in the socialist movements of the 1980s. As Coleman Agyeyomah, a member of our PAR collective, notes, “many of those connected to the democracy movement, and the movements that preceded it and flowed out of it, have over time shifted gear from being more activist to being more educator – although they continue to be both” (research validation meeting, Dec. 20, 2007).

In this sense, this research takes as its framing perspective the views of this evolving group who were involved indirectly or directly both in the movement that helped bring democracy back to Ghana, as well as in other movements in the current democratic era. These movements will be discussed further in chapters 3, 4 & 5. In contrast to the older nature of the wider group, those of us who constitute the PR core, who have collectively designed this study, analyzed its emergent themes, and decided on a resulting action, are products of this older generation of activist-educators as well as being activist-educators ourselves. We are not necessarily movement leaders, as some of these older generation activist-educators have become, but we still have an experienced perspective from which to collectively analyze the information drawn from this wider group. This approach to participatory research is drawn especially from the work of Michelle Fine, and its detailed articulation is elaborated more below and in the next chapter.

Yet it needs to be said that there is a common set of experiences that unites these different generations of activist-educators, and in many ways it also circles around the socialist movements of the 1980s. In order to give a greater sense of this common set of experiences as well as shed light on those this research calls activist-educator, thereby placing this categorization in context, I would like to share how I came to know about and connect with this loose grouping. To do this, it is necessary for me to also shed some light on myself, and how I, a Canadian who grew up partially in Kenya, ended up living and working in Ghana for more than 10 years. I first arrived in Ghana as a student in the Trent University
Development Studies in Ghana program (Trent in Ghana for short). It was in this program that I cut my teeth in community development work in Northern Ghana, embedded in a World Bank funded water project that used local NGOs to mobilize communities to take ownership of and maintain new local water points (such as hand-dug wells and boreholes). This was a project I was in many ways critical of. While beginning to meet those involved in the project, I began to connect with likeminded critical minds who raised serious systemic questions about the implications of equating a community sense of ownership with raising part of the capital for the resource, and the way in which the poorest communities were discriminated against as a result. Likewise, this process opened my eyes to the power of discourse as it was mobilized by the World Bank (the main funder of this project), CIDA and other international development donors to justify this consumerist shift in the provision of social amenities.³ At the same time, in the process of learning first hand about this project, I witnessed how the organizations involved founded by those who had a likeminded critical mindset had incredibly different goals and values than those with a non-critical stance. For instance, the former consistently placed community consensus and dialogue at the forefront of their work, and mediated the overt consumer and market orientation of this project by focusing on communal aspects of ownership rather than acting as glorified debt collectors for the project. This was in contrast to the latter of these type of organizations that saw these projects as a way to make money, and therefore did not question the values of the project nor did they invest in either their approach to staffing or their community work with any sense of ethical conduct – making it easier for them to assume the position of debt collector when poor communities couldn’t pay the capital cost associated with the borehole or well.⁴

³ Throughout this work, bilateral and multilateral international development donors such as CIDA and the World Bank will often be referred to as “donors”.

⁴ This was phase 1 of the World Bank sponsored local water project. The organization in which I was interned, as well as many of the critical local organizations refused to be a part of the second phase because of the issue of capital costs. In many ways, they took inspiration from the Ethiopian
It was also during this time that I first began to learn of the importance of the revolutions of 1979 and 1981 as being critical to the formation of those with the critical mind set I was coming to know. Here was a network of young men and women who had been members of People’s Defence Committees (PDCs – described more at length in chapter 3), who later went to the USSR, Cuba, East Germany, Yugoslavia and Libya for higher education. Yet here too were people who stopped supporting the revolutionary military government when it took a massive right turn in 1983/84 and took on the first of many World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs); these same people were forced into hiding, published pamphlets denouncing the shift in government approaches, and brought food and books to those who didn’t make it into hiding: the ones who were arrested, often tortured and then scattered to jails in the four corners of the country. This group was loosely called the cadre corps. At the same time, the cadres also included those who did not leave the government, who in fact tried to hunt down these other cadres who were denouncing the regime. When I first entered this network in the post-military/revolutionary era, what amazed me most was how, in this new democratic era, these folks who were on both sides of this divide – either critiquing or staying loyal to the regime – would all joke with each other about the time they were nearly caught, or the exploits they had accomplished under each other’s eyes. In fact, my fondest memories of this time as a student were the nightly debates that these colleagues would have in rural communities throughout the North. Much of this discussion was highly critical of development, of international donors, and of the government. It was also critical of what Uma Kothari (2001) would later call the “tyranny of participation” where participatory development was used to brush over real power in balance in development projects and the way these projects ignored local knowledge systems and capacity, the systemic nature of poverty and the Western/foreign design of the project as well as the meaning of participation. Key to these discussions was also government’s public position that no foreign power had the right to demand a government tax its poorest people for provision of essential services.
the topic of ongoing activism around these critiques – how things were and/or could be resisted, renegotiated and/or changed through collective action.

Coleman Agyeyomah, a member of our PAR collective and the person who partially initiated me to this network, has always said that his time as a cadre provided him not only with an important education as to the values of working for a better and more socially equitable and just society – even as this education was inflected with the knowledge of the potential for a revolution to go wrong. But even more important to him than this, he has always singled out his time working with communities throughout Northern Ghana during this period as being the greatest education he has ever received (research validation meeting, Dec. 20, 2007). For me, I would say that it is in the dialogical engagements between members of this corps of former revolutionaries turned social activists and community workers that I received my greatest education. It was in these spaces that I garnered some understanding of the complex costs as well as moments of possibility associated with the two Rawlings revolutions – accounts I have yet to see well represented in writing about this era. Likewise, it was in these informal learning spaces that I first began to see that democracy was not just a naïve and malignant Western imposition, but also emanated from the strong desires of Ghanaians for stability without military rule – yet the version and performance of Ghana’s democracy was also constantly critiqued in these sessions. This was a hard time for the government of the day – the democratic version of the military government still ruled by Jerry Rawlings. A massive drought had led to the closure of the huge dam that was the backbone of Ghana’s electrical mainframe, which meant day-long rolling blackouts across the country. In some ways this was the crisis that precipitated the change in government that occurred in 2000, with the first electoral transition in government in Ghana’s history – even as other elements of social activism such as the reconfigured democracy movement and the women’s movement also played key parts (discussed further in chapter 3).

The story of the cadres, and the larger network of social activism that sprang from these failed revolutionary moments, is absolutely intertwined with the story of this study. In many ways Coleman’s story is indicative of this
intertwined relationship as it is similar to that of a number of others who feature in this account. Like Al-Hassan and Kofi, as well as a number of the anonymous activist-educator interviewees, Coleman is a product of the revolutions – he was a member of the revolutionary cadres who then became leading figures in the decentralized and participatory democratic People’s Defence Committees (PDCs). It was these cadres who ended up being the battle ground for loyalty in the subsequent shift by Rawlings to the right in 1984. Many such as Coleman split with the government – though in some cases this was done in secret – and led clandestine operations to destabilize it and critique its policies. For some this led to harassment, detention, torture, exile and in some cases disappearances. For others, this led to a secret life of smuggling books and food to prisoners, printing leaflets in the night and generally making what sacrifices people could while still hiding one’s true alliances. For many unsympathetic to the new direction, it also led to tickets to Cuba, the Soviet Union, and East Germany ostensibly to study – but really for the administration to have these elements away, and for those who left to avoid any of the other more egregious options listed above. This history of formative learning is so clearly central to much subsequent activism in Ghana that the inclusion of the military/socialist period in the focus of this study was necessary – and was one of the main design adjustments that came from both the core PR group and the wider group of activist-educator interviewees – despite the clear delineation of the democratic period as the timeframe under examination.

Before turning to state briefly, as well as clearly, the parameters of this PR study, there is one final caveat to make in this section that has sought to introduce the relationships behind this research. While this research is focused on both the wider network of activist-educators as well as on our core PR group analysis of social movement dynamics and learning in the democratic period, I cannot remove myself from this research – as if I was some uninterested observer of these interactions. It needs to be stated clearly from the outset of this document that, in my own way, I have been contributing to these analyses, but in large part as a learner rather than a contributor on an equal footing. This is I think why my role in these processes became gatherer of opinions, and then subsequent supplier
of theoretical hooks, and then in this last instance the reporter of some of its analyses and processes. As an insider/outsider enmeshed in this world and also in another – my Canadian world – this role came naturally to me. But, as the chapters that follow reflect, I was still an active participant at the table, since our organizational ethos was one of dialogue, mutual learning and reflection. Thus this border thinking, as Walter Mignolo (2000) calls it, cannot be untangled from the re-presentation I make here of this collective work. In large part, it is the tension of both this singular insider/outsider position as well as the plural identity of our group that informs the writing strategy described at the conclusion of the first section above. Yet, in framing this caveat, I do not want to in any way subsume our group’s identity, decisions and analysis through the imposition of my own individual voice and opinions – since this voice and those opinions were and are a part of our group’s negotiated reality. It is important to underscore that the relationships behind this research are the product of us all deciding to come together to collectively analyze Ghanaian social movements and their learning. And, as this story progresses through the pages ahead, it is the collective decisions of our group that inform the analysis and conclusions that have been drawn as well as the action we decided to take out of this participatory space. To introduce how this space was constituted, it is useful to turn now to a brief elaboration of the research questions and method of this study.

**Research Purpose and Overview of the study**

To situate this study in a methodological context, it should be conceived as being first and foremost grounded in a co-constructivist and participatory approach, where the participants and researcher will be co-constructing meaning. Co-construction challenges the notion that one truth can be established in research, and replaces it with a mutual process of meaning-making (Harding, 1998). This open approach to meaning-making is a core element of Participatory Action Research (PAR), the methodology that informs this study (Fine, 2007; Reason, 1994), even while we acknowledge this study is not emerging from action, but is
rather leading to it – the reason behind our decision to call it participatory research leading to action, or PR for short. Participatory research is also recognized as ensuring greater local ownership and control of the results of the research (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Within the study’s PR framework, the research also used other qualitative methods including critical discourse analysis and narrative re-storying. Critical analysis of discourse examines texts from various sources (from publications to emails) for their underlying assumptions, and reveals the individuals and groups who benefit most from these assumptions (Fairclough, 2003; Foucault, 1980). Discourse analysis has informed other studies in the development context (Kamat, 2002; Ndgewa, 1996; Ferguson, 1994), but this research adds the innovation of participatory meaning-making to this approach. Narrative re-storying, a technique that compliments participatory research well, helps to create verbal or written reflections that participants return to a number of times, allowing them to deepen and layer their reflections on the content and process of the research (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003). With this textured approach to collecting reflections and information, the research led to a dynamic and generative space in which to investigate how practical learning in social movements occurs – detailed below.

This description of the research approach is drawn from the initial and iterative research design of the study, as it has been articulated in our PR group’s discussion. Based on this approach, this research explored the question of how Ghanaian movements of the marginalized and disenfranchised have been learning to contest, negotiate and transform the democratic terrain over the last 15 years through the perspectives of activist-educators embedded in these movements. The research had three mutually determined objectives:

1. To establish with these activists-educator what democracy means and what it could mean in Ghana;
2. To establish the ways in which social movements have been contesting and negotiating the democratic terrain over the last 15 years; and
3. To establish the ways in which this contestation and negotiation reflects learning in struggle, and the ways in which this learning could be enhanced through locally determined methods.

In engaging in addressing these objectives five phases of the research emerged.

In the first of these phases, taking place in the two years before the main research took place, members of our group met to determine what needed to be the objectives of our collective research and how this research would be undertaken. While the main decisions around this are reflected in the objectives listed above, we also decided to stagger our PR process to, in the first instance, take a wider look at the dynamics and learning of social movements in Ghana, before we later connected our work with a particular movement to build a longer-term iterative PR process. Based on this, we decided this first component of drawing together information and building a collective understanding of Ghanaian social movement issues would be the focus of this study, with our collective decisions around the action coming out of it determining what would be the next step. It was during this period that we came to the collective decision that I should undertake a number of interviews with activist-educators embedded in various movements in order to draw together a baseline of reflections that we could use to begin our collective analysis of social movement dynamics and learning in the Ghanaian democratic context. It is these interviewees that are described above as the wider group of activist-educators. As the next chapter articulates more clearly, this decision was the result of a realistic assessment of the time our group members could devote to the research, while still being cognizant of the ideal for a PR study, where all of us would have been involved in this initial phase.

However, to put it in context, this baseline information gathering exercise was also designed to assist me in developing my own understanding of the issues and history of social activism in Ghana over the last 20 years – something all those involved in our group besides myself had a practical handle on already.

The second phase of this study took place at the outset of the real research period (Dec 2007 to Apr 2008), and it involved a reconfiguration of the parameters of the research based on further deliberations with members of our PR
The main reconfiguration, already mentioned above, involved stretching the period of study to include the revolutionary cum military regime time period, running from 1979 to 1992. Our group made this adjustment based on a desire to include both the antecedent roots of the democracy movement in the socialist movements of the 1980s, and also to provide a contextual backstop to the origin of the wider group of activist-educators from which our PR group emerged, and through which our group would draw the initial reflections for our analysis this interconnections is alluded to above. Therefore this inclusion provided us the means through which to include historical reflections on the factors that led to the democracy movement, as well as the important elements of learning that activist-educators drew from the socialist period and applied in the new democratic era. Also during this phase, a list of 25 of those activist-educators in the wider network that I should interview was finalized in our group discussions, as well as the list of social movements the research would cover (the socialist movements of the 1980s, the democracy movement, the anti-neoliberalism movements – including the anti-mining movement and anti-privatization of water movement – the women’s movement and the people with disability movement). As described in greater detail in the following chapter, this list was determined with reference to two factors: that it include movements that have had a national character, and that our PR group have a practical connection to each.

In the third phase of this study, I interviewed the 25 activist-educators that we had identified in phase two. While interviewing a wider population in a PR process is not unusual (c.f. Fine & Tore, 2006), I proposed that our group still make the wider process of interviewing as transparent and participatory as possible under the circumstances, as the vast majority of those interviewed did not have the time to take part in more collective processes. As such, I established an invitation only research blog that gave anonymous access to all of those interviewed, while also creating a collective administrative group that would allow any of our PR members to make their own additions to the blog. Through this, both those interviewed and members of our group could debate, add-on, correct, or re-story the reflections from the interviews that I uploaded. It was these
reflections, and comments that annotated and re-storied them, that became the baseline of information that our PR group used for its collective research analysis in phase four.

Thus, phase four saw our PR group retreat for a collective deliberation, discussion and ultimately analysis of the issues facing identified social movements as well as the learning trends that have emerged from the issues/histories. This collective process used the reflections drawn from the wider activist-educator group to first provide a more detailed account of the various social movements in Ghana, and their relationship with the democratic terrain (objective 2 above), and through this reflect more deeply upon the nature and potentialities of Ghana’s democracy (objective 1 above). Finally, we turned to focus on the broader context of learning within these processes and movements, especially as this learning was grounded in Ghanaian experiences and knowledges (objective 3). The results of these analyses are elaborated in chapters 3, 4 & 5 below. As alluded to in the description of phase one above, this then led our group to think of a way forward towards action. It was in this context that our group made the collective decision to begin working with a local resource-defence movement located in Ada – just outside the capital – to design a longer-term participatory action research (PAR) process to delve more deeply into the people and movement specific issues and learning that their struggle had engendered. This is the fifth phase of our study, a phase that is still emerging – even as it could be considered the initial phase of a new, more focused PAR study. Though this process is moving forward discussions are still ongoing. Chapter 6 provides an in-depth analysis of the initial aspects of these discussions, as well as the history of this particular struggle.

Why this research is important

While readers may have begun to get a sense of why this research matters to those of us who make up our PR group, as it provides us with an opportunity to reflect and act on social movement activism and learning here in Ghana in a way that our
busy lives do not often allow, there are other reasons why the study is important. As the opening of this chapter suggested, much of Ghana’s contemporary democratic story has been told from the perspective of those in or desirous of political power. Alternatively, a major source of writing and reflection about Ghana involves the actions of donor organizations and Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the IMF). Along another tangent, Ghana has often been written about through the lens of a traditional versus modern cultural tension, where the focus has often been on the customs and interrelations of different peoples that live within the artificial boundaries of this nation. Finally, and perhaps coming closest to the focus of the present study, Ghana has often been the container in which discussions of civil society and non-governmental activity are elaborated. Yet, none of these foci adequately capture the ongoing story of activism within the Ghanaian context. In chapter 3 below, there is a full articulation of the problematic association between civil society and activism.

Suffice it to say here that common definitions of civil society more often than not include elements that would maintain the status quo and stabilize and contain discontent rather than understanding the sources of this discontent and working through various forms of activism to change conditions of inequality. Therefore, instead of focusing on the politicians, traditional institutions, donors, or civil society/NGOs, this research focuses on movements of Ghanaians arising out of particular struggles to extend and/or reconfigure the democratic terrain.

In this sense, this study takes as its point of departure that other story of the origin of Ghana’s current democracy, described above, and captured so vividly in the Glover “No Way” Demo painting, namely the study of social movements in Ghana. As such, it actively counters the analysis of Kwame Ninsin (2007) when he states that Ghanaians do not have a strong tradition of activism. Not only that, this study provides much needed Ghanaian contributions to larger growing discussions of social movements in the African context, as well as the global context (c.f. Mandani & Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1995; McKinley, 2004; Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002). Even though there has been some recent literature that does analyze Ghanaian activism from a social movement perspective, this study offers a unique and much needed Ghanaian contribution to this discourse.
perspective, it is greatly limited in scope, focusing either on specific movements (c.f. Prah, 2007; Kwai Pun, 2007), or situating a Ghanaian example in a larger continental or global scope of analysis (c.f. Abrahamsen, 2000; Prempeh, 2006; Fallon, 2008). In this sense, this study provides an important first articulation of the Ghanaian-specific parameters of social movement activism in the wider contemporary Ghanaian context, where the focus is not just limited to a single movement. As Al-Hassan Adam, a member of our PAR group put it:

We are here to study how social movements work here in Ghana, to see how they come together and how they can last – as well as how they learn. (PAR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

In a similarly path breaking sense, this study also moves beyond simply analysing movements and their dynamics to focus on the learning trends that have emerged from movements in the contemporary democratic era. This further contribution is perhaps even more justification for the current study since there remains virtually no literature emerging from the African continent that focuses on social movement learning, especially outside of struggles for independence (c.f. Foley, 1999).

Yet, arguably the most important justification for the relevance of this current study is the manner in which it highlights a collective analysis of movement issues and learning in a Ghanaian context from a collective and participatory perspective, grounded in the cumulative experiences of the activist-educators who make up the membership of our group. In this sense, unlike even the Mamdani & Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995) collection that sought to bring together reflections on movements from across the continent, or the background papers for the 2004 social movement conference in South Africa (Cock, 2004; Egan & Wafer, 2005; Hassim, 2004; Khan & Pieterser, 2004) that brought forth a rich array of research grounded in various movements, yet conducted through singular research efforts, this research takes a collective approach at analysing what is, in the end, a collective subject. Therefore, it tries to put into action the collectivist idea that more heads are better than one. Following this logic, it must also be stated that the importance of this research needs to be understood through
the eyes of our collective, and not only through the contributions it makes to academic conversations/debates. As such, the importance that our group places on the products of this research and their potential for beginning further discussions within the activist community in Ghana needs to be placed on par with any justification for this study from an academic perspective. Thus, out of the results chapters (chapters 3, 4 & 5) that follow, chapter 4 outlines two heuristic typologies of Ghanaian social movements that emanate from our group’s desire to see how these typologies can spark a debate amongst the various Ghanaian social movement actors as to which of the two typologies their movements most closely resemble. Similarly, the action that has emerged from this research in connection with the establishment of a longer-term PAR process with the local resource defence movement in Ada – discussed in chapter 6 – is an equally important justification for this research as it has provided the impetus for us to come together and begin this ongoing work – work whose end we cannot yet see, nor yet imagine.

Thus, this research not only provides important contributions to furthering academic understanding of movements and their learning in a Ghanaian and African context, but it also provides contributions to movement actor reflections in the Ghanaian context, as well as emerging activism and action geared towards building stronger participatory relations between movements and activist-educators in this current democratic era.

**Structure of the document**

In the chapters that follow, the context, associated theoretical frame and contributions of this study are elaborated. Key to this elaboration is a constant connection back to the collective set of voices and analysis that are the foundation of our PR collaboration. As such, even in the midst of theoretical discussions an attempt will be made to inflect the nuances of these discussions with voices from this study that connect with the Ghanaian context. At points these voices will be drawn from our group, while at other points they will be drawn from the wider
activist-educator interviewees, and at other points they will be drawn from my own research reflections, published on the blog. This approach is designed to not only provide intertextual links between context and theory, but also to weave a series of narrative threads throughout the text with the aim to help make the results that emanated from our collective deliberations richer and more complexly inflected. With this stylistic note aside, let me expand upon the structure of the chapters to follow.

The next chapter of this dissertation, chapter 2, situates this study in its methodological underpinnings as a participatory research (PR) engagement leading to action deeply inspired and informed by participatory action research (PAR). The PAR methodology is fully explored in this chapter, and is connected to the other methodologies that inflect this study – hinted at above. Key to this articulation is a walking-through of the distinction between our participatory approach and PAR, with a clear delineation of direct connections with the methodology, and where our study deviates from its tradition. The reasoning for these deviations is fully articulated, as is the way in which this reconfigured participatory research connects with the other methodologies of discourse analysis and narrative re-storying. This chapter also provides a much more detailed understanding of what we mean by activist-educator, as well as providing background on our PR group members. The chapter also fleshes out the five stages of the research implementation outlined above. Finally, the chapter anticipates and responds to some of the weaknesses in the approach of this research.

Following this laying out of the methodology as well as the process through which this research was carried out, the dissertation introduces three chapters that respond to the objectives of the research – discussed above. Thus, chapter 3 will focus on the first objective, what democracy means in Ghana; chapter 4 will elaborate our collective analysis of social movement dynamics in Ghana, the second objective of the research; and, chapter 5 will delve into social movement learning in the Ghanaian democratic context, objective 3. In each of these chapters, the analysis and data drawn from our study are fused with
literature that helps unpack the complex conversation to which our analysis is contributing. In this sense, this dissertation is again bending the genre conventions, as it does not separate this theory into its own chapter, creating an artificial line between democracy and development theory in Ghana and Africa, social movement theory, and social movement learning theory, and the voices, discussions and analyses emerging from our participatory study. These sets of literature are part of our conversation too, even if it was largely through me that they were brought into the site of our participatory deliberations, both virtual and real.

With this in mind, chapter 3 – which reflects on democracy in Ghana – unpacks the theoretical literature around democracy in Ghana and Africa, drawing a dichotomy between celebratory and critical camps within this literature, yet also making this dichotomy complex by providing a range within each of these camps. So, for instance the celebratory camp within Ghana is represented by Kwame Baofor-Arthur and Gymah-Boadi, with Baofor-Arthur tempering Gyimah-Boadi. At the continental level, the World Bank, Landell-Mills – one of the Bank’s senior analysts –, Larry Diamond and Claude Ake are presented as celebrants of the new wave of African democracies; yet, Claude Ake is shown to be clearly celebrating the potential of a democracy far different from the ones being proposed by these other sources. In this sense, Ake’s vision of a participatory form of democracy builds a bridge to the critical voices that follow, as other continental commentators critique both the form and content of the democracies that emerged in what has been called Africa’s third wave of democracy. These critical voices range from Mafeje and Mamdani, who see the Western domination of this form as the main problem, to Mbembe who sees democracy as a part of an architecture designed to enable privatized violence within Africa, to Ferguson who re-imagines this wave of democracy as merely the latest attempt by transnational neoliberal forces to gain legitimacy for the exploitative project in Africa, and to Abrahamsen who unpacks the discourse of democracy in Africa and connects it to an appropriation of people’s struggles where calls for democracy were also enmeshed with calls for the end of foreign domination, and
where the form of democracy that emerged ignored this second struggle. On the Ghanaian level, Abrahamsen provides a link between her analysis and Ghana’s democracy movement, whereas Kwame Ninsin critiques the form of democracy that emerged in Ghana – he calls it elitist, yet does not see this transformation having emanated from any strong movement. It is into this space that our research introduces an alternative understanding of democracy in Ghana, one that is less concerned with the elitist form it has taken, and more with the way in which this form is being contested and pushed at on an ongoing basis – despite Ninsin’s opinion that there is no tradition of activism in Ghana. A major component of this chapter is the narrative description of the democracy movement, the antecedent movements that helped produce it, and the subsequent direct descendents of it in the democratic era. This movement description provides the hinge to the next chapter.

Thus, chapter 4 focuses on understanding movements within this contested democratic terrain. Here, the democracy movement discussion in chapter 3 is placed in its wider movement context, connecting it with the other movements that sprang from it, as well as from the new space it helped foster. This detailed description of other movements relevant to the democratic era will be informed by a teasing out of the relevant social movement theory literature. Critical to this discussion is the tension that is drawn between Gramscian and Foucauldian informed interpretations of movements, and the potential that postcolonial interpretations hold in bridging this tension through a realistic assessment of what movements across Africa and India have been engaged in doing, and how they draw from various sources in waging their ongoing campaigns for change. Especially important to this re-articulation of what some call the NSM/OSM divide in social movement theory, is the voice of Mahmood Mamdani who underscores the importance in not analogising African phenomena to other sources of theory or historical locations in time. Instead, he pushes for a constant attention to the way in which ideas and actions are manifesting themselves within a particular African setting, and how this connects to the history of that place. Based on this call by Mamdani, our PR group produced two heuristic typologies
for understanding Ghanaian social movement dynamics, both of which are presented in this chapter. Instead of focusing on the issues movements contest or the way in which they organize, these typologies focus on the way movements communicate and learn. Based on our collective experience, this distinction is important, as it predicts whether a given movement will become deracinated from its wider base of support as it becomes more institutionalized. This connection provides an important synergy with the work of both Paulo Freire and Jurgen Habermas, as each has produced a framework through which to unpack the consequences of the two models we describe while still being cognizant of the histories from which they emerge. Considering the importance both of these figures play in discussions of movement learning, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the discussion of Habermas and Freire also provides the bridge to the next chapter.

Chapter 5, the third thematic chapter, focuses on movement learning in the Ghanaian context. Here social movement learning theory is brought into dialogue with the reflections on learning that emerged in the research. Much like in chapter 4, the predominance of Euro-American traditions of social movement learning theory – where the NSM/OSM, Foucauldian/Gramscian, and poststructuralist/Marxist divide is accorded central stage – is countered with a postcolonial theoretical position that draws on Mamdani's critique of using Marxist or postmodern lenses to understand African phenomenas, as well as recent work by Choudry (2007) and Kapoor (2007). Despite this critique, some elements from the Euro-American tradition are brought into dialogue with the analysis of our group, especially Griff Foley’s (1999) notion of learning in struggle. In addition, this notion is reconfigured based on our analysis, not just learning in struggle, but also learning through and learning to struggle. As such, our PR group’s articulation of three lenses through which to understand learning and struggle provide different ways of unpacking learning within the various movements in Ghana in the contemporary democratic period. Importantly, these three lenses of learning in/through and to struggle also provide a powerful way to sum up the various reflections of social movements in Ghana and their learning,
as the example used to illustrate each of the lenses of analysis reconnects with the 3 objectives of the research in different ways. Looking forward, the last lens of learning to struggle provides a simple and elegant link to the action that is emerging from this collective work where a PAR study is being designed with a local resource defence movement. Establishing this link provides a transition to the final chapter where this emerging process is discussed.

Therefore, in chapter 6, the concluding chapter, the dissertation focuses on the emerging action that has come out of our collective work, where our group has begun work with the local resource defence movement in Ada. This chapter takes the time to place this movement in its historical context, articulating its local history of struggle. The chapter then introduces some of the initial lines of discussion that have emerged with movement members, as well as discusses how the PAR process is beginning to take on a life of its own. It is through this hopeful, yet also tentative narrative that the dissertation will end, proposing in its closing sections the ways in which the collective work captured in these pages has contributed to a number of different conversations, both in academic and activist circles. Included in these conversations will be a reconnection with the tensions identified above concerning Foucauldian and Gramscian approaches to reconstituting power relations, as well as connecting the reflections on learning emergent from this work with Freirian and Habermasian thought. In both cases it is hoped that these conversations and an African-centric set of inflections based on Ghanaian experiences will help reconfigure these dialogues in important directions.

Definition of Key Terms

Here, for the information of readers, is a short list of Key terms and a corresponding definition, as the term is used in this document.
Social Movements: the collective coming together of individuals and organizations that are moving towards a particular end/goal, even if that goal is a long-term one like social justice.

Social Movement Learning: learning that occurs in social movements as well as the learning that is provoked by them in the wider society. This also includes the knowledge they produce through their very existence.

Development: a much debated term that could mean, alternatively, social change towards a better life – where better is recognized as a subjective qualifier – or a Eurocentric project that contains debate over the definition of a better life to fit within Western parameters of this definition.

Democracy: again, a much debated term that can be seen as representing a way for citizens to participate in their own governance, or as a vehicle for Eurocentric cultural values. This debate is further explored in the 3rd chapter below.

Activist-Educators: this is a term used to describe movement activists that also play educative roles, as well as educators that have taken on activist roles in particular movements. This categorization is often coterminous with what other studies call movement leaders, or what Gramsci has called organic intellectuals, but both of these terms fail to fully capture the dynamic contribution of those placed in this category make to the learning in movements.
CHAPTER 2 – METHODOLOGY

Explanatory note:

In this chapter the main methodologies that have informed and ultimately framed this study are expanded upon, as is a more detailed account of the research process itself. In addition to these key discussions, there are two further sets of information this chapter adds to establishing the context of this study. First, the chapter delves more fully into the way our research is using the notion of an activist-educator, including a problematization of this grouping from our own self-reflexive perspectives. Second, this chapter provides background information on who the members of our PR group are, as well as offering an overview of the movement backgrounds of the wider network of activist educators interviewed. Both of these sets of information are provided to offer readers a greater sense of not only who we are, but how we grapple with our positions within the movements in which we are situated. As a final act of self-reflexivity, this chapter concludes with reflections on potential problems associated with our research design, as well as our attempts at mediating them.

Introduction:

Although only very briefly mentioned as of yet in this document, there is a major figure who has influenced much of our work here, providing not only a guiding vision of what it is we may be working towards, but also offering hints at a methodology of collaboration that can make it happen. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first President, and one of the main proponents of Pan Africanism, African Socialism and Afro-centric thought, provided a vision for a “progressive and dynamic African society” that could emanate from collaborative work grounded in “African-centred ways” (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 129). In describing this approach to collaboration, he delivered a message to those “non-
Ghanaian and non-African” researchers who may wish to contribute to the ongoing formation of this “dynamic African society”:

They must endeavour to adjust and reorientate their attitudes and aspirations to our African conditions and aspirations. They must not try simply to reproduce here their own diverse patterns of education and culture. They must embrace and develop those aspirations and responsibilities which are clearly essential for [building and maintaining such a society] (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 129)

While this message is a message that I, as a non-Ghanaian and non-African, take to heart in understanding my role in this participatory research, from our group’s perspective this message from Nkrumah is important for all of us. Too often, those Ghanaians who have had access to Western-informed forms of education have ignored the knowledge of our own “history, culture and institutions, languages and arts” as it manifests itself in our various communities (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 129). This major reflective insight is the source of Coleman Agyeyomah’s giving credit to communities throughout Northern Ghana as the best university he ever attended. In this chapter, this opening invocation by Nkrumah will help illuminate the interconnection between discussions of participatory research, as well as the other methods used, and the larger project of our research.

As mentioned in the opening chapter, at the heart of this research is a set of relationships among activist-educators going back to the revolutions of 1979 and 1981. In many ways, it is likely possible to trace the roots of some of these relationships right back to the Kwame Nkrumah era. While it is not necessary to dwell on this here, it is enough to point out that most of us would call ourselves Nkrumahist, of one sort or another (though there is much debate as to what this means). In any case, this is one of the ties that bind the activism of our group, and the wider network of activist-educators interviewed for this study. And like the

5 This is another moment of layered convergence of tension between the positions from which this text is written – my own and our larger group identity, where my identity is in the minority.
history of relations with the Rawlings regime, these ties are an important way to understand the relationships at the center of this research.

In the chapter that follows, our group, and the relationships between it and the wider network of activist-educators will be expanded upon. These sets of relations will then be linked to the guidance this participatory research leading to action (PR for short) received from such sources as participatory action research, discourse analysis and narrative re-storying. This methodological frame will then be placed in context, as the five phases of the research described in chapter 1 are further articulated. Finally, the chapter will conclude by exploring some of the shortcomings of the research design, as well as hinting at the ways in which the next stage of the research will be moving.

**Activist-educators**

While it would be possible to insert Gramsci’s (1971) term, *organic intellectual*, or the social movement theory term, *movement leaders* as a replacement for the *activist-educator* term used by this study, to do so would largely miss the point of the category. As Michael Newman’s (2006) use of the term suggests, it is the combination of the roles of activist and educator that are important through this view, rather than whether or not someone is a movement leader. In this sense, the members of our PR group, as well as those interviewed, are not necessarily movement leaders, but they do provide important insights based on their experiences, as well as more often than not, their education: by and large most activist-educators involved in this study draw both from the praxis of revolutionary learning acquired in the People’ Defence Committees (PDCs) described in chapter one, and from having attended university in Ghana, in the West, in Cuba or in the former USSR.

Here, in this section, a more detailed account will be given of the activist-educators that make-up this study. This includes both a more fleshed-out background of the members of the PR group, and a more general description of those activist-educators interviewed. Before delving into this though, it is
important to recognize our group’s own debates regarding the nature of our involvement with movements, and our extrapolation of that debate onto the role of other activist-educators. In many ways, this debate can be summarized through the analogy of choosing breadth over depth – as in by choosing to look at social movements in a more general sense, rather than focusing on and building a participatory research process with only one movement, our group chose breadth over depth. In many ways, already elaborated in chapter 1, this decision was important as the key interlinkages between movements, and their ties to the movements of the past, have largely been overlooked in any literature that has emerged. Yet even as a critical self-reflexivity and consciousness emerged in our discussions, we also acknowledged that activist-educators occupy an important space not only as insiders to social movement experiences and knowledge production, but also as outsiders in the sense of being connected to wider networks of activists, both in Ghana, and elsewhere in the world. Ultimately, the insider knowledge is critical, for as Michelle Fine et al. (2004) point out “insiders carry knowledge, critique, and a line of vision that are not automatically accessible to outsiders” (p. 111). Yet, the comparative sense of history and access to other sites of struggle also offer important educational insights for movements. In this sense, building a participatory research process with activist-educators was a natural place for our group to begin a longer process that will shift from a comparative breadth of understanding to a participatory praxis with a particular movement that aims at depth of understanding (see research phases below). It is crucial to point out that it is not merely understanding that is being sought in this research process, but also action – we take inspiration from Marx when he says, “philosophers have only interpreted the world […] the point, however, is to change it” (Marx, 1969, p. 9). This is precisely why, in the methodological discussion that follows, we are clear in calling this research participatory research leading to action – a slight distinction on PAR.

In discussing the leadership of social movements in Ghana, Al-Hassan or our PR group makes this point:
The leadership of the social movements are the products of the neo-liberal. We jump ahead to be the leadership because the social movement, if they are going to communicate their ideas they need to communicate it through some written documents, some movies and those things. Who has the skills to do that? The person they can get closer to to do that is somebody who claims to be progressive but who is a product of the same system that they are fighting. And its some of us, so we are acting as a buffer […] For me this a contest of class. (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008)

This statement sparked an important moment of self-reflexivity for our group that came at the end of our participatory research retreat – detailed further below – and it interconnected with the typologies that we had charted out the day before as well as the notion of an organic or unbranded movement – discussed in detail in chapter 4. What in many ways was key here was the fact that we were both acknowledging and problematizing our own power within the particular activist contexts we belonged to. This is similar to the process Stephen Brookefield (2001) recommends doing as adult educators involved in critical social action. For Brookefield, it is the important drawing together of Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual – an intellectual emerging from and embedded in social movements – with Foucault’s complex understanding of power and the way we are all implicated in its circulation that helps us engage in this process of self-reflexivity. This connection to a complex understanding of power is one I also drew in our discussions:

This [vision of our role] leads us to see ourselves as being always already implicated in power, which could lead to an impasse were we don’t act because we are worried about the power implications, which is dangerous. (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008)

The flip-side of this stasis was also discussed, where those waiting for a “pure” process of change, un-mired in inter-class alliances, will refuse to get involved in

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6 Again, the tension around my voice in these discussions is important, and re-invokes some of the problematics associated with a single-authored dissertation based on collective work.
the ongoing struggles of the marginalized (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008). These difficult discussions were grounded in two understandings. One, advanced by Kofi of our PR group proposed

We wait for opportunities to come on board … one group will ignite a struggle and another will take the leadership. What is important is their connection, their fusion, for the two groups to be able to hold things together, which is what has been lacking. (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008)

In contrast to this, Al-Hassan Adam proposes a different role for activist-educators:

All that we should be doing is document the processes that are going on. We might try to influence the processes, but I am still sceptical as to how much we can contribute to that change if the people who are supposed to make the change are not the ones driving the process. (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008)

These two points of view of the role of activist-educators are important, even as they both contain some flexibility in the range of action that can be taken. What was important for us out of this discussion is that it allowed our group to explore not only our roles in the movements we had hitherto been a part of or supported, but also our process of engaging in action out of this space as we moved forward.

This discussion is introduced here in order to highlight the collaborative nature of our work together, but also the way in which our space did not need final consensus – the tension above was not ultimately forcibly resolved. This distinction is a point Fine et al. (2004) note is critical in building participatory research spaces:

A crucial feature of participatory work is the building of a community of researchers – this means shared skills, respect, trust, and common language. This does not, however, mean consensus. (p. 111)

It is also introduced here in order to inflect our use of the term activist-educator with a sense of our own understanding of the positions of power we, and those interviewed in this research possess, even as we also have knowledge critical to
building a wider understanding of resistance and struggle in Ghana that will hopefully lead to action that contests other forms of power. So, in this sense, we acknowledge the problematic nature of this approach, but also share with others (Free Association, 2006) the notion that there are no pure spaces from which to contest for social change. With this in mind, it is useful here to ground the notion of an activist-educator in the context of those involved in this study. Given that I already outlined my connection to this process in the first chapter, I will leave myself out of this elaboration.

**Our Participatory Research Group:**

**Kofi Larweh**

![Kofi Larweh at PR group retreat (Photo: Jon Langdon)](figure3)

Perhaps our strongest link to the older generation of activist-educators tied directly to the Rawlings revolution, Kofi has been a long-time activist in the Ada area. He was involved in the salt flat defence movement during the PNDC era, yet he never officially distanced himself from the revolution. In the democratic era he became a worker at the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE), and was later seconded to Ada’s now ten-year-old community radio station. This last shift is interesting, because when the community radio station process was starting – a two year long process of participatory engagements – Kofi was one of the stations greatest opponents on the grounds that this would be a site of elite
control in the Ada area. In the subsequent process, his view on the potential of the radio station changed, and he is now a major proponent of community radio – a movement in its own right in Ghana, but beyond the purview of this study.

Gifty Dzah

Figure 4: Gifty Dzah at PR group retreat (Photo: Kofi Larweh)

Certainly a member of a younger generation of activists, Gifty has been until recently heavily involved in the current manifestation of the women’s movement. She was a part of the core team that drafted the Women’s Manifesto. Disillusioned with some of the inter-generational politics in the movement, she has taken a break recently to continue her studies. She is from southern Ghana.

Al-Hassan Adam

Figure 5: Al-Hassan Adam at PR group retreat (Photo: Kofi Larweh)

A long-time activist on environmental fronts, Al-Hassan drew much of his early learning from members of the cadre corps. He was previously a part of Forest Watch, a coalition of communities and organizations involved in defending forest reserves in Ghana, and is now a leading member of the National Coalition Against
Privatization of Water (NCAP-W). He is also peripherally involved in the socialist forum. Al-Hassan comes from Northern Ghana, the poorest part of country and most water deprived.

Coleman Agyeyomah

Figure 6: Coleman Agyeyomah (Photo: Coleman Agyeyomah)

Also from Northern Ghana, Coleman was a cadre in the 1981 revolution, and was involved in the subsequent administration that emerged from this space. When the Rawlings regime made its right turn, Coleman became actively involved in the New Democratic Movement (NDM), and transported books and food to other anti-Rawlings activists who had been sent to prisons in the north. In the fall-out period, he managed to go to Cuba to attend university. More recently, he has been involved in the NCAP-W movement in the north.

Tanko Iddrisu

Figure 7: Tanko Iddrisu at PR group retreat (Photo: Kofi Larweh)

Tanko links our reflections to a new generation of young people emerging from university and secondary school, as he has been for many years deeply involved
in contemporary versions of student movements. As a member of the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) he has been involved in countless encounters with both the previous NDC and NPP governments. He is especially concerned with how a new generation of those prepared to take on international and national forces of capital is emerging. Tanko currently lives in Tamale, in Northern Ghana.

**The wider network of activist-educators**

As was mentioned in chapter 1, and will be further expanded upon below, a decision was made by our group that I should conduct a wide array of interviews with activist-educators from an older generation – and from movements not covered by our collective experience – in order to garner their inputs on the three objectives of our study. As will be detailed below, the strictures of the research do not allow the identities of the 22 people interviewed to be revealed. Below, however, there is a basic breakdown of their movement connections along with their pseudonyms (Table 1). Briefly, these 22 people encompass activist-educators with connections to the people with disability movement (PWDM), the women’s movement (WM), the democracy movement, the socialist movements of the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-mining movement, the NCAP-W, the salt defence movement of Ada, and the labour movement. A list of working questions, developed by myself, Coleman Agyeyomah and Al-Hassan Adam, and which were flexibly adjusted depending on the interviewee can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 1

*Pseudonyms of activist-educators interviewed with their movement affiliation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>Leading member of women’s movement with ties to democracy movement and socialist movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Leading member of democracy movement and socialist movements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Before discussing the methodologies that inform this research, it is important to re-iterate the goals of the study upfront: from the perspective of Ghanaian activist-educators, this research explored the question of **how Ghanaian movements**...
the marginalized and disenfranchised have been learning to contest, negotiate and transform the democratic terrain over the last 15 years. The research had three main objectives:

1. To establish with these educator/activists what democracy means and what it could mean in Ghana;
2. To establish the ways in which social movements have been contesting and negotiating the democratic terrain over the last 15 years; and
3. To establish the ways in which this contestation and negotiation reflects learning in struggle, and the ways in which this learning could be enhanced through locally determined methods.

In aiming to accomplish these goals, the research was founded on 3 key principles:

a) This research is collectively owned and designed, makes room for participation of those in the study on multiple levels, is collectively analyzed, and most importantly will lead to action;

b) This research takes the convergence of language and power seriously, and therefore will make every effort to critically interrogate how language constructs social situations that reinforce power; and,

c) This research is premised on the idea that we make sense of our world through qualitative analysis, such as stories, and that it is by engaging in a critical, mutual process of meaning-making that we can articulate a more complex and nuanced understanding of our world. As our discussion of consensus above suggests, this does not mean we are providing truth – as the establishment of any truth in our opinion means necessarily denying other interpretations – but rather that we are laying out one varied, multi-faceted and complex understanding of what contestation of the democratic terrain in Ghana means. With this in mind, there are, admittedly, many parts of this story that we have left out, which we hope others will pick up and fill-in.
It is based on these three organizing ideas that our group established this research – though it is important to note that in the initial stages these design elements came from discussions between Kofi, Coleman, Al-Hassan and myself. With these three principles in mind, a set of interlocking methodologies was drawn-up, with participatory action research (PAR) theory helping to ground our approach to the first and most important value; likewise, discourse analysis helped us ground our discussions of language and power, and finally, narrative re-storying gave us the tools to take apart the stories emerging from the research and to look at them again from fresh perspectives. In the sections below, these three research methodologies will be briefly laid-out before turning to a more substantive look at the way in which this study was actualized.

**Participatory Research Leading to Action: a variation on PAR**

Although participatory action research (PAR) theory has deeply informed the values and approaches of this research, it is important to distinguish this research from other PAR studies, especially those fully embedded in people’s movements (c.f. Kapoor, 2008). Where PAR shares the premises of mutual design and ownership of research with the current study, it also underscores the way in which the research is supposed to emerge from action and re-engage into action (Fine et al., 2004; McTaggart, 1991; Fals-Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003). Since this research was more reflective in its orientation, with the intention of using these reflections to then engage in action, it is important to make the slight distinction of calling this research *participatory research leading to action* (or PR for short) rather than PAR. Certainly, it needs to be noted that the association with PAR is highly formative to the research design – as the discussion below will illustrate. And, the action emanating from this space is contributing to the emergence of a longer-term PAR process being mutually designed with the resource defence movement in Ada – discussed in greater detail in chapter 6. Therefore, it would not be far off the mark to characterize the study presented here as the opening chapter of a
longer PAR process. With this distinction in mind, there are many elements of the various articulations of PAR that have a bearing on this study and the way it was both designed and carried out.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been identified as an important window through which to research social movements (Rahman, 2004; Kapoor, 2007). Not only does the methodology provide for collective ownership of all aspects of the study, but it also requires that the research produce action – a very important element to activists involved in social movements (Reason, 1994; McTaggart, 1991; Tandon, 1988). As Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) notes, PAR is an important aspect of a research methodology that decolonizes (in line with Mamdani (1995) and Kapoor’s (2007) point of ensuring social movement research remains grounded in a post-colonial awareness, detailed in chapter 4 below). The potential of PAR to lead to cooptation of voice must also be kept in mind (Jordan, 2003), and therefore needs to be grounded on Michelle Fine’s (2007) notion of response-ability, where all outcomes of the research contribute to furthering the collective goals of the group, and where there is a clear articulation of the complementary roles of all those in the group.

For the majority of theorists who use and comment on PAR, it is seen to draw its inspiration from two different sources. Lewin’s (1946; 1952) work on Action Research, the first of these sources, is often sited as raising the critical question of action in social science research (McTaggart, 1991; 1999; Reason, 1997; Fine et. al., 2004). The cycle of AR, according to Lewin, is composed of planning, action, observing and evaluating. Some critics are, however, quick to point out the dominance of liberal approaches in current Action Research (Heron, 1994; Jordan, 2003). The second major source of inspiration is the work of Paulo Freire (1970), as PAR is interested in marginal iterations, and the potential of these iterations to reconceive the world (Reason, 1994; Jordan, 2003). The important notion within both Freire’s work and PAR is the desire to move from positivistic determinations by the researcher of what ‘subjects’ from marginal positions are thinking (i.e. thinking for people) to a collaborative meaning-making approach that allows knowledge produced by the research to be owned by
participants. Freire also premises his approach on turning participants into researchers and analysts in their own right. These two sources of inspiration help to spell out the basic contours of the methodology, as they suggest the collaborative and participant owned nature of the research, and that the research should not be for its own sake, but should compel all involved to action.

In developing a deeper sense of PAR, it is useful to begin with McTaggart’s warning that in PAR, there must be a clear distinction between “participation” and “involvement” (1991, p. 182). For McTaggart, “authentic participation in the research means sharing in the way the research is conceptualized, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world” (1991, p.171). For Reason (1994), this sharing is the basis upon which collaborative interpretations of domination and power can be articulated, and this collective articulation is critical to the process of challenging them. Furthermore, Reason (1994) notes, this process can lead into a planning process for action, whereby learning from the collaborative effort can produce new discourses of contestation, and new plans for further reflection and action. In this reflection-action process that questions power, it is possible to see both of the sources of inspiration for PAR noted above.

Although it has been noted by some that PAR is not a strict methodology with rigid guidelines (Reason & Rowan, 1981), it is also common practice for those using PAR to list what they believe it is and is not (c.f. Kapoor, 2009b; Jordan, 2009; McTaggart, 1991; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Tandon, 1988). For the purposes of this discussion, it is only the elements of these lists and guidelines that apply to the current research that will be explored here. Based on this, McTaggart provides five key points that inform our research: 1) identification of individual and collective project; 2) changing and studying discourse, practice, and social organization and the distribution of power; 3) action and reflection; 4) knowledge production, and; 5) creating theory of the work (1991, pp. 172-79). To this we add Carr & Kemmis’ (1986) reminder that “social inquiry must grasp the meaning that social practices have for those who perform them” (p. 129), as well as their underscoring that PAR “is NOT research done on other people”, it is
research done “by particular people on their own work, to help them improve what they do, including how they work with and for others” (p. 130). In this sense, our participatory research emerges from this convergence of PAR characteristics.

Yet, in many ways even more important to our collaborative work is the connection Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) draws between PAR and the possibility for a decolonizing research methodology. Along much the same lines as Nkrumah’s invocation above, key to our process, and part of our collective answer to Al-Hassan’s concerns raised above, is a recognition that this process must be grounded in a detailed interrogation of our approach not only from an “African-centred” research method, but based on bringing local Ghanaian culture, languages and ways of knowing and being into the research. Echoing Al-Hassan when he speaks of being implicated in the very system marginalized Ghanaians are fighting, Tuhiwai-Smith notes further,

It is through these [academic] disciplines that the indigenous world has been represented to the West and it is through these disciplines that indigenous people often research for the fragments of ourselves which were taken, catalogued and stored. (1999, pp. 58-59)

In the examples she provides, Tuhiwai-Smith describes how, in the case of the Kaupapa Maori, a localized version of critical theory is articulated, yet it is based on the “specific historical, political and social context” in which it is practiced (1999, p. 186). In this sense, Tuhiwai-Smith is hinting at the way in which our collective project may begin to move away from the Euro-American dominated space of not only neo-liberal discourses, but also critical discourses that are also, ultimately embedded in the “system being fought” (Nandy, 1986). In this sense, she is inviting the Ghanaians in our group to rejoin these locally determined spaces of knowing and being, even as Nkrumah advances the possibility of this being a process that will necessarily not only decolonize Ghanaian society, but also the mind. As an aside, it is important I note my own insider/outsider
position⁷ here and acknowledge that there are only some parts of this process that I can ultimately be a part of.

But there are dangers in this process as well. Just as our self-reflexive debate above illustrated, there is a grave concern that any research, no matter how participatory, may ultimately be co-opted in the service of what Kapoor calls “taming the grassroots” (2005, p. 210). Jordan (2003) has raised similar concerns about PAR, underscoring the need to be aware of the ethical relationships as well as power relations that frame a given participatory process – something we attempted to do on an ongoing basis, even before we had established what kind of action we would take out of our collaborative space. Along different lines, the fault lines within our research group also need to be acknowledged, where we necessarily had to draw rings around what each of us thought was important to emerge from the research. As Fisher & Phelps (2006) note, doing a participatory research process with action is a difficult thing to merge with a doctoral dissertation process – not only stylistically as mentioned in the opening chapter, but also epistemically as it necessarily means some aspects of the research are written by individuals rather than the collective. This is a concern John Stanfield II (1994) has noted more broadly with participatory research in general, where “rarely do researchers share career rewards with ‘subjects’ of color, such as coauthorships and access to authoritative credentializing processes” (p. 336).

Which leads back to our principles laid out above, where we collectively own these ideas, but also grant each other the right to use them so long as we have what Michelle Fine calls “response-ability,” where we have the ability to respond to the way things are being used. In the closing chapter, there is a discussion of how we plan to present our emergent analysis not only to academic spaces, but more importantly to activist spaces in Ghana and elsewhere. In this sense, the dissertation is only one aspect of our knowledge production. Perhaps fortuitously,

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⁷ This is another instance of the specific use of the singular voice to re-invoke my own identity as both a Canadian outsider of this process, but also someone with many years of experience and relationship-building in this world.
as we speak of texts, it is useful now to turn to the second principle upon which our research is premised.

(Critical) Discourse Analysis

As the guidelines McTaggart (1991) outlines above suggest, studying and questioning the interconnection between discourse and power is one important element in critical participatory research. Recognizing this, our PR group embedded this principle into our research design – as noted above in principle 2. The importance of this approach for us also comes from Abrahamsen’s (2000) analysis of democracy discourse in Africa, where she notes the way in which the term democracy becomes part of a process of disciplining African governments to be good – i.e. neoliberal – by the World Bank and other Western donors. It needs to be said that Abrahamsen’s (2000) study sparked the initial discussions about democracy and the democracy movement in Ghana that led to this study, especially as a result of the way in which she reconfigured the narratives around democracy movements across the continent being mobilized by the Bank, and in the way Ghana featured as one of the main examples. In saying this, her study specifically helped our PR group by providing a model for unpacking the ways in which language becomes intermeshed with power and knowledge, creating discourses that silence other alternatives ways of understanding notions such as democracy. As will be expanded on below, seeing how this linkage is deployed through various types of texts – including such documents as Ghana’s 1992 Constitution – made it possible for us to unpack who benefits most from these texts, and also how the social movements under scrutiny contest the discourses supported by these texts through subjugated knowledges.

At the same time, it is important not all credit go to Abrahamsen (2000), as her study is not alone at examining the impact of discourse. In fact, discourse analysis has become an important feature of many recent studies of development, in Africa and elsewhere. Ranging from Escobar (1995) and Rist’s (1997) studies of development discourse, to Ferguson’s (1994) case study of development
discourse in action in Lesotho, to Ndegwa’s (1996) study of the discursive ramifications of civil society work in Kenya, to Vavrus’ (2000) study of the way ‘empowerment’ acts as a disciplining mechanism in education and development work in Tanzania, to Kamat’s (2002) study of the way hegemony works in development NGOs in India, there is a growing sense of the legitimacy of interrogating the discursive field in which development – and other discourses such as democracy – operates. These studies examine discourses, or the ways in which language and power converge in such texts as emails, policy documents, scholarly publications, and multimedia texts such as videos and other recordings, to see how they reinforce particular ways of understanding and organizing the world. In this current section, discourse analysis is described through some of its leading proponents, and is re-interpreted based on our approach to analysing discourses critically. Building on the participatory space discussed above, it is especially important to create a nuanced and more participatory approach to discourse analysis where participants are active in the analysis of discourse and its effects on terms such as development and democracy.

In order to explain how discourses such as the development discourse, or the good governance discourse become disciplining mechanisms, it is important to draw on the work of Michel Foucault. For Foucault (1991), “Power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (p. 27). This then implies that the manner in which human life is constituted is historically contingent and is embedded in a web of power relations. Likewise, the discursive representation, or discourses, about human conditions are also embedded in this power/knowledge nexus. Studying these discursive manifestations allows us to “stand detached from [a discourse such as democracy], bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context with which it has been associated” (Foucault 1986, p. 3). In this sense, we can step back and shift from a ‘what is it’ investigation of the term to an exploration of how discourse understands or constitutes something – a process we engaged in around the term
democracy (discussed in chapter 3). This allows for the political and strategic nature of the discourse to become apparent, and asks, “Whom does [this] discourse serve?” (Foucault, 1980, p. 115). Subsequently, this type of questioning also opens the way for the re-insertion of subjugated knowledges, knowledges “that [have] been disqualified as inadequate to [their] tasks” through discursive silencing (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). Subjugated knowledges are further discussed below.

Critical discourse analysis builds on the work of Foucault to develop a more systematic method of analyzing how particular texts operate within a discourse to reinforce power relations. Emerging out of linguistics, CDA draws especially on Fairclough’s (2003) three-pronged approach to analysis. This approach includes studying the object/text of analysis, the process by which the text was produced and received, and the socio-historical conditions that govern the production of the publication (Fairclough, 2003). As Janks (1998) notes, this approach to discourse analysis is especially useful in that it allows for a detailed examination of the politics of the text, but also recognizes the historical dimensions that determine the range of possibility in its utterances. Dorothy Smith (2001) has also highlighted the ways in which discourse can surface in institutions and, through these institutions, can embed particular logics in their institutional ways of being.

In our own approach to analysing discourses critically – as opposed to CDA –there are certain critiques of the common understanding of discourse analysis that need to be addressed. Firstly, we should be wary of the objective distance that Foucault and Escobar have suggested is achievable in discourse analysis. This smacks of a positivistic scientific method, suggesting there is a distilled truth that can be discerned in texts through the use of discourse analysis – something our co-construction of knowledge belies. Equally worrying in this typification is the privileged position the analyzer of discourse begins to occupy, reifying the position of expert. This danger of reification is why our research design clearly calls for collectively undertaking discourse analysis within a PR setting. This more participative approach will not only contribute to a more
nuanced and locally contextualized understanding of the power of discourse to frame/contain/discipline, but it will also form an important component of a dialectic which resists final synthesis. This is something some of us have written about already (Agyeyomah & Langdon, 2009); and it is based on recognizing the importance of a dialectic process that does not finally try to resolve differing understandings of particular issues, such as identity – or our debate about the role of activist-educators outlined above. In this sense, resisting this consensus or final resolution, becomes a crucial component in maintaining open texts, texts that allow multiple points of view to coexist (discussed further below).

Of equal importance in our own use of discourse analysis is a resistance to the systemic approach of CDA, as advanced by Fairclough and others (Gee, 1995; Luke, 1995). While the usefulness in including the 3-level approach to textual analysis in analyzing discourse needs to be acknowledged, it is artificial to remain bounded by these types of guidelines. In this sense, Foucault’s more general approach to discourse analysis continues to be more fruitful, especially as it allows for the potential implications of discursive relations on a multiplicity of registers. Connecting this use of discourse analysis to post-colonial and development settings, Kamat’s (2002) work is especially useful here, as it demonstrates how discursive formations within NGOs contain hegemonic relations that permeate relations both inside and outside their artificial boundaries. In this sense, we need to build an approach to discourse analysis that is aware of the danger of boundaries, and the way boundaries can come to represent new sites of capillary power.

However, even as our process strives to build in this awareness of the convergence of language and power, it is also important to keep in mind Foley’s (1999) critique of the use of discourse itself. He reminds us that the study of language and its relationship with power must always remain connected to the material effects these particulars sets of relations have on people’s lives. This same observation surfaced as a constant theme in our discussions, as can be seen even in the debate concerning the role of activist-educators above, there is a constant attempt to link discourses such as neoliberalism to the material effects
not only on movements but on how their mobilization can be co-opted (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). This tension between privileging material reality over the way language creates our understating of this reality is a theme we return to in our conclusion, as it has some bearing on how this study connects to some larger epistemic debates not covered here (between Marxism and Poststructuralism, for instance). However, even as we acknowledge Foley’s important warning, it is also important to recognize that the way in which we come to understand the world is not only through language but also through narratives, through the stories we tell. It is therefore very much through the act of re-storying, described below, where we collectively analyze how power and language come together in discourses such as neoliberalism and the ways in which this discourse impacts movements and their material reality. Subsequently, the use of re-storying allows us to collectively engage in debating how this discourse also has implications on our own positionality, even as we attempt to subvert it through challenging its truth regime. In order to better appreciate how this is done, it is important to introduce the theory behind re-storying.

**Narrative Restorying**

As our third research principle above notes, our research design uses the stories we tell as mutual meaning-making devices for creating the co-constructed knowledge in the chapters that follow. To clarify from the outset, re-storying here implies a technique of co-constructing narratives of meaning around Ghanaian social movements and their learning through collective engagement and debate around these narratives as they evolve, as well as a mutual interrogation as to their subsequent meaning. In this sense, our study has reworked the stories told in the pages that follow from our mutual perspectives as well as debated their mutual meaning.

Along these lines, Alan Sinfield (1989) has argued for the recognition of the importance of stories in understanding our own preconceptions as well as the cultural norms in which we are embedded. Ted Chamberlin (2003) has further
extended this importance of stories, especially in situations that cross cultural
terrain of understanding. In narrating an instance of conflict between a First
Nations community and Canadian government officials around the question of
land ownership, he describes how an elder of the First Nations community asked
the government officials, “If this is your land, where are your stories?”
(Chamberlin, 2003, p. 1). The elder then told a story in his Gitksan language,
which may not have been understood by the government officials, but whose
meaning was clear: we have a deep relationship with this land and won’t give it
up easily. While this ‘story’ itself raises questions concerning the relationship
between governing institutions and marginalized communities, as well as issues of
the lasting legacy of colonial relations, it also suggests the way that language and
stories are the beginning of meaning-making that resists what Walter Mignolo
(2000) calls global designs (see next section). For Chamberlin, stories also
represent the terrain over which we can begin to build collaborative meaning,
especially across cultures. He suggests that stories begin to allow us to reimagine
the “them and us” identities we place upon those we call outsiders. Returning for
a moment to the invocation that began this chapter, Nkrumah has provided a route
through an openness to African “aspirations” that non-Africans as well as those
Africans distanced from these spaces through what Al-Hassan above calls
neoliberal education can contribute to African-centred knowledge production. In
this context, aspirations seem like the stories we tell ourselves about the future. I
believe, as an outsider to Ghanaian culture, that it is by building collaborative
stories, stories based on the aspirations of those working in social movements for
a more egalitarian relationship with power and grounded in a history of their
learning in struggle, that a deeper understanding of local histories can be
achieved. This process of using stories to open up collaborative and cross cultural
spaces is crucial, for as Chamberlin notes, “we need to understand the power of
stories, our very lives depend on it” (2003, p. 5).

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8 This is another moment of the intentional reminder of my positionality in this collective
meaning-making process, especially relevant in discussions of building collectively re-storied
understandings of movement histories and learning.
Narrative inquiry represents one important methodology for getting at people’s stories, even as discourse analysis represents a method of analyzing the stories of others and of power. In this current section, we explore the possibility of using a specific form of narrative inquiry, called restorying, to provide all of us with a layered and growing site for our own reflections, a site from which we can contribute directly to the research, both in content and in process.

Mattingly (1991) has established the importance of telling stories and believes that putting experience into narrative form can contribute to meaning-making processes and make participants aware of the every-day on deeper levels. This is echoed by Brunner (1986; 2002) and Polkinghorne (1988; 1996). Hopkins (1994) has suggested “our narratives are the means through which we imagine ourselves into the person we become” (xvii). Clandinin & Connelly (1991, 2000) and Karpiak (2000) suggest the telling and retelling of stories contributes to personal reflections and growth. This telling and retelling of stories has been linked to the narrative inquiry concept of restorying (Fitzclarence & Hickey, 2001; Mulholland & Wallace, 2003; Randall, 1996; Kenyon and Randall, 1997). For Mulholland & Wallace (2003), restorying represents a method to make narrative inquiry more legitimate by retelling stories in a number of different ways. They have elaborated a three part process of interpretation, whereby a story is presented first with the participants’ voice leading. In subsequent retellings the story is interpreted by the researcher in different ways, looking at the participant’s text through thematic “entryways”, and then looking at the participant’s experience through the notion of border crossing leading to growth (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003). They note, however, that there are many other ways to retell stories (Mulholland & Wallace, 2003).

It is through these other possible ways to retell stories that restorying can offer a participatory approach to research, as the Mulholland and Wallace version is problematic in its connection between legitimacy and the retelling of stories by the researchers involved, suggesting a positivistic searching for rigor. In thinking through how our PR study can be connected to narrative inquiry, it is crucial that all involved gain access to the interpretive realm. As such, by providing ongoing,
evolving stories as they emerge from the research that are then tweaked, pulled, 
contradicted and commented on by all involved, a richer and more complex 
understanding that resists resolution, or consensus begins to emerge.

Randall (1996) sees “restorying as the central process of transformative 
learning” (Rossiter, 2002, p. 4). In analyzing Randall’s contribution, Rossiter
(2002) notes that when individuals “externalize their own stories they are better 
able to locate and assess their own stories within the larger familial or cultural 
context” (p. 4). This echoes the story that began this section, and implies the way 
in which narrative restorying allows participants the possibility of building stories 
in their own languages, and embedding them in their own cultural meaning-
making processes. This opens up the possibility of what Ngugi wa Thion’o calls 
“decolonizing the mind” (1986), as well as re-invoking Tuhiwai-Smith’s (1999) 
call for a re-indigenization of research. As Rahman (2004) noted, this type of 
localized knowledge and contextualization is highly relevant as a starting point for 
thinking about how social movements grounded in local protest can begin to 
connect to, as well as reconfigure, larger global formations of power. Our PR 
group believes that stories can help this happen. For a clear example of how we 
used re-storying in our study, please turn to the description of phase 3 of the 
research below.

Justification for merging participatory research leading to action with a 
critical analysis of discourse and narrative restorying

As has been mentioned above, this study is grounded in a co-constructivist and 
participatory approach; we together will be co-constructing meaning. This term 
co-constructed meaning is drawn from the work of Sandra Harding (1998), and it 
suggests a challenge to the notion of one truth being established in research, 
replacing it with a mutual process of meaning-making. The notion of co-
constructing meaning is especially important in participatory research as it 
addresses concerns raised by McTaggart that participatory research can often 
simply be about “involvement” and not “participation” (1991, p. 182).
This co-construction is grounded in a critical analysis of the democracy discourse, as well as the development and neoliberal discourses as they apply to Ghana. As the description above lays out, discourse analysis examines texts from various different sources (from emails, to publications, to project documents) for their underlying assumptions and biases, and for those who benefit most from these assumptions and biases (Foucault, 1980; Fairclough, 2003; Janks, 1998). For example, in investigating the role of these discourses in framing the way democracy and African governments are understood, our study builds on the work of Abrahamsen (2000) and asks who benefits the most if it is the World Bank who defines what democracy should mean, and not local Ghanaians (see chapter 4). In this sense, a critical analysis of discourse helps to ground the co-construction of meaning in an analysis of power as it manifests itself through the operation of particular discourses. Thus, this current study builds on other research that asks questions about discourse in development situations (Ferguson, 1994; Ndewa, 1996; Abrahamsen, 2000; Kamat, 2002), yet it adds a participatory dimension.

Equally important, the focus on discourses also begins the dialogue of what counter-discourses can contest these dominant discourses, or what Foucault also calls truth regimes (1980). In many ways, discourse analysis also provides for openings to contest these dominant discourses through local knowledges, or counter-discourses. These locally contingent counter-discourses can be thought of as what Foucault (1980) has called ‘subjugated local knowledges’. Walter Mignolo (2000) has described the importance of challenging global dominant discourses – or what he calls “global designs” – with “local histories” that challenge and resist them (p. xi). This in many ways echoes Tuhiwai-Smith’s (1999) point above. In our own study, the power of knowledge that has been subjugated to destabilize not only current power relations, but also those of the past is palpable in this quote from Al-Hassan:

Currently, the people [of Ada] do not want to overthrow their chiefs, even though these chiefs are just a creation of colonial times. Prior to colonial imposition of chiefs on them, the Adas were only loosely ruled by fetish priests connected to the lagoon. Now the chiefs are directly
implicated in alienating the lagoon from the Adas … if people came to understand that chiefs don’t have the right to do this, based on history, it could really help. In other words, respecting chiefs is not respecting tradition (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008)

Other theorists, looking at social movements as sights of dynamic challenge of dominant discourses, and of ‘learning in struggle’ have noted the importance of activists-educators in helping shape the learning and counter-discourse that can emerge from these ‘local histories’ (Newman, 2006; Freire, 1970; Brookfield, 2001; Holford, 1995; Welton, 1993). And while acknowledging the self-reflexive problematization of this role is pointed out earlier by Al-Hassan, it is nevertheless important to emphasize how activists-educators have been actively involved in the ‘learning in struggle’ of social movements in Ghana, going back to the democracy and socialist movements, and therefore have a unique set of experiences to bring to the table as co-inquirers around these movements. Likewise, this unique outlook provides an important vantage point from which to analyze the role of dominant discourses in shaping Ghana’s contemporary socio-economic landscape. This outlook is all the more important as a place to begin building a participatory understanding of social movements in Ghana and their learning given the scant writing about movements in the Ghanaian context.

The other methodological component of this research involves an extension of narrative inquiry described above as narrative re-storying. This technique compliments participatory research well, as it helps create verbal or written reflections that participants return to a number of times, thereby deepening and layering their reflections on the content and process of the research (Mulholland & Wallace 2003; Mattingly 1991). In the description of the research below, re-storying is used to allow all involved in the research to engage with the emerging story of Ghana’s democracy, social movements in this context, and their learning. For instance, in the evolving description of the democracy movement I produced on our research blog (see description of Phase 3 below), I described the Committee for Joint Action (CJA) as the current manifestation of the movement. Indicating yet another moment where we re-storied these narratives for co-
construction of meaning, not consensus on truth, a number of our group problematized this link made in the blog, while others sought to recontextualize the CJA as carrying on the spirit of the democracy movement, while not necessarily having the same members (discussed further below). This was made even more layered when we asked who CJA mobilized, and whether there weren’t strong similarities in the messages they were spreading and the population they appealed to. This complex re-storying of CJA is significant, as it provides an important context in understanding both the politics and power behind movements, yet also where they ultimately draw their support.

**Studying Ghanaian Social Movements: Participatory Research Leading to Action with Movement Activist-Educators**

As discussed in the opening chapter above, this study has had five phases, outlined below in Table 1. These five phases lead from the collective design of the research, through the validation phase, into the two aspects of the data collection and collective analysis, to the collective action emerging from it.

Table 2

*Dates and activities associated with 5 phases of research*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
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| 1     | May – August 2006 & June – August 2007 | **Research Design Phase**  
  - Outlined key objectives of research  
  - Designed parameters of research approach, including use of interviews and PR group retreat for collective analysis. |
| 2     | December 15th – December 30th, 2007 | **Research Validation Phase**  
  - Reviewed and revised approach to research with PR group members  
  - Established list of wider network of activist-educators to be interviewed |
### Phase One: Research Design

In the first of these phases, taking place in the two years (May to Aug 2006 and June to Aug 2007) before the main research took place, Coleman, Al-Hassan, Kofi and I met to determine the objectives of our collective research and how this research should be undertaken. Our coming together around this research stemmed from our ongoing knowledge of each other, but ultimately came from our collective work on a civil society engagement process called *Community Voices* (Gariba & Langdon, 2004) that brought us all together for the first time, but also made us aware of each other’s critical assessment of civil society projects.
It was based on this critical assessment that we began talking about undertaking a more critical look at struggle in Ghana – one that moved away from the advocacy created by donors, and towards an agenda Ghanaians themselves were fighting for. Therefore, during the course of meetings during both these years, we outlined the research parameters described in the previous section. One of the key decisions that emerged in this collective design process was to stagger our PR process to take a wider look at the dynamics and learning of social movements in Ghana, before we later connected our work with a particular movement to build a longer-term iterative PAR process. In this sense, we collectively decided to reach for breadth to establish a baseline of understanding around Ghanaian social movements in the current democratic period, before turning to undertake a more in-depth PAR study of a particular movement.

Based on this decision, we decided this first component of drawing together information and building a collective understanding of Ghanaian social movement issues would be the focus of this study, with our collective decisions around the action coming out of it determining what the next step would be. It was during this period that we came to the collective decision that I should conduct a wide array of interviews with activist-educators from an older generation – and from movements not covered by our collective experience – in order to draw together a baseline of reflections that we could use to begin our collective analysis of social movement dynamics and learning in the Ghanaian democratic context. The process of engaging in these interviews is described in phase 3 below. There were two key reasons for this decision – despite it running against the spirit of collective research praxis:

- First, this decision was the result of a realistic assessment of the time our group members could devote to the research. As each of them had full-time commitments elsewhere, and as I was fortunate enough to be on a scholarship, it was a natural conclusion to task me with this undertaking. Yet, in this design phase we had already begun discussing the ways in which this information gathering process could be more inclusive, both for the rest of the PR group,
• The second reason, however, was purposefully educational for me\(^9\) – not for the rest of our group. To put it in context, this baseline information gathering exercise was also designed to assist me in developing my own understanding of the issues and history of social activism in Ghana over the last 20 years – something all those involved in our group besides myself had a practical handle on already.

**Phase Two: Research Validation**

The *second* phase of this study took place at the outset of the real research period (Dec 2007 to Apr 2008), and it involved a reconfiguration of the parameters of the research based on further deliberations with members of our PR group as well as with the local research institution hosting my research, the Institute for Policy Alternatives.\(^10\) The main reconfiguration that emanated from the conversations within our group, as already mentioned above, involved stretching the period of

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\(^9\) This is an important moment in our methodological design where my own status as both non-Ghanaian and insider/outsider was consciously addressed. It is important to recognize the generosity of my colleagues in helping design a process that would allow me to join the table of our collective work with some level of baseline understanding, accumulated in my blog narratives – now ready to be further re-storied.

\(^10\) IPA is an organization that I have worked with for many years, on such projects as *Community Voices* mentioned above. The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), as part of the funding requirements for their doctoral research grant and as an important ethical regulation, require research conducted in southern post-colonial nations such as Ghana to be done under the auspices of a local organization. In terms of this research, this relationship involved consultation in the validation phase, and a final dialogue with Dr. Gariba – IPA’s Executive Director – as these research phases concluded. These conversations were not directive, and did not redirect the participatory design of the project. As with all research interactions, these conversations were disclosed to the entire PR group through the research blog.
study to include the revolutionary cum military regime time-period, running from
1979 to 1992. Our group made this adjustment based both on a desire to include
the antecedent roots of the democracy movement in the socialist movements of
the 1980s, and also to provide a contextual backstop to the origin of the wider
group of activist-educators from which our PR group emerged, and through which
our group would draw the initial reflections for our analysis. This reconfiguration
is captured in the research blog entry based on first discussions between Coleman
Agyeyomah and myself on Dec 20th, 2007:

The most fundamental discussion we had was in connection to my focus
on the last 15 years of democracy. Coleman suggested that if we were
looking at the formation of the democratic state, and the democratic
movement that contributed to this formation, then we must think of the
antecedents of this movement, and its connection to the socialist
movements connected with the 1981 PNDC revolution, and how, over
time, these various movements had to go underground. The members
and leadership of these various groups began to criticize the new
government, and as a result they were often jailed and tortured over the
subsequent years. The phrase “the revolution eats its children” is apt
here. In any case, near the end of the 1980s these activists finally began
to resurface in the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ) – the main
mobilizing force behind the democracy movement. (Research blog entry,
uploaded December 20th, 2007)

This same observation later surfaced in discussions with both Kofi Larweh and
Al-Hassan Adam. Therefore, the inclusion of this antecedent history provided us
the means through which to include historical reflections on the factors that led to
the democracy movement, as well as the important elements of learning that
activist-educators drew from the socialist period and applied in the new
democratic era.

In addition to this major adjustment, discussions between Coleman
Agyeyomah and myself also underscored the appropriateness of using the term
activist-educator:
Coleman also added that he felt the use of the term activist-educator to be highly useful. For him, many of the people connected to the democracy movement, and the movements that preceded it and flowed out of it, can be thought of as people who over time have moved from being activists to educators, although they have probably always been a bit of both. He cited AK, AC and others as being now the educators who are trying to reflect on the years of learning in struggle to configure a new process of learning through which a fresh generation can emerge to continue questioning global and local dynamics of power and exploitation. (Research blog entry, uploaded December 20th, 2007)

This validation of our group’s use of the term activist-educator is significant not only for the way in which it grounds our research design in the terminology I helped to bring into the research space, but also because it helped us in establishing who the wider group of activist-educators to be consulted through interviews were.

Based on these series of discussions between Coleman, Kofi, Al-hassan and myself, a list of 22 of those activist-educators in the wider network was finalized to be interviewed, as well as the list of social movements the research would cover (the socialist movements of the 1980s, the democracy movement, the anti-neoliberal movements – including the anti-mining movement and anti-privatization of water movement – the women’s movement and the people with disability movement). This list was determined using two factors: that it include movements that have had a national character, and that our PAR group have a practical connection to each. In this sense, we avoided looking at movements that involved local conflicts, such as the various youth associations involved in the 1994 interethnic war between Konkombas and Dagombas. Likewise, we also did not look at the movements emerging around particular religions, such as the evangelical charismatic churches. This was despite Kofi’s strong insistence that we focus on them in the PR retreat. We also decided not to focus on a youth movement, despite there being youth activist in most current movements. This
was decided based on the distinction that these youth activists were not pushing for goals for youth across the country, but rather other movement-specific goals.

**Phase Three: Interviews of Wider Network of Activist-Educators**

In the *third phase* of this study, I was tasked by the rest of the PR group to undertake interviews with 22 activist-educators identified in phase two. The interviews were not based on a predetermined list of questions, but were rather structured loosely on gathering information around the three objectives of the research. This follows what Bill Gillham (2005) calls the unstructured interviewing technique, a technique well suited to narrative inquiry methods, such as narrative re-storying (p. 48). As such, it is a useful way to conduct interviews in an open-ended way that allows those interviewed a large degree of latitude for meaning-making.

In this sense, every interview addressed an understanding of democracy in the Ghanaian context, the dynamics of the specific movement(s) the person being interviewed was involved in, and the person’s thoughts on learning within movements in the Ghanaian context; yet these themes were not forced but rather emanated naturally from discussions. However, based on the history many of those interviewed were a part of – especially connected to the state led violence perpetuated on activists during the PNDC regime – the identities of those interviewed cannot be revealed. Likewise, because of confidentiality issues, the interviews could not be recorded and therefore have no transcripts – part of the reason for using the blogs as a method of disseminating interview reflections. In producing the research blogs then, I would summarize the day’s interviews and post my reflections based on how the interviews of the day re-storied the ongoing narratives of the democracy movement, other movement dynamics and understandings of movement learning. As will be discussed below, these narratives were then further re-storied first through online engagement by either members of our PR group, or members of the wider activist-educator network, and second through our PR group’s collaborative analysis retreat.
While interviewing a wider population in a PR process is not unusual (c.f. Fine & Tore, 2006), I proposed that our group still make the wider process of interviewing as transparent and participatory as possible under the circumstances, as the vast majority of those interviewed did not have the time to take part in more collective processes. As such, I established an invitation only research blog that gave anonymous access to all of those interviewed, while also creating a collective administrative group that would allow any of our PR group members to make their own additions to the blog. As an example of these blog entries, here in Excerpt 1 is the first of an evolving set of blogs on the democracy movement and its connection to contemporary times.

**Excerpt 1: Being hit by the changes in Ghana (Research blog post, January 13th, 2008)***

It is easy to assume that coming and going from Ghana at least once a year grounds you in the lay of the land, and the ways in which this lay of the land is changing. Yesterday, this was clearly shown to me to be untrue. Upon returning from Tamale on Thursday, I went to a local restaurant on a busy street with many guards around. Despite this broad daylight bustle, our car was broken into, and my bag – containing my research book, a collection of essays on rights discourse in Africa, and an ipod I had purchased to record my research conversations – was stolen. The professional way in which this was done, forcing the lock by using some specific device, showed more to me about the preparations for the coming Cup of African Nations than all the shiny new stadiums scattered around the country. The sad thing is that had the car’s window been shattered and I could feel that someone really was in need, I would feel better about this theft. As it is, it is obvious this is a syndicate activity, indicative of the ways in which this country has changed. With the arrival of massive amounts of cocaine in the country has raised the level of crime in the capital to this new professional level, and includes mafia-like assassination hits, disappearances of cocaine under police custody, and the head of the police being implicated in these cases of disappearance. The same head of police, untouched in his fiefdom, has even gone so far as to condone police bribery as it helps supplement the low wages the average police officer...
receives. All this in a country governed by a president who came to power shouting from on high, “zero tolerance for corruption”.

So the country has changed, and the gap between those who don’t have and those who do is being further widened by the influx of cocaine laced money, as well as the recent emergence of oil sources off the coast. This is the big kind of money that can buy all sorts of things, including presidential bids. And it is precisely this kind of change in the country – the open display of wealth by the ruling elite, and the professionalization of crime – that has led to collective demands for change by one of the longest standing groups of activists in the country (linked to the original democracy movement, the calls for change in the previous administration and the current Committee for Joint Action). This Committee for Joint Action (CJA) has been the main organizer behind a series of demonstrations over the last few years first called “whahala” and now called “Yawuo” and decrying the deterioration of the living conditions of average Ghanaians. And then we can return to the fact that the conditions in the country hit me yesterday personally, and now today we hear that the CJA demonstration planned for today in Tamale is facing a police injunction against it. They are going ahead anyway, and if something happens we may hear comparisons between Ghana and Kenya, where police are currently being used as a mechanism of control. So, we are watching and listening to news, receiving calls on the phone and waiting to hear...

Later in the day...

I have just heard that the demonstration went ahead, and the crowd it drew was huge. In fact, in one of the reports from Joy FM (one of the leading private radio stations) it was said that police joined with the demonstration instead of trying to prevent it. The whole procession happened peacefully, with only two serious points of interference from authorities. The first involved a huge military presence at the Regional Minister’s residence, where protesters had hoped to lodge their complaints. As a result of the blockade they could not see the Minister. At the end of the rally, when they returned to the major square in town, the crowd was sent running by two military helicopters that buzzed the field, sending up dust and
debris. Despite these instigations, the demonstrators came back together and finished the rally peacefully, listening to speeches from various activists and opposition politicians. The funniest aspect of the event had to do with the placards being held by the crowd. Most of these were polemical in nature, but one in particular made me laugh. It said Ghana 50, Tamale 0 (this year is Ghana’s fiftieth birthday – and the ostentatious display around the anniversary, as well as the loans of over 30 million that were used for this display and that have left a trail of unpaid bills. This added to the historical inequities between the south of the country and the north – where Tamale is – makes this sign a very loaded statement).

This blog helps provide some of the initial context of the changing dynamics in Ghana, but it also draws a relational tie between CJA and the remnants of the democracy movement. As discussed above, this is one of main aspects of the blogs that was restoried, as members of our group debated whether it could really be linked. The complex picture of these set of relations – a direct result of the openness of the blogs – is an important contribution of this research to understanding the ties that bind today’s activism in Ghana to the past.

The blog also elicited general comments on the process of engaging in activist work in Ghana, and how this research may be contributing to its documentation. As ‘Dawadawa’, an anonymous blog commentator, notes:

Jon this work getting me think [sic] through the processes we have collectively used for social mobilisation. I hope and pray one day we would be able to document it, may be through your research to serve as a catalyst for further discussion and refinement of the most effective and participatory tool. Cheers (Blog comment, January 4th, 2008)

Therefore, through this blog, both those interviewed and members of our group could debate, add-on, or correct – or re-story – the reflections from the interviews that I uploaded. It was these reflections, and the comments that re-storied them, that became the baseline of information that our PR group used for its collective research analysis in phase four.
Phase Four: Participatory Research Group Retreat

Thus, phase four saw our PR group retreat for a collective deliberation, discussion and ultimately analysis of the issues facing identified social movements as well as the learning trends that have emerged from the issues/histories. This took place between February 22\textsuperscript{nd} and February 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2008, with the majority of our discussions taking place on the 23\textsuperscript{rd} & 24\textsuperscript{th}. Our collective meeting began with a review of the blogs produced from the interviews. This collective process then used the reflections drawn from the wider activist-educator group to first provide a more detailed account of the various social movements in Ghana, and their relationship with the democratic terrain (objective 2 above), and through this reflect more deeply upon the nature and potentialities of Ghana’s democracy (objective 1 above). All three of these tasks were the preoccupation of the first day of our meeting. On the second day we turned to focus on the broader context of learning within these processes and movements, especially as this learning was grounded in Ghanaian experiences and knowledges (objective 3). The results of these analyses are elaborated in chapters 3, 4 & 5 below. As alluded to in the description of phase one above, this then led our group to think of a way forward towards action. This also took place on the second day of our discussions. It was in this context that our group made the collective decision to begin working with a local resource-defence movement located in Ada – just outside the capital – to design a longer-term PAR process to delve more deeply into the people and movement specific issues and learning that their struggle had engendered. Our group also made a decision to look at the possibility of regenerating the cadre process that helped produce the majority of the activist-educators in this study. Unfortunately, nothing has yet happened concerning this decision.

Phase Five: Action Emerging from Research
This beginning discussion with the movement in Ada is the fifth phase of our study, a phase that is still emerging – even as it could be considered the initial phase of a new, more focused PAR study. Though this process is moving forward – two meetings were held with members of the movement on March 20th, 2008 and on Nov. 23rd 2008 – discussions are still ongoing. Chapter 5 provides an in-depth analysis of the initial aspects of these discussions, as well as the history of this particular struggle.

**Potential Limitations of the Study**

There are five areas that have emerged as potentially problematic as a result of our research design. These are:

1. The research may not be participatory enough;
2. The wider focus of the study may undercut its usefulness, or may lead to broad generalizations that are not grounded enough;
3. The research may be based too firmly on relationships;
4. The dissertation form may not be appropriate for a participatory study;
5. The research focuses on activist-educators who may have a class bias.
6. The interview format may not get at the “how” of social movement dynamics.

Here are some reflections that engage with these problematics, not in an effort to dismiss them, but rather to provide some nuance to their applicability to this research.

**Not participatory enough**

The fact that this study does not fulfill all the requirements for a PAR could easily lead to the criticism that this research is not participatory enough – or as McTaggart might put it, is based on involvement rather than participation. While it is hoped that the discussions above go a long way in explaining how we have
collectively engaged in this study, there may be some truth to this criticism – after all it was only I that undertook the various interviews that made up our preliminary research material. Nonetheless, our PR group always operated with the recognition that we were engaging in this work in the real world, and that the idea that we could find the time to create a pure and perfect research design was not a reality we could entertain. The fact that so many of us gave up so much time to be involved in this process is indication enough of our commitment to it, and our ownership of it. Our continued dialogue around the design of a PAR process with the movement in Ada is equally compelling evidence that all of us that sat around the table see this as a longer discussion than just this first chapter may indicate. This is important, as participation is a two way street, and involves not only mutual ownership of the process, but also mutual commitment to stay connected to the action that emerges over the long term. This is a commitment we have all made. So, the technical methods of this research could have been improved, but the participatory spirit at its heart should not be questioned.

**Too wide a focus**

Another critique that can be levelled against this study is that it has aimed for breadth over depth, and that this breadth is perhaps too wide. This critique is mediated, in our estimation, by noting three important factors:

1. The qualitative nature of this research does not aim for comprehensive knowledge of this terrain and needs to be instead understood as the beginning of this conversation since there has yet been no attempt to grapple with these issues in the Ghanaian case;

2. There are clear delimitations of this research, in that it focuses only on those movements with a national dimension, and taking place in, or having a bearing on the democratic era. In this sense, the breadth of our study is quite specific and again does not aim for comprehensive knowledge of every social movement in Ghana and their respective methods of organizing and learning;
3. The underlying logic of this critique is that this study is using the container of Ghana to make generalizable conclusions that can be extended to other SM situations. It is our hope that in the chapters that follow, and with the discussions of our method of approach above, it can be seen that while we invite activists and academics grounded in work in other locations to use our work here for further reflection, part of the importance of this research is that it have a bearing on Ghana, and that it help reconfigure some of the ways of understanding democracy and activism in local ways (c.f. the reconfiguration of chieftaincy in Ada discussed above). In this sense, this is very much a Ghanaian conversation, but this does not preclude it being of interest and potentially instructive/enlightening to others working elsewhere.

Based too firmly on relationships

From the perspective of an objectivist – someone wishing to see research untainted by researcher bias – this research could be critiqued for being too strongly based on prior relationships, and that these relationships have somehow predicted the way in which the research has been designed. Our counter to this is fairly straight forward: yes, this research is based on relationships that have predicted the research design; and, in the end this is what the participatory nature of the research is based on. The various changes and adjustments to this design noted above made this research richer, and I\textsuperscript{11} for one have trouble imagining how these adjustments could have been made without the honestly and trust necessary for real collaboration – a core value of our working method. This honesty has important implications not only on this study but on our action moving forwards. For instance, Al-hassan Adam asked me at the end of the research what my honest intentions were for the coming years. I replied that I

\textsuperscript{11} This is another moment where layers of tension around authorship and identity are intentionally re-invoked.
didn’t see any real difference in my approach now or in the future, as I have a deep relationship with Ghana that is not going away. In this sense, the firmness of our mutual relationships is precisely what made this research possible, rather than tainting it with bias. As noted above, this logic is recognized in thinking around participatory research by Reason (1994) and others (Kapoor, 2007; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999).

The dissertation form and participatory research do not match

In many ways, this critique is already addressed in the discussion above. Nonetheless, it may bear repeating that participatory research does not preclude individual writing projects that emerge from its space, so long as they are premised on the notion of what Michelle Fine (2007) calls “response-ability.” From a different direction, the focus on breadth and on this research leading to a more grounded relationship with a specific movement was also made a fundamental part of the design precisely because of the link between this current participatory research process and a doctoral study. These delimitations on the research helped make this study more manageable as a doctoral endeavour, even as our collective work with the Ada movement takes its own mutually owned course.

Too focused on activist-educators

Along similar lines as the potential critique of breadth above, the fact that this research is grounded in the knowledge of activist-educators based in many movements as opposed to being a) focused on one movement, and b) moving beyond those implicated in the leadership of the movements, is important. The self-reflexive discussion of this issue above is reflective of how we have been trying to remain critical of the position many of us hold in movements, even while we begin a more movement specific long term PAR process aimed at diversifying the owners and designers of the research. However, it does need to be underscored
that, this self-reflexivity aside, our research recognises the important level of knowledge activist-educators possess, and that bringing it together here is a useful process for all of us involved in social activism in Ghana. In this sense, even as we move towards a new phase of participatory inquiry in collaboration with a specific movement, it is important to recognize the way in which this study does provide an overview – albeit not a comprehensive one – of social movement organization and ongoing learning in Ghana’s contemporary democratic era.

**Interview format may not get at the “how” of social movement dynamics**

A final potential limitation is the choice to use interviewing as a method to draw more voices into the participatory dialogue. This is especially relevant when one considers that our intention is to explore *how* Ghanaian social movements of the marginalized and disenfranchised have been learning to context, negotiate, and transform the democratic terrain of the last 15 years. It is arguable that a reflective process of dialogue around these dynamics may not capture the ongoing reality within particular movements. For instance, a process of participant/observation in a particular movement may have gone a long way to reveal “how” learning unfolds. In many ways this is tacitly acknowledged in our research design, in that we, as a group, imagine and are planning a further in-depth exploration of these processes in a particular movement context. However, it is critical that we not dismiss the subjective experiences of movement activist-educators and replace this with a questionably objective researcher-as-judge/expert. The cornerstone of this research process is collective analysis and action – something that would be greatly undermined by the researcher separating him or herself from this process to evaluate it. In this sense, building towards a more indepth exploration of a particular movement context necessitates a participatory research engagement of its own, where not only are baseline understandings of the Ghanaian context established, but where processes of participatory research are also built and strengthened.
CHAPTER 3 - WHAT DEMOCRACY MEANS AND WHAT IT COULD MEAN IN GHANA

Explanatory note:

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, the three objectives of this participatory research are laid-out. These objectives, and the way in which they were collectively determined by our participatory research (PR) group, are further discussed in the previous methodology chapter. In this chapter, the first of these objectives – To establish what democracy means and what it could mean in Ghana – will be discussed. As the previous chapter, as well as the introductory chapter, note, meaning in this study is determined through a co-construction process of participatory research with Ghanaian activist-educators embedded in social movements. This process includes two different approaches to data gathering and analysis – one involving a wider group of activist-educators that I interviewed, and a second that brought together our PR group to collectively analyze the reflections from these interviews and advance co-constructed understandings of these phenomena. Here, in this chapter, the aim is to convey both our collective analysis of Ghana’s democracy and what it means and could mean, as well as the reflections of the wider activist-educator group consulted through interviews. In order to place these reflections in their context, the chapter will first explore literature on Ghana’s democracy, and connect this literature to African democracy debates. With this backdrop in place, the chapter will walk through the ways in which the meaning of democracy was articulated in this study.

Introduction

On January 7, 1993, Ghana became a democratic state again with the inauguration of its fourth Republic. To date, this current version of democratic dispensation is
the longest in Ghana’s 51 year history, and it has been its most eventful, with the first ever electoral transition in government in the country’s history, and five successive elections. Much can be said that is positive about this current Republic, especially when one considers the state of the country prior to its re-emergence: an economy in shambles in the early 1980s, a series of coups and failed civilian governments running from 1966 to 1982, and then a socialist revolutionary military government that turned into the implementer of neoliberal western-led reforms. In this sense alone, the 15 years since the return to democracy have been important to Ghana as they have seen stability return to the country. Yet it must also be acknowledged that stability often comes at a cost, and that this cost is most often borne by those least able to bear its weight and fight its imposition.

This chapter aims to explore these different facets of Ghana’s current democratic story through reference to a number of interpretive lenses. First, the context of Ghana’s return to democracy will be explored from three perspectives. The first two are drawn from the literature, and generally view the return in either celebratory or critical ways. The third perspective is a much more detailed account of Ghana’s re-democratization as this story has emerged in this research. Yet, even as this story is told, it needs to be connected to the meaning of democracy in Ghana, as well as in the larger African context. As such, the Ghanaian discussion needs to be situated in the larger debate of democracy in Africa, before returning to explore how this study reconfigures these notions based on the Ghanaian context. Thus, the African democracy debate is introduced through two views coming from the literature, with a celebratory set of views being contrasted with a critical perspective; following this, the alternative view that has emerged from our research will be presented – an alternative view that takes inspiration from Sasha Marley’s critique of Ghana’s democracy that began chapter 1.

Perspectives on Ghana’s return to democracy
There are a number of interpretations as to why Ghana returned to democracy in 1993. Just as the opening chapter above describes two ways to understand democracy in Ghana today – inspired by Sasha Marley’s lyrics – there are also, roughly speaking, two broad interpretive camps in the literature when it comes to describing Ghana’s re-democratization process: one that aligns itself with a normative view of democracy and sees its re-establishment in Ghana in positive and celebratory terms – questioning very little the form of democracy that emerged in the West African state; the second more critical stance closely examines the type of democracy that emerged in Ghana and is more suspicious of its potential to bring real change to the lives of Ghanaians. For clarity’s sake, it is important to note here that a further understanding of democracy has emerged from our collective reflections, and is elaborated below. But for now, it is important to outline the two different camps found in the literature. The broad differentiation between these camps is important, as each of these camps interprets the same contributing factors in light of their own view of what the re-emergence of democracy in Ghana means.

To place these two views in context, it is necessary to describe what they agree on. First, both points of view agree that the failure of World Bank structural adjustment policies to improve the livelihood of average Ghanaians directly contributed to the growing pressure for change in the country – though the two sides assign the blame for this situation to different sources. Second, both points of view agree that a countervailing force of either civil society or a social movement helped to focus the pressure for change being felt in the country. Third, the international shift in priorities as a result of the end of the cold war meant that there was greater pressure/support for democratic change by/in the international aid community. In what follows, the more celebratory view of the re-emergence of democracy in Ghana will be laid-out, followed by the more critical view. However, in both of these iterations room will be made for deviating voices within each camp in order to self-reflectively undermine the binary being developed here and thereby underscore its use as a heuristic device for explicating the numerous interpretations of Ghana’s democratization, rather than falsely
representing it as a hard and fast divide. After presenting these two views that emanate from the literature, the description of Ghana’s return to democracy that has emerged in this study will be laid-out.

A celebration of Ghana’s re-democratization

In describing the re-emergence of democracy in Ghana in 1993, Kwame Boafo-Arthur emphasizes the fact that the military government that had ruled Ghana for more than 10 years was reluctant to hand-over power. Despite this reluctance, two factors led to the transition to democracy:

Ghana’s return to democracy could be attributed to unanticipated changes in the international system as well as to internal agitation by civil society groups. (2007, p. 2)

Both of these are iterations of the factors laid-out above, yet it is the typification of these factors that is important here. The changes in the international system are understood as resulting from “leading donors and development partners [who] imposed political conditions on aid recipients in undemocratic regimes” (p. 2). Likewise, it is this “imposition [that] emboldened civil society organizations” to agitate for change (p. 2). While Boafo-Arthur does not directly link the erosion of livelihoods to the failure of structural adjustment, he does note that one of the greatest challenges of the new democratic era was the “seeming contradiction between the democratization process and the demands of structural adjustment” (p. 3). Others from this more mainstream view did not necessarily see structural adjustment reforms as negative in any way, as they saw the shift in policy environment that came with structural adjustment allowing for greater freedom of civil society activity, and a more stable economic environment (Gyimah-Boadi, 1994; Gyimah-Boadi & Oquaye, 2000). In fact, key to Gyimah-Boadi’s (1994) position is not that structural adjustment created the discontent that led to the “civil society” pressure Boafo-Arthur describes, but rather that its presence forced open the space for key associations such as the Ghana Bar Association to begin to assert themselves and demand for democratic change. Frempong (2007), another
celebrant of Ghana’s return to democracy, sees the elitist consensus as the most critical factor to Ghana’s democratic success. For Frempong, the consequences of a failure to create elite consensus might lead to their loss of societal control – a negative consequence in his view:

Continued or prolonged disagreement over the rules of electoral politics and elite succession could lead to militant and radical action from sections of the lower classes. (2007, p. 137)

In this sense, stability is the most important factor in Frempong’s (2007) view, where all parties involved in a political contest will accept the verdict of the ballot box. From his perspective, it wasn’t until the 2000 elections that this consensus truly manifested itself. Yet, in celebrating the achievement of this elite consensus, Frempong ignores the other factors the consensus left unchanged – namely the neoliberal approach to privileging capital over citizens in Ghana’s economy.12 In this sense, the elite consensus around the formation of the democratic state that Frempong celebrates reveals precisely the manner in which the interests of the wider populace that Baofo-Arthur expresses concern for above were put aside for the interests of stability. For instance, he describes how at the outset of democracy in Ghana members of the opposition as well as those of the ruling military government agreed on certain principles of doing business in the emerging democratic era. And, despite a contested presidential result, the two main parties were able later to come to a consensus despite their supposedly opposed ideologies (Frempong 2007).

Thus, in all three of these interpretations of the factors that led to Ghana’s re-democratization, what can be seen is the shifts in the international system creating the room for an “emboldened” civil society to demand change, in partnership with this international system. Key to all three of these representations is the general conclusion that Ghana’s re-democratization is a positive development for the country, though Boafo-Arthur’s read of this is more tempered than either that of the celebratory Gyimah-Boadi or Frempong. The key difference

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12 Ayee (2007) in the same collection notes, “under the current New Patriotic Party (NPP) government, the Neoliberal environment has continued” (p. 169)
between these three voices is how each interprets the influence of the World Bank, the most powerful celebratory voice on the continent, and the effects of its SAPs. This differentiation is also important in the celebratory voices that surface in the continental debate – discussed below.

**Critical reflections on Ghana’s form of democracy**

In contrast to this celebratory view, a second set of voices is highly critical of not only the re-emergence of democracy in Ghana and across Africa, but also of the way in which the celebratory set of voices largely ignore the way the activism that led to democratization was often wedded with a call for an end to structural adjustment (Abrahamsen, 2000; Ninsin, 2007). In the Ghanaian case, K. A. Ninsin (2007) is highly critical of the form of democracy that has emerged since 1992. In contrast to Gyimah-Boadi positive linkage between structural adjustment and democracy, Ninsin provides a detailed critique of the intertwining of neo-liberal economic policies and democratic practice as it has evolved in Ghana. He notes that Ghana’s current democracy is the result of “the failure of the stringent economic reforms to overcome the severe economic crisis into which the country had been plunged” (2007, p. 86). He also points out that the continued and exacerbated poverty that has been linked to the World Bank SAP programs has resulted in a form of democracy that does not allow for broad public participation. He calls this “democratic elitism” (2007, p. 87), where the interests of the elite, intertwined with transnational capital, are legitimated through the democratic process. The democratic process therefore becomes a choice at the ballot box, but not an alternative to the neoliberal mandate that has eroded livelihoods over the past twenty years (SAPs began in Ghana in 1983). This understanding is very much in-line with Ferguson’s framework outlined below.

Reinforcing this critique of democracy, Abrahamsen’s (2000) discussion of democratization in Ghana presents a further articulation of where the impetus for democracy came from. Drawing on the work of Akwetey (1994) and Yeebo (1991), Abrahamsen (2000) shows how in the lead up to Ghana’s re-
democratization, the elite consensus Frempong so clearly favours sidelined the voices of the working-class and rural poor, as they bitterly questioned the neoliberal foundation of the new democratic state. Furthermore, Abrahamsen argues that the unaddressed concerns of these marginalized groups continue to surface, not through the stabilizing forces of civil society, but rather through social movements, such as new articulations of the democracy movement that re-emerged in the democratic era and continued to contest neoliberalism. Abrahamsen connects her analysis of the Ghanaian process of re-democratization to the wider continental wave – further discussed below. However, Abrahamsen’s description provides a perfect bridge to the discussion of the democracy movement that emerged in our study – as her works points out that the democracy movement that precipitated Ghana’s re-democratization was contesting not only the form of Ghana’s governance, but also the link between it and transnational forms of neoliberal power. In the next section a detailed account of Ghana’s re-democratization process is laid out, grounded in the perspectives of our PR group and the wider number of interviewed activist-educators – most of whom were directly involved in this process.

Ghana’s return to democracy and the movement that precipitated it

Taking a cue from Abrahamsen (2000) above, and in order to give a full account of it, any description of Ghana’s return to democracy needs to be situated in the history of the movement that let to its return. Below (Figure 1) is a timeline of the political events that led to Ghana’s re-democratization (along the top of the timeline), as well as corresponding notes on the activities that led to the emergence of the democracy movement (along the bottom of the timeline). Similarly, in order to describe the democracy movement, it must also first be situated in its origins in the antecedent socialist student, worker and lower rank military movements of the late 1970s-early 1980s that preceded and informed it. First in 1979, and then in 1981, Ghana went through what have been called socialist informed revolutions (Shillington, 1992). While both of these seizures of
power revolved around the central figure of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, there were also huge numbers of students, workers and lower-ranked military personnel that actualized and defended these revolutions. Yet, this simplistic distillation is far from complete, and fails to capture the internal vicissitudes and disagreements between and amongst these movements. These tensions are important as they provide the backdrop for the formation of the democracy movement.

 Socialist movements (students, workers, junior rank officers) join revolt

Some support Dec 31st & help form PDCs; others unsure

Most Break with Rawlings/PNDC; regime targets them

Begin to organize for return to democracy

Approach right and jointly form Movement for Freedom and Justice (MJE)

MJE splinters after referendum victory

**Figure 8:** Historical timeline of origin of democracy movement

In the late 1970s, after more than 10 years of military rule, a growing convergence of student and workers movements arose demanding an end to military regimes that defended the rights of the elite over those of average
Ghanaians.\textsuperscript{13} As a result of this felt need, and deeply informed by Marxist theory, these movements felt the country must change in a socialist direction. Subsequently, on June 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1979, the junior ranks of the armed forces rose up against their seniors and overthrew the military government of the day. Yet the movement associated with this revolt was seen as both an offshoot of these socialist student and worker movements, but also a departure from their vision of how change should occur. For instance, TO recalling that time, speaks of the fact that their movements were largely unprepared for the June 4\textsuperscript{th} revolt. Likewise, he notes that many were concerned that this process would simply lead to another military regime. These concerns led to hesitancy of the various movements to involve themselves wholeheartedly in the June 4\textsuperscript{th} movement (interview, January 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2008). As a result, the revolt conducted what it termed a cleansing exercise of the military, killing several senior military officials including 3 former heads of state, and then handed over power to civilian rule in late 1979 (Shillington, 1992). Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that the actions of this Ghana’s most bloody revolution or junta were supported by large numbers of students and workers on the street, who were calling for blood alongside their junior-ranked military colleagues (Shillington, 1992).

In the aftermath of this revolt, many of those involved in the student and worker movements began planning for a more properly articulated socialist revolution.\textsuperscript{14} However, when the follow-up revolt of Dec 31\textsuperscript{st}, 1981 took place

\textsuperscript{13} It should be noted that despite the importance of the anti-UNIGOV movements – contesting the military rule of General Acheampong (1972-1978) – to this story, it is beyond the scope of our study to include them here.

\textsuperscript{14} In the interest of conserving space, the different iterations of the various socialist movements won’t be spelled out as they largely follow a similar trajectory throughout this period and into the democratic movement. Nonetheless, it is important to mention them here by name: the New Democratic Movement (NDM), the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guard (KNRG), MONAS, URF and the June 4\textsuperscript{th} Movement. It was this last movement that was mostly involved in the 1981 revolution, and during the subsequent right turn of the PNDC, its members either joined the new version of the PNDC or left it to join the other movements that would become the targets of state-sponsored violence.
and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) took power, the various left movements who were attempting to build further relationships and momentum for a socialist alternative were completely surprised by it. To draw from TO again, “There was no strategy for dealing with the PNDC since no one expected them; we were all in disarray” (interview, Jan 31st, 2008). As a result, the movements became fragmented as they formed different relationships with the PNDC. These relationships included those who had a “critically supportive” relationship, criticizing the violence of the PNDC, but trying to offer advice for directions, those who joined them in an attempt to deepen the socialist intent, and those who kept their distance, demanding the PNDC should become even more radical (AK interview, January 14th, 2008). Certainly, many of these differing elements were deeply enmeshed in the first institutions of the revolution, the People’s Defense Committees (PDCs) (Shillington, 1992; Yeebo, 2007). Largely autonomous initially, adjudicating upon the inequities found within their situated localities, these committees later became the mechanisms through which the PNDC would centralize control, renaming them Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) (Yeebo, 2007).

By 1983, when the PNDC took a dramatic right turn and took on board World Bank/IMF structural adjustment, called Economic Recovery Programs (ERPs), all of the relationships these various movements had with the PNDC had begun to shift, as people distanced themselves from the government. By signing the first Economic Recovery Program with the IMF/WB, the PNDC lost the support of the many of the leftist elements – who began to actively contest and critique the regime. Through the rest of the 1980s, a number of crackdowns targeted activists on the left, sending people to jail throughout the country, as well as torturing and silencing some. The major effect of these crackdowns was to weaken the various movements and their ability to organize. One of the major analyses at the time was an emerging sense that it is only in a space with at least some human rights guarantees that you can organize properly for more equitable
change. With that said, it is during this period of targeting that the momentum for a movement to return to democracy began. For many of those targeted, this experience led to the critical realization that it is only within a broader public space where one’s human rights can be defended that it is possible to truly mobilize for a socially just form of governance that contests the exploitative nature of capital and globalization. This realization was steeped in a socialist praxis of activism, yet this praxis had been deeply affected by the failure and totalitarian turn of the PNDC (Yeebo, 2007). This is a topic that will be further explored in the discussions of an alternative understanding of democracy below, as well as in the chapter that addresses the third objective of the research – learning in Ghanaian social movements. What is important to highlight here is how the growing dislocation of structural adjustment (Hutchful, 2002; Hilson, 2004; Ninsin, 2007) became intertwined with the activism of those who in the revolution had targeted, which generated a growing platform from which to question the violence and lack of accountability of the government as well as its growing link with transnational capital and Bretton Woods institutions (Abrahamsen, 2000; Akwetey, 1994; Yeebo, 1991; Langdon, 2009).

Thus, picking up the narrative again, the scattered remnants of the various socialist movements came to the conclusion that multi-party democracy was likely the most appropriate vehicle for curtailing human rights abuses. A corollary realization to this was that the fractured and fragmented left could not bring about this change alone. As Coleman Agyeyomah recounts:

It was the immediate past of brutalization, arrests and detentions of the leadership of these movements. The left had fought the PNDC alone, and they were scattered alone throughout the country, brutalized, one person went into a coma. So in the aftermath, they were fractured so they said, no we can’t go it alone, let’s have a broader coalition. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

As such, at the close of the 1980s, discussions began between elements of the National Democratic Movement (NDM) and the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guard (KNRG) that resulted in the emergence of a real strategy for dealing with
the government. Namely, decisions were taken to explore more fully the possibility of multi-party democracy. This meant building a broader based coalition for change, especially considering the weakened state of most of the movements on the left. As Al-Hassan Adam reminds us, “the political clout of the left was so discredited because they were part of the PNDC, so the [democracy movement] needed to have a credible face” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). As a result of this strategic objective, the left began approaching those elements on the right most interested in curtailing HR abuses by the PNDC. Though they were initially rebuffed by leaders on the right because of fears of repercussions as well as a general feeling that structural adjustment was a necessary process for the country to go through, they eventually convinced some leaders on the right to come on board. As a result, the elements of the socialist movements that had been struggling against the PNDC joined with the political tradition of right-wing liberal democrats to form the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ), and named Adu Boahen, the elder statesman of the right-wing tradition, its leader. This provided the movement the credible face needed to win the referendum for a multi-party national democratic form, yet as soon as the victory was won, the internal tensions of this coalition drove it apart. This ultimately contributed to the return of Rawlings in 1992 as a civilian President as the right-wing liberal democrats formed their own party, believing the referendum victory was due to their popularity, and the remnants of the socialist movements were left fragmented and scrambling for a banner under which to run. Al-Hassan Adam points out the irony of this situation, for it had been the left that “had raised funds for the democracy movement outside Ghana, and had mobilized within its borders” yet the right believed they could still go it alone against the still-popular figure of Rawlings (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008).

While there are mixed interpretations as to whether or not the transition to multi-party democracy as a result of the referendum led to free and fair elections, one characteristic did emerge in this form of democracy: it did not question the relations with foreign capital (Ninsin, 2007; Abrahamsen, 2000). Despite Frempong’s positive view of the process of elite negotiation he describes, it is
clear that this emerging consensus would leave the relations with transnational capital intact. Partially as a result of the elitist form of democracy that emerged as a result of this consensus, and as a result of the failure to wed the questioning of the primacy of capital with this form of democracy, many of the same socialist activist-educators turned their activism away from party politics to focus instead on the newly minted democratic institutions and the foreign-imposed policies they enacted that further deepened the poverty of average Ghanaians. The results of this set of decisions are explored in the section below in an alternative vision of democracy. Nonetheless, it is important to outline the shape this activism took in the new democratic era.

In the democratic period, these activist-educators became embedded in amalgamations of urban labour-forces, the urban working poor, students and – to a lesser extent – oppositional politicians from both the left and the right (these later had mostly an exploitative relationship with these movements, something further discussed in chapter 5). Below (Figure 2) is a timeline of this period, where the political context is described along the top of the timeline, and the subsequent activism related to the democracy movement is described along the bottom of the line. During the tenure in office of both major political parties – the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) – these amorphous movements sparked major demonstrations around several policies that affected the poor and marginalized in Ghanaian society.

In 1995, a schism in the formal labour movement, led by a younger set of labour activists tired of an the older generation that pursued a path of neutrality towards the ruling NDC, brought out into the open tensions surrounding the introduction of a World Bank sponsored Value-Added Tax (VAT). As Al-Hassan Adam recounts:

It was basically the [younger elements of the] trade unions that made it possible. 1st May, 1995, at a rally in Tema, when the Vice President came to read his speech and wanted to mention VAT, they surged onto the podium and seized his speech, and tore it, and he didn’t make any declaration on the VAT. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)
This schism provoked a massive outpouring of street activism throughout the country, known as the *Kume Preko* demonstrations. However, these follow up demonstrations were the product of a re-unified Movement for Freedom and Justice, now called Alliance for Change, which the right decided to join in an attempt to win the upcoming 1996 elections. But there again they split with the left in the run up to the polls, and Rawlings won again – this time without any large-scale questions of voter fraud.

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<td>Splintering of Movement for Freedom and Justice</td>
<td>Right vows not to use populism again as vehicle</td>
<td>Women’s movement linked to 2000 defeat of Rawlings</td>
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<td>Alliance for Change (AFC) takes lead in organizing demos</td>
<td>Galvanizes formation of women’s movement</td>
<td>Formation of Committee for Joint Action (CJA) – main organizer of Whahala and Yemfo demos</td>
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**Figure 9:** Historical timeline of democracy movement since 1992

Nonetheless, the power of this outpouring not only slowed down the application of this new tax and changed its nature (Hearn, 2001 – see next chapter), even as it provided the NPP opposition with a springboard to win the 2000 elections, achieving the first ever democratic transition of power in Ghana’s history. A number of other factors contributed to this victory, including an
economy in trouble and a Ghanaian populace tired of both Rawlings and his wife, Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings. As the discussion of the women’s movement in the next chapter will reveal, the victory was also due to the opportunistic use of emerging women’s activism by the NPP as a populist platform to gain public sympathy.

Despite the broad initial support for this new NPP regime, many of these same activist-educators became involved in a similar series of demonstrations as the new government also aimed to build growth on the backs on the poor. Reacting to what it called the *Whahala* budget – which translates as “hard suffering” (OF interview, Feb. 5th, 2008) – a new manifestation of many of the same elements that made up the democracy movement helped to coordinate demonstrations in every major city in Ghana. This most recent manifestation of these elements has called itself the Committee for Joint Action (CJA), and it brings together some leftist elements of the MFJ with some members of the NDC. For some commentators as well as members of our PR group (see previous chapter for discussion of CJA), this link with the NDC meant this new iteration of the democracy movement was merely a vehicle for the NDC to regain power. Yet, as KE, a long time leftist activist-educator interviewed for this study noted, “I am opportunist in the sense that if these are the things we are critiquing, and people want to come in and join us and build momentum with us, fine let them do it, but don’t call me an NPP man or an NDC man; you call me this today and that tomorrow, but you will always see me fighting for the same things” (interview, Feb 4, 2008). Central to the critiques levelled by this interviewee, and the main thrust of the *Whahala* demonstrations, was the huge burden of costs for services and goods being shifted to the urban and rural poor, as the government attempted to privatize and deregulate health, education, electricity, water and fuel. Finally, as a further telling indication of the complex nature of the Committee for Joint Action (CJA) – with its antecedent links to the organization in the previous NDC democratic regime, to the democracy movement itself, and to the socialist movements of the 1980s – remains constantly vigilant regardless of who is in power. For instance, despite the CJA’s decision to endorse John Evans Atta Mills
of the NDC who subsequently won Ghana’s most recent election in 2008 – securing Ghana’s second peaceful transfer of power – they have mobilized mass demonstrations against this new government as the administration set about granting huge end-of-service benefits to members of the previous administration. As a result of this action, the benefits have been frozen in place and a major member of the NDC has been purged for signing the authorization (Daabu, 2009).

The National Coalition Against the Privatization of Water (NCAP-W) – a movement that arose in the previous NDC regime but faced its greatest challenge during the NPP tenure – has also been closely aligned with both of these manifestations of the democracy movement, and has successfully built a nationwide resistance movement that brings together urban and rural poor to contest what they see as the erosion of a social water policy meant to bring clean water to every Ghanaian (Prempeh, 2006 – further discussed in next chapter). In one particular demonstration in Tamale, 400 women from across Ghana’s mostly rural north took over a meeting where World Bank hired consultants were trying to sell the privatization to urban users. Not only did these women forcefully drive home the link between public water provision and urban subsidization of rural water – making water privatization everyone’s business – but they also most importantly demanded the proceedings be conducted in the northern language of Dagbani, a demand that revealed the intersection of capital interests with identity politics as the consultants could no longer speak directly to the crowd. This intervention made it clear to all present that privatization served someone else’s interest – not their own.

In this sense, the various iterations of the Ghanaian democracy movement can be understood as being embedded in the history of activism in the country that goes back to failed socialist experiments in the 1980s and runs through the current democratic period. They can also be seen as both being a part of and apart from the political terrain, as the party in opposition at the time often takes opportunistic advantage of the movement; yet they can also be understood as consistently questioning power, especially as it is intertwined with foreign and domestic capital – though in the section on social movement typologies in the next chapter
this is recontextualized based on two models articulated by our PR analysis. And, finally, the manifestation of movements in the Ghanaian context needs to be understood through the lens of local identity and cultural politics, especially as these politics became & become sites of resistance to coercive or hegemonic power – further discussed below in the concluding section on an alternative meaning of democracy. Before turning to this alternative, however, it is useful to place the Ghanaian story in a continent wide context.

**Celebrations of democracy in Africa**

Larry Diamond (2003) notes that prior to 1990 there were only three democracies in Africa, whereas “most African states by 1997 had at least legalized opposition parties, opened space for civil society, and held multiparty elections” (p. 6). The greatest proponent of this wave, not only on a theoretical front, but in funding and advocating for its implementation was and continues to be the World Bank.

For the World Bank at the time, including some of the institution’s senior researchers, the notion of democracy in Africa was wedded to the Bank’s emerging discourse of good governance. In contrast to the positive association established between democracy and good governance, the objects of criticism for the Bank, responsible for increasing poverty across Africa, were not just African governments but the whole development paradigm upon which these governments had been operating since independence. Landell-Mills (1992), one of these senior Bank researchers, captures the feeling well when he writes:

> The first three decades of African independence have been an economic, political, and social disaster. The number in absolute poverty is rising faster than anywhere else in the world, and is expected to exceed 250 million by the turn of the century … This sad state of affairs is not simply a consequence of an unfortunate coincidence of collapsing commodity prices and mismanagement, but rather because of a fundamental flaw in the prevailing development paradigm … based on the erroneous proposition that state institutions derived from
metropolitan models could be made the engine of development in the post-colonial era. (p. 534)

This model, according to Landell-Mills, is foreign to Africa and therefore an imposition that was doomed from the start. Interestingly, for future reference, the only country he sees as avoiding this trap is Botswana, which it “managed to transform its colonial heritage into a viable democracy without first passing through a period of authoritarian rule” (p. 544). This twist in Landell-Mills’ thinking needs highlighting, as he has clearly ring-fenced state-led development as foreign to Africa, but democracy as not. This will be important in later discussions in the chapter, where critics of the new approach brokered by the World Bank argue that democracy is not indigenous to Africa and is therefore a foreign imposition.

Turning to examine more closely this new World Bank approach, it is important to recognize how democratization in Africa was deeply embedded in the Bank’s call for “good governance” and how the discourse that emerged around this term positioned democracy as a positive example of “good governance.” The origins of the good governance concept can be traced to two World Bank documents from the late 1980s and early 1990s: Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth (World Bank, 1989); and, Governance and Development (World Bank, 1992). The first of these documents associates the notion of ‘poor governance’ with African states, and blames this poor governance for the failure of structural adjustment programs across the continent (World Bank, 1989). Yet, echoing Landell-Mills, the Bank argues in this document that African governments are not entirely to blame as their failure also represents a development “strategy that was misconceived” and led to an externally imposed form of government (World Bank, 1989, p. 3). As a result of this imposition, state decisions did not reflect the needs of the local populations. The second document advances the Bank’s solution to this misconceived approach, whereby development must be “rooted firmly in the societies concerned” (1992, p. 12). Inherent in this iteration is a sense that government should get out of the way of Africans, especially indigenous business people. What these seminal documents
describe is a government that creates “an enabling environment for development, [with] larger responsibility for the private sector, a reduction in direct government involvement in production and commercial activity, and a devolution of power from the center to lower levels of government” (1992, p. 5). This is in direct contrast to the state-led models inspired by Keynesian or Marxist economics (Peet and Hartwick, 1999). Equally important in this new architecture was the positioning of civil society as a “countervailing power” to the state’s monopoly on decision-making and resource allocation (World Bank, 1989, p. 61). Finally, the last clear associations that emerged in these documents are two discursive links, the first being that less government is better government, and the second being that economic growth improves with transparent and accountable governments that are responsive to the needs of the people. In order to better situate the implications of both of these discursive connections, they need to be put into the context of the Bank’s economic thinking at the time.

By the time the good governance language had emerged in the World Bank, the Bank and the IMF had already been following more than a decade of neoliberal economic thinking. In this sense, the notion of less government equating with better government is not only a perspective held by the World Bank and IMF, but is also grounded in a neoliberal view of the state. In many ways, the neoliberal perspective on development is the latest of a long string of modernization theories (Martinussen, 1997). The original modernization school of the 1950s, led by Walter Rostow and Arthur Lewis, spoke of the various stages a society needed to go through to develop, or the urban migration that was necessary for industrialization. Building on this, the neoliberal view was deeply informed by a school of economics that saw the market as the great developer (Peet and Hartwick, 1999). The Chicago School of Economics, along with the monetarist economics of Milton Friedman and the Institute of Economic Affairs in Britain, helped to describe a vision of growth – potentially leading to a Rostow like “take-off” – that was dependent on giving the market a free hand (Peet and Hartwick, 1999). This position was further articulated by Deepak Lal, where he argued that even an imperfect market would do better than an imperfect state-led
planning mechanism (Lal, 1980; Lal, 1983). Building on these theories, a consensus began to emerge in the late 1980s within international economic policy circles (Peet and Hartwick, 1999). Commonly referred to as the “Washington consensus,” it brought together the World Bank, IMF and the US executive branch in “dismissing the conclusions reached in the development literature and relied instead on classical economic theories” (Peet and Hartwick, 1999, p. 52). This led to a series of policy recommendations including fiscal discipline, public expenditure priorities, tax reform, financial liberalization, floating exchange rates, privatization, and deregulation, amongst others (Peet and Hartwick, 1999). John Williamson summarizes the position “as prudent macro-economic policies, outward orientation, and free market capitalism” (1990, p. 18). The implementation of this reform package as a conditionality for loan disbursement resulted in what is known as the Structural Adjustment Programs. To many theorists within and outside the Bank, structural adjustment meant “getting the price right” (Pete and Hartwick, 1999). Yet, it was also recognized by many involved that these policies would have initially devastating effects on the poor in adjusting nations. Jeffrey Sachs, in discussing the transition of Eastern European economies to capitalism and the free market, describes the necessity for populations to pass through a veil of tears before things can improve (Sachs, 1991). He calls this process “shock therapy.” Within this concept, Sachs displays the essence of neoliberalism: “‘liberal’ in the classical sense of lack of state control and reliance on markets and the price mechanism, ‘liberal’ in the contemporary sense of concern for the victims, but ‘neo’ in the sense that suffering was accepted as an inevitable consequence of reform and efficiency” (Peet and Hartwick, 1999, p. 53).

In this sense, the emergence of the good governance discourse is a further extension of the thinking of the Bank and IMF concerning state-led development. As Goren Hyden – a supporter of structural adjustment in Africa – notes, even as it was necessary to get prices right, it was equally important to get the “politics right” as “a requisite for development” (2004, p. 10). As such, what emerged was a form of governance that considered less government better, but that this less
government should respond both to the needs of its people and to the needs of the market. In many ways, according to the two documents referred to above, the needs of the people and the needs of the market are one and the same. The translation of this convergence is liberal democracy. As Rita Abrahamsen (2000) puts it:

In the good governance discourse, democracy emerges as the necessary political framework for successful economic development, and within the discourse democracy and economic liberalism are conceptually linked: bad governance equals state intervention, good governance equals democracy and economic liberalism. (p. 51)

This link is important from the World Bank and IMF perspective, as it connotes that democratization in Africa is positive if it reinforces good governance and economic liberalization. Academic debates around the term “governance” also acknowledge the intrinsic link with democracy, though the interpretations of this link vary (Kjaer, 2004). Below, some celebratory voices from the academy will be explored, after which the contrasting critical view will be introduced.

Echoing Hyden’s quote above, Sandbrook (2000) has also noted the necessary link between “getting the politics right” and “getting the prices right” (p. 12). For Sandbrook, democratic reform is a necessity in Africa if the benefits of economic liberalization are to be felt. Clearly linking democratization to a neoliberal outlook, he argues:

Democratization should re-establish the rule of law, open up policy debates, reduce governmental waste and capriciousness through enhanced accountability, and empower coalitions supporting market-based reform. (2000, p. 13)

It is especially this last argument that establishes a clear link between Sandbrook’s vision of democracy and a market-led orientation. When one reflects back on the World Bank’s documents outlined above, “empowering” these “coalitions supporting market-based reform” is another way of saying providing freedom for the indigenous business person – the protagonist of the Bank’s vision of democratization. In this sense, Sandbrook (2000) and the Bank are in fact
echoing earlier thinking by the original modernization theorists, such as Rostow, who saw a clear link between economic growth and democratization (Kjaer, 2004).

From a less overtly neoliberal perspective, Larry Diamond and others have described the wave of democratization that swept the African continent in the 1990s as a positive shift towards a more accountable governance system, something necessary given the track-record of military rulers across the continent (Diamond, 1989; 2003; Linz, 1990; Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1988). This is a point of view also held by Claude Ake (1996), although his assessment of the form and content of democracy differs greatly from that of Sandbrook. His position needs to be inflected first with the ambiguity of Goran Hyden.

Goran Hyden also sees shifting trends in Africa towards government responsiveness to citizen demands as being crucial, but he does not necessarily believe that copying the western form of democracy is the best and only route (Hyden, Olowu & Okoth-Ogendo, 2000; Hyden, Court & Mease, 2004). He has similarly warned of the external imposition of this concept of democracy through foreign interventions in the politics of African nations – through such mechanisms as foreign aid and the World Bank’s push for good governance (Hyden, 2004; Hyden, Olowu & Okoth-Ogendo, 2000; Hyden, Court & Mease, 2004; Elgström & Hyden, 2002). Instead, he has called for forms of governance that are locally determined, and insists that focusing on the characteristics of a regime rather than insisting on democratic institutions is the key to positive governance change (Hyden, 2004). On the other hand, and in a slightly ambivalent manner, Hyden – writing with Court and Mease – has also insisted that structural adjustments made across the continent have been a positive foreign imposition, helping African economies to “get the price right” (2004, p. 100). Hyden, Court and Mease also argue that it is equally important for African nations to couple this economic adjustment with political change, though not necessarily with democracy. In this sense, Hyden is at once critiquing one form of foreign imposition – namely western liberal democracy – and at the same time condoning another. Ironically, the ambiguity of his positions has led him to be critiqued by African scholars for
espousing a view of governance change too closely wedded to Western values (Olokotun, 1999; Williams, 1999).

Unlike Hyden, Claude Ake (1996) does not see the processes of structural adjustment enforced by the IMF and World Bank as a positive and necessary change. In fact, by his account, structural adjustment so undermined the legitimacy of African states that it helped to perpetuate if not deepen the economic crisis many countries were facing (1996, p. 133). According to Ake, as the structural adjustment policies failed to improve the lives of average Africans, what he calls a “strong movement for democracy” sprang up across the continent demanding change (p. 135). What is crucial for Ake is the type of change being demanded. In beginning to explain this vision of democracy emerging across Africa, Ake first distances it from liberal democracy, and from those Western social scientists who defined it:

Even at its best, liberal democracy is inimical to the idea of the people having effective decision making power. The essence of liberal democracy is precisely the abolition of popular power and the replacement of popular sovereignty with the rule of law. As it evolved, liberal democracy got less and less democratic as its democratic elements, such as the consent of the governed, the accountability of power to the governed, and popular participation, come under pressure from political elites all over the world as well as mainstream social science … On the pretext of clarifying the meaning of democracy, Western social science has constantly redefined it, to the detriment of its democratic values. (p. 130)

In contrast, Ake links the popular demand for democracy with a form that is more participative and people centered, which he calls “participative social democracy” (p. 137). It is this other form of democracy that is the vision of the democracy movement sweeping the continent, a vision of a democracy that:

[W]ill emphasize concrete economic and social rights rather than abstract political rights; it will insist on the democratization of economic opportunities, the social betterment of the people, and a strong social
welfare system. To achieve these goals, it will have to be effectively participative and will have to draw on African traditions to adapt democracy to the cultural and historical experience of ordinary people.

(p. 139)

It is in this sense, and with this understanding of the term in mind, that Claude Ake is positive about the wave of democratization sweeping Africa. Yet, in his final thoughts on the subject, Ake notes that “such a people-driven democratization … will continue to be challenged by the elite-driven democratization that reduces democracy to multi-party electoral competition and generally exploits it as a strategy of power” (p. 139). This statement has a predictive quality when one considers Kwame Ninsin’s (2007) description of Ghana’s democracy below as elitist.

Returning to Ghana, it needs to be acknowledged that there are many who see no problem in democracy taking an elitist form. Frempong (2007), for instance, sees nothing wrong with this type of elitism. In fact, he argues that elite consensus, especially around the form Ghana’s democracy was to take, has been critical in maintaining stability in the country. Clearly showing his class bias, Frempong argues:

Continued or prolonged disagreement over the rules of electoral politics and elite succession could lead to militant and radical action from sections of the lower classes. (p. 137)

He further notes, it is precisely this “elite consensus” that has led to the dividends of democracy, which include “stability” and “consensus building” (pp. 155-56). Embedded in this logic is the calming role civil society played in a number of the Ghanaian elections, including the watershed 2000 election that saw a transfer of power from one political party to another. In this sense, the positive vision that Frempong elaborates is grounded on the principle that stability matters more than equity, and that elitism is fine so long as it leads to peaceful transitions in power, where governments change but policies remain.

In this sense, the celebratory voices, both within Ghana and across the broader continent, see the possibility of democracy resting largely upon a model
of public consensus-building that does not undermine links with a market process of getting the prices right. The exception here is Claude Ake, who – writing at the beginning of this new wave – still holds out hope that the form of democracy that will emerge will avoid the elite capture so prevalent elsewhere. And, despite Baofor-Arthur’s (2007) concerns regarding the negative impacts of structural adjustment and liberalization on the livelihoods of Ghanaians, the general consensus from this literature is that government transparency and economic stability will eventually lead to a better country and a better continent. Frempong’s view may be the most extreme in this respect, but largely the story of democracy fits with a view that the dividends of democracy to the elite are more important than the potential livelihood benefits for the average citizen.

**Critical views on democracy: impositions and economic transnational government(re)ality**

In some ways, Archie Mafeje (2001) provides the clearest bridge between Hyden’s point of view and Ake’s. Speaking at the 2001 *Promoting Good Governance and Wider Civil Society Participation in Eastern and Southern Africa* conference in Addis Ababa, Mafeje warned all participants of the danger of adopting terminology and conceptual frames, such as democracy, good governance and civil society, from external hegemonic institutions like the World Bank. In an argument that will surface in the writing of many of those who view this recent wave of democratization and supposedly good governance with suspicion, he states:

> In Africa, the term “good governance” was given currency by the World Bank when it was desperately in need of partners for implementing its structural adjustment programs. (p. 4)

He then underscores how this term has been conceived in technocratic and instrumentalist terms, which he warns “give primacy to efficiency at the expense of democracy” (p. 4). Yet, much like Ake, the democracy he is envisioning is not “liberal democracy” but rather “social democracy” (p. 4) with a clear “social and
political mandate from the people and civil society” (p. 5). He further critiques the notion of civil society as “a Eurocentric idea” and wonders “to what extent are extant traditional forms of organizations part of civil society” (p. 5)? For Mafeje, it is the duality of the imposition of these terms, whose parameters are imposed from elsewhere, that must be contested. However, he is hesitant to abandon the notion of democracy because he sees the possibility of redefining it in socially just ways.

Mahmood Mamdani shares Mafeje’s suspicion of Eurocentric terminology. Like Mafeje, he notes, “Democracy is not an artefact that can be introduced and sustained regardless of context, either as an intellectual enterprise or as a foreign aid package” (1995, p. 56). For Mamdani, understanding current democratic movements across the African continent must be grounded in a much more complex understanding of the colonial state that has been the antecedent of the contemporary state. In *Citizen and Subject*, he describes the systematic use of indirect and direct rule that helped define the form of resistance to the colonial state, as well as to contain the form of post-colonial state that emerged, as it reapplied the indirect method in dealing with the rural population, creating patrimonial clientalistic relationships between politicians and rural constituents (Mamdani, 1996). Mamdani suggests this problematic structure must be addressed if contemporary democratic movements are to last, and truly manifest a form of governance that is not “decentralized despotism” (1996, p. 292). Again, like Mafeje, he expresses concern about external notions of civil society and its connection with democratization across the continent. Building on Gramsci’s complex understanding of civil society, and the way “the realm of civil society is not just the market but public opinion and culture,” Mamdani suggests the state-society relationship has elements that both reinforce and resist the status quo (1996, p. 15). He further elaborates how racial definitions within the bifurcated colonial state helped create new cleavages and identities within civil society, ones that fell along “citizen” and “subject” lines (1996, p. 16). This then is his central thesis, that any understanding of contemporary democratic movements must examine carefully how citizens and subjects continue to be defined along rural
and urban lines in the majority of Africa, and that democracy formed on this premise will automatically exclude the majority of Africans as external to civil society.

Rita Abrahamsen (2000) – whose description of Ghana’s re-democratization process is outlined above – contributes an important discursive inflection to the critique of democratization in Africa and its links with Eurocentric definitions of civil society, good governance and democracy itself. Unlike the other theorists thus far, she takes a note from Michel Foucault and undertakes a deep textual analysis of the two seminal World Bank reports mentioned above, and their relationship both with the construction of the discourse of good governance and with mainstream understandings of the democratic movements in Africa. In relying on Foucault’s theory of discourse, Abrahamsen is taking a cue from other scholars who have performed similar discursive deconstructions of “development,” and its intricate ties to European Enlightenment ideals of progress (Escobar, 1995; Rist, 1997) – discussed in the previous chapter. Other scholars have used a similar approach to question participation within development discourses (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). From this perspective, often called post-development, development is seen not as a means through which to bring the rest of the world to Western levels of the ‘good life’, but rather a means of dictating to a constructed ‘Third World’ what may be thought of as development – a pattern that entrenches a hierarchy of knowledge and power that places the Eurocentric vision of the world above any other (Peet & Hartwick, 1999). Further, according to Gilbert Rist, this view sees development as “effectively boil[ing] down to the global extension of the market” (2002, p. vii). Arturo Escobar, one of the leading proponents of this view, explains his work as arising “out of a sense of puzzlement” that “the industrialized nations of North America and Europe were supposed to be the indubitable models for the societies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the so called Third World” (1995a, p. vii). He questions how this privileging occurs, and “its unquestioned desirability,” and concludes his work needs “to explain this situation, namely, the creation of a Third World and the dream of development” (1995a, p. vii). Likewise, Rist speaks
of the “power to seduce” of the *development discourse* (Rist 2001, p.1, emphasis added). Abrahamsen echoes this, when she connects this seductive power to the good governance discourse and to Westernized definitions of democracy (Abrahamsen, 2000).

For Abrahamsen (2000), the discourse of good governance and the way in which it disciplines democracy in Africa needs to be resisted and challenged through discursive analysis. In reviewing Escobar, she argues for the power of discursive analysis:

> Thinking about development in terms of a discourse enables us to maintain a focus on power and domination, while at the same time exploring the discourse’s conditions of possibility as well as its effects. (2000, p. 14)

Therefore, she is particularly interested in the ways in which the World Bank documents that first use the term “good governance” are connected to forms of power and dominance. For instance, in discussing the failure of state-led development interventions throughout Africa, what emerges from the *Sub-Saharan* document is a defence of “indigenous entrepreneurs,” something Abrahamsen sees as being intrinsically tied to the Bank’s neo-liberal attack on the state and defence of private capital:

> The good governance discourse constructs a binary opposition between alien state intervention, which is associated with past development failures, and indigenous capitalism, which represents the basis for future development successes. (2000, p. 50)

This capitalist side of this binary becomes not only the solution of Africa’s crisis, but it is also “indigenous” rather than “alien”. This indigenous connection is then coupled, according to Abrahamsen, to the emergence of democratic movements across the continent (2000, p. 51). Abrahamsen further closely reads these documents for the way they connect democracy, good governance and economic liberalism to the notion of civil society. According to Abrahamsen, civil society is established by the Bank as the “countervailing power” to the state, “a way of curbing authoritarian practices and corruption” (2000, p. 52). The result is a
convenient and oversimplified binary opposition to the state that is supposed to help engender, in one Bank policy adviser’s words, “more participatory politics, greater public accountability, and hence basic democracy” (Landell-Mills, 1992, p. 563). Yet, the power dynamics within civil society, and the ways these dynamics are intricately linked to power within the state apparatus, are ignored (Abrahamsen, 2000).

Nelson Kasfir (1998) – in developing a similar critique of the Bank’s use of civil society – adds a further inflection to Abrahamsen’s power analysis by noting:

Much, probably most, of associational life [in Africa] is excluded from civil society and thus from any proper analysis of the impact of civil society on the struggle for democracy or its consolidation. (1998, p. 5)

Kasfir’s inflection is important if a deeper understanding of the democracy movements in Africa as well as the wave of democratization across the continent is to be developed. Abrahamsen begins to address this need by pointing out the critical oversights of the Bank and IMF, as well as mainstream theorists. Countering the World Bank’s reading and appropriation of these democratic movements, Abrahamsen (2000) notes that in the Bank’s celebratory analysis it conveniently overlooks the role Structural Adjustment Policies played in sparking the uprisings against regimes in for example Zambia, Kenya, Ghana, and Cote D’Ivoire. She also critiques mainstream theorists on democracy – such as Hyden and Diamond above – as being “primarily concerned with effecting transitions to democracy, and very little attention is paid to the quality and substance of the resulting political systems” (2000, p. 83). In explicating the elements that went into the various democratic movements in Africa, she notes how in mainstream and Bank readings of these transitions, the uprising against structural adjustment, as well as the contributions of rural agricultural movements as well as the labour movement are conveniently forgotten. Instead, the literature focuses on the leadership of these movements, which had become dominated by “friends of structural adjustment” who had managed to take over and head the movements,
marginalizing economic concerns in demands for democratic dispensation (Abrahamsen, 2000).

Achille Mbembe (2007) has added a further layer to the critique of democracy in Africa, albeit from a slightly different angle. Mbembe, speaking in a recent interview, argues “Democracy as a form of government and as a culture of public life does not have a future in Africa” if it does not take into account what he has called “necropower” (Höller & Mbembe 2007, p. 8). By “necropower” Mbembe has

[Int] mind the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, sovereign power imagines itself and is deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of deathscapes, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead. (Höller & Mbembe 2007, p. 8)

It is through the creation of these deathscapes that “private indirect government” has emerged on the continent – as a direct result of IMF and World Bank structural adjustment policies. These policies have “led to the ‘spectralization’ of the economies of the continent,” where:

[M]illions of people have been deprived of jobs, food and shelter and are now reduced to struggling for daily survival. Instead of curbing the corruption of local elites, the brutality of the international system has increased their greed and carelessness. (Höller & Mbembe, 2007, p. 8)

In this sense, Mbembe is underscoring Ake’s point above, that a form of democracy driven by elites and transnational institutions will only continue the destruction of the living fabric of African societies. He is also echoing Abrahamsen in connecting this destruction to structural adjustment. His conclusion is especially ominous when one considers the way security forces and militia are for sale across the continent, privatized like any other aspect of the spectralized economy: “partial democratization under conditions of structural adjustment” he concludes, “has opened the way for the privatization of violence” (Höller & Mbembe, 2007, p. 8).
The final critical voice on democratization in Africa to be introduced is James Ferguson. Like that of Mamdani, Mbembe and Abrahamsen, James Ferguson’s (2006) view of democratization in Africa is highly skeptical. In fact, for Ferguson, democratization of the African nation-state can be understood as a renewed attempt to gain legitimacy for a level of governance that has been seriously undermined by a history of foreign interventions. The failure of structural adjustment policies is the most pronounced of these interventions, and necessitated a re-legitimation of national governments that had visibly abandoned their populations. He proposes a useful framework within which to analyze this wave of democratization of African nation-states, especially in connection with the external determination of “getting the politics right”. He calls this framework “topographies of power”, and it involves a reconceived spatialization of power relations as they apply to African nation-states (2006, p. 100). According to Ferguson, up until recently, African nation-states have been conceived of as the state vertically encompassing civil society, communities, families and citizens, as if the state exists somewhere “up-there” above these other elements in society. Through this conceptualization of power, African nation-states claim legitimacy and supremacy in deciding how people should live at the local level because of their greater claims to generalizability – they understand what is and is not good for the nation. In contrast to this rarely questioned spatial arrangement, Ferguson suggests Africa’s history, and its contemporary relationship with neoliberal globalization, tell of a different topography of power, where the local is embedded in transnational forms of governmentality (Ferguson, 2006; Ferguson & Gupta, 2002). Following Foucault’s lead, Ferguson extends the notion of governmentality – a term Foucault (1991) linked to the mechanisms through which a population is governed by institutions such as the nation-state – to connect with transnational forms of institutions and discourses that govern people.

In reconfiguring how we understand African nation-states, Ferguson, like Mamdani, reminds us that the contemporary African postcolonial state cannot be understood without reference to its colonial antecedent. “In Africa, domination has long been exercised by entities other than the state” (Ferguson, 2006, p. 100).
Likewise, with neoliberal policies and conditionalities, as well as the penetration of transnational capital, African states continue to “be ruled in significant part by transnational organizations” (Ferguson, 2006, p. 100). This set of relations is perhaps not surprising, and certainly goes a long way to explain such momentous instances of democratic undermining as the forced removal of the poultry and rice tariffs that are elaborated below. Yet, what Ferguson’s reconceptualization of these topographies also suggests is that transnational forms of governmentality are not just dominating the post-colonial African state – democratic or not – but bypassing it altogether and connecting directly to the local through, for example, foreign capital taking over local security agencies. In fact, neoliberal discourses of governance, at the heart of the present form of market-led democracy, have successfully reconfigured the state as an obstacle for change, something that should ideally be by-passed (Ferguson, 2006; Taylor, 2002). This recasting of the state from protagonist of development to obstacle to development legitimates a direct connection to the local by transnational institutions such as the World Bank, transnational forms of capital such as mining, and even forms of civil society that benefit directly from this new topography of power. It is this new web of connections between the local and the transnational that Ferguson sees as transnational governmentality.

And, like Abrahamsen and Kasfir’s critique of the term civil society, Ferguson (2006) argues that the notion should be viewed with scepticism as it contains many elements that support the current set of power relations, and contributes to the stabilization of the local for capital extraction. Instead, he advocates social movements as a better category of differentiation, and describes resistance to this form of transnational governmentality as being associated with transnational solidarity movements, or international social movements:

If … transnational relations of power are no longer routed so centrally through the state, and if forms of governmentality increasingly exist that bypass the states altogether, then political resistance needs to be reconceptualized in a parallel fashion. (Ferguson 2006, p. 106)
This is important, as this new topography of power makes room for a form of resistance that sees not only the state as a goal to capture or an adversary to change, but further recognizes the transnational forms of relations that reproduce global governmentality on a local scale. Ferguson’s “parallel” structure aims to resist and contest on both these registers at once.

**Alternative meaning of democracy**

In contrast to both of these perspectives on democracy in both the Ghanaian and African context, our research here suggests a different articulation of democracy – one less concerned with the politicians and political parties, and more concerned with the ability of Ghanaians – in this case – to mobilize and contest, defend or reconfigure the democratic terrain. In many ways, this alternative articulation is hinted at in the opening chapter, where the story highlighted is not the one of Rawlings and Kuffuor, and their full bellies, but rather the one where Ghanaians have come together repeatedly to contest the form and functioning of what Ninsin (2007) calls Ghana’s “elitist democracy.” In a sense, it is this alternative story that Abrahamsen (2000) begins to describe above, yet her articulation does not truly capture the evolving logic and learning behind this ongoing story of contestation. And, along similar lines, despite the ways in which this story is in dialogue with Ninsin’s (2007) description of Ghana’s democratic elitism, the story completely undermines Ninsin’s typification of Ghanaians as largely lacking a strong tradition of activism. In this way, our collected analysis of the democratic terrain, including both our PR group’s synthesis, as well as the wider understanding as articulated by interviewed activist-educators, describes the re-emergence of democracy as a compromise, and the new democratic terrain as a battleground not for state capture, but rather, as Gramsci would put it, for positioning – as a space in which to contest on an ongoing basis the way in which power, capital and exploitation are being mobilized and operationalized in people’s lives. Yet these articulations of resistance are not ultimately limited to only the socialist parameters, but also include new issues related to identity and cultural
construction that suggest a plurality of sites of contestation. Thus, in this section, this evolving alternative articulation of democracy is laid-out through the voices and opinions captured in our research.

“You speak and then I speak.”

As mentioned briefly in chapter 1, there is a Twi translation of democracy that is commonly used throughout Ghana as a defacto local definition of this form of governance. Loosely translated by AK, an activist-educator interviewed early in the research process, it means “you speak and then I speak” (interview with AK, January 14th, 2008). The connotation of this definition may seem clear, suggesting there is a space for everyone’s opinion in this model. When our PR began the synthesis of thoughts around democracy, the use of this definition to encapsulate the meaning of democracy was advanced by Kofi Larweh. Yet, Al-hassan Adam quickly suggested we avoid this definition as it too closely resembled the common public opinion that “the opposition will have their say while the government will have their way” (PR group retreat, February 23rd, 2008). In many ways, this vision of democracy is also captured in Sasha Marley’s song lyrics, where Rawlings and Kuffuor both have their say, but “still de people is hungry.” As a result of contesting this facile definition of democracy, our PR group turned instead to a rehistoricization of the origins and form of Ghana’s new democracy, grounding it in our collective reflections. The decision early on to focus on the socialist movements of the 1980s and not on the democracy movement as the starting point of this research helped us make sense of this historical moment. It is only by referencing the history of these movements that the shift to democracy in Ghana can be understood.

Though it was largely as a result of the intervention of Coleman and Al-hassan at the start of the research period (described in the previous chapter) that the necessary link was made between the socialist movements and the democracy movement, this link was re-emphasized a number of times by interviewed activist-educators. For instance, AK, AC, GY and KE all underscored how the
socialist movements of the 1980s were the formative spaces in which the activist-educators involved in the democracy movement grew. In essence, these movements took on many shapes and names (from the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guard, to MONAS, to the New Democratic Movement, to the URF) yet they all came to have similar relationships with the PNDC after the right turn of 1983 – no matter the relationship prior to this point. The shift in relations with the PNDC was quite critical, most especially because it resulted in the targeting of these individuals and movements by the military government. This targeting led to an important turning point in the thinking of many of the activist-educators involved in these socialist movements. It was during this period of targeting that the momentum for a movement to return to democracy began. For many of those targeted, this experience led to the critical realization that it is only within a broader public space where one’s human rights can be defended that it is possible to truly mobilize for a socially just form of governance that contests the exploitative nature of capital and globalization. This realization was steeped in a socialist praxis of activism, yet this praxis had been deeply affected by the failure and totalitarian turn of the PNDC (Yeebo, 2007). This shift in thinking is well summarized in this excerpt from the blog I posted on January 15th, 2008 in which I paraphrase the reflections from the interview with AK:

The reflections of those who have been embedded in the struggle are a critical point of departure for this work. After all, it is precisely these reflections that have informed the learning in struggle of various aspects of the movements in this country.

So, when someone who has been involved in the struggle from a leftist/socialist point of view reflects on their commitments in the past, especially in light of what became of the ‘revolution’ in the country, and says they are no longer convinced that revolution is the best way to make Ghanaian lives better, it is important to listen.

From this ambiguous space of learning (described further in chapter 5), AK and others (AC and KE) articulate a new priority that emerged in the latter part of the
1980s: re-establishing human rights in Ghana. This emerging collective realization is described in Excerpt 2 from a later blog post.

*Excerpt 2: Importance of Human Rights (Posted January 17th, 2008)*

The importance of human rights (HR) discourse, even in its flawed universality and liberal association, is consistently recognized as a fundamental keystone to the changing face of social movements in Ghana, and the learning associated with this change. It has been suggested that HR discourse – while roundly criticized by these same activist-educators in the early eighties – played a critical role in providing a language of contestation throughout the military period, and continues to provide a set of values through which to question inequities in the Ghanaian state that remain unaddressed. This is important as it is a position that both recognizes the problematic nature of this discourse, but also points out its usefulness in trying to get those wrongfully incarcerated free, and those continuing to suffer some relief. This is an uneasy relationship, and one that is constantly being questioned; a tentative, temporary relationship – one that is constantly being reviewed and re-evaluated; nonetheless, it is a relationship that is seen as important for the improvement of people’s lives. And so, the crux of characteristic at the core of this group of activist-educators emerges. These are not those who believe in waiting for the revolution to come, in allowing those suffering to suffer until their breaking point. And while they acknowledge the ways in which this position may make capital exploitation easier and more stable, it also is a question of where ones allegiance’s lie: with an ideology or with those marginalized from resources and livelihoods.

A return to a democratic form of government is directly associated with the potential usefulness of this discourse, and led in large part to the formation of the resultant democracy movement. Yet, what was of particular importance to our PR group’s analysis of this shift in thinking is that it also reconfigured the
relationship of activism in Ghana with the state. From a history of repeated state capture by either military or socialist movement elements – and planning for this capture by socialist movements – the new era of re-democratization, with all its pitfalls and hiccups at the politician level, comes with a sense of a change in relations between activism and the state. This new set of relations is exemplified by KE when he says that no matter the party in power, he will continue to work to reveal and contest inequity, and that he is prepared to work with anyone else to accomplish these goals – a point that will be returned to below in discussing the Kume Preko demonstrations (interview with KE, February 4th, 2008). Kofi Larweh captured this changing logic well when he asked in our PR group session:

Which is better, to be in power and be forced to do things against your will, or to be out of power and hold those in power to account to do what you want? (PR Retreat, Feb 24th, 2008)

Yet, Kofi’s analysis here also provides an important link to the other ingredient in this shift in thinking – an ingredient that links in with Ferguson’s (2006) description of the way African nation states are embedded in transnational governmentality. Thus, when Kofi is speaking here of being “forced to do things against your will” he is directly referencing the decision by the PNDC to take on structural adjustment in 1983. In essence, Kofi is adding the last element in our group’s analysis of this shift in thinking, where the decision to put aside for now the issue of state capture by movements and activist-educators is also embedded in an awareness of the global power dynamics in which Ghana is situated.

Thus, this alternative story of democracy in Ghana takes as its starting point the potential it provides for contesting the everyday inequality of the global capitalist system, and not from the electoral you say - I say of partisan politics. This differentiation was most tellingly captured in the Kume Preko demonstrations of 1995 – a series of demonstrations Abrahamsen (2000) also uses to underscore her point that in joining the democracy movement, Ghanaians were not only demanding a change in governance models but also a change in relationships with global capital and the aid regime. While the learning dimensions of this discussion are more deeply undertaken in chapter 5, it is useful
here to dwell on Kume Preko because it illustrates clearly this new relationship with the notion of state capture.

**Democracy as contestation, not just contested elections**

While *Kume Preko* is briefly described above, what needs to be underscored here is that the uprising of the younger elements of the labour movement who took the stage was not reconfigured into a revolutionary attempt to seize the state, nor into an opportunist excuse by elements within the military to undertake a coup. Instead, it lead to a major series of demonstrations across the country that not only critiqued the government, but as Abrahamsen points out, also linked it to a critique of global neoliberal governmentality that disciplined and contained the range of choices available to African governments, no matter how democratic or “good.” And, while this major uprising also brought with it opportunist attempts by the political adventurers within the organizing Alliance for Change to use the momentum generated by the demonstrations to win power, the demonstrations themselves could neither be contained nor controlled by these adventurers. As KE describes, *Kume Preko* stands out as the most important moment of resistance and contestation in recent Ghanaian history. And yet, he notes that it is important precisely because of what it was not – an attempt to put someone new in power (interview with KE, Feb. 4th, 2008). In many ways, according to him, it was proof that aiming not to seize power but rather to contest it was an even more effective strategy as it deflated critiques of self interest being thrown by the state. In the blog post that sums up reflections around *Kume Preko*, I wrote:

> This moment, to a number of the people interviewed, marks a critical turning point in Ghanaian politics where people realized it was possible to gain power and purchase on an issue without (a) capturing state power, and (b) using militancy to do so. The sheer power of momentum of an idea can carry the mass of people. Here, the reflections of those interviewed was that we must not fall into the trap that imagines popular
support equals support for individual leaders, or even particular parties.  
(blog post, Feb 18th, 2008)

GB, coming at it from the perspective a younger generation, also underscores how *Kume Preko* also helped to signal that the older generation of activist-educators could not contest the power of the state alone. He sees the uprising by the younger generation of labour activists, and the failure by the leadership of the trade union congress to support it, as indicative of this split. What is important in this lesson – discussed further in chapter 5 – is that many in the older generation were forced to realize that movements and mobilization, and successful contestation are not the result of personalities, but of the appeal of the issues being fought for (interview with GB, Feb 14th, 2008).

**Conclusion**

Thus to summarize, in the process of engaging in the participatory discussions at the heart of this research, a new articulation of democracy emerged. As the first chapter alluded to, this articulation of democracy is not, ultimately found in the vagaries of electoral politics, nor in the foundations or architecture of its democratic institutions. Instead it is found and re-found through the processes of contestation embodied in movement politics; or, to put it more simply, it is found in the way that Ghanaians have gotten out to defend, deepen and redefine what democracy means. This is a tenuous process, and we don’t mean to falsely represent it in celebratory and triumphalist terms, ignoring the elitist version of democracy that exists and the way it continues to support the interests of capital over the broader needs of the public; yet, this complex and contested definition of democracy cannot also be simply swept aside by critical voices bent on dismissing democracy as un-African. The story of Ghana’s democracy at the electoral level may be elitist, but there is something else going on in the movements that contest and reconfigure what this space really means – and this something else has profoundly local ramifications, history and origins. It is
towards an understanding of these dynamics of contestation that the next chapter turns.
CHAPTER 4 – GHANAIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT CONTESTATION AND NEGOTIATION IN THE 4TH REPUBLIC

Explanatory note:

Like the previous chapter, this chapter aims to address one of the objectives outlined in this document’s introduction. Here, the focus is objective 2 – To establish the ways in which social movements have been contesting and negotiating the democratic terrain over the last 15 years. Like the previous chapter, the co-constructed and re-storied meaning here comes from both our collective deliberations as well as from the wider activist-educator interviews. The chapter aims to first situate Ghanaian social movement negotiation and contestation in the literature on social movements within the Ghanaian and African context as well as more broadly – important in this case as there is such little literature on social movements in Ghana. In doing this, the chapter will articulate a case for using social movements as a analytical category over the more prominent notion of civil society, a case that was hinted at in the previous chapter. After justifying the social movement outlook, and situating its use in a wider literature, the chapter will lay out two facets of our analysis concerning objective 2. The first facet provides a detailed account of the Ghanaian social movements in existence during this democratic period; the second facet presents two heuristic typologies that our PR group articulated in order to better understand the link between movement organization and movement strategies. Usefully, the differentiation established in these typologies revolves around the ways in which movements communicate and learn – a way of understanding difference that builds a bridge to the next chapter on learning in social movements.

15 Though what little there is will be drawn on and woven into the articulations of movements in Ghana laid out below.
Introduction

In the previous chapter, our different articulation of democracy was presented, where the protagonists of the democratic movement and ultimately democracy, are not politicians, but are rather Ghanaians who took to the streets. In many ways, the different literatures on Ghanaian and African experiences of (re-)democratization acknowledge this activism; yet in the case of the celebratory and some of the critical literature, this activism is overshadowed with an obsessive deliberation on what politicians/elites make out of this new space. A corollary of this is a further containment of this activism through reference to a problematically all-inclusive civil society. In contrast with this, this study takes inspiration from Abrahamsen (2000) and other critical voices in locating the agency generated through this activism not in the container of civil society, but rather in movement terminology. As the introduction makes clear, it is this narrative of democratization – still very much ongoing – that is at the heart of this research.

With this in mind, it is useful to bring to the fore the various different parameters of this movement terminology, as it, like anything else, is also embedded in its own debates and articulations. However, before doing this, it is necessary to return to the story of Kume Preko – the 1995 demonstrations that helped solidify in the Ghanaian activist and public imaginary this new concept of democratic contestation – and to pause for a minute to dwell upon the government and aid regime reaction to its success. What is telling in this reaction is the way in which it illustrates the co-opted nature of the notion of a civil society, as well as underscores the justification for this study’s focus on social movements.

The uses and abuses of Civil Society

Julie Hearn’s (2001, p. 43) review of the “uses and abuses of civil society” in the African context provides a key starting point from which to draw a connection between the critiques of civil society articulated in the critical literature in the
previous chapter (c.f. Kasfir, 1998; Abrahamsen, 2000; Ferguson, 2006) and the Ghanaian context. Unlike mainstream and celebratory literature where civil society is an undifferentiated and ultimately statically benevolent entity, Hearn describes civil society in much more contentious ways. She notes how in Ghana a shift occurred in the mid to late 1990s, where civil society – as donors such as USAID defined it – was recruited to build consensus on the continued economic reforms associated with structural adjustment. Unlike earlier in the decade when Gyimah-Boadi (1994) lamented the fact that civil society organizations seemed to be against what he felt were much needed economic reforms, Hearn documents how the *Kume Preko* VAT demonstrations provoked a donor-driven economic consensus-building exercise:

The VAT demonstrations were a turning-point for the Rawlings government. The lesson which it and the donors learnt was that implementing difficult economic policy within a democratic framework requires broad-based consensus. With a view to building support around the reintroduction of VAT, the government organised a two day National Economic Forum in September 1997. (2001, p. 45)

This forum was sponsored by a cross-section of development donors, including the World Bank, and was aimed at building stability in the face of what was obviously a public disenchanted with the prospect of even more of their dwindling livelihood being taken away. In this sense, civil society organizations are being recruited here by Ghana’s government and by its donors to stabilize the way for the re-introduction of this incredibly unpopular tax – a civil society architecture Ferguson (2006), Kamat (2004) and Kapoor (2005) have also discussed. What is also clear is that, according to Hearn, the emergence of a cohort of organizations willing to support these reforms is a “consequence of donor support to civil society in Ghana” (2001, p. 47). Hearn reveals the full implications of the cooptation of both the notion and the reality of civil society in the Ghanaian context when she argues that:

Civil society's ability to promote consensus around restructuring forms the subject of the new politics of adjustment in the late 1990s in a
context where adjustment is increasingly pursued through liberal democracy rather than authoritarianism. (2001, p. 47)

In this sense, the shift to democracy under the auspices of the good governance discourse Abrahamsen (2000) describes above has necessitated the creation of a version of civil society that is not the protagonist of the fight for rights and greater access to resources by the poor, but is rather the facilitator of the economic process of further destroying the livelihoods of average Ghanaians. As an important aside, this analysis is also echoed by our own study, where the role of civil society in stabilizing communities affected by mining is unpacked in a detailed manner. Al-hassan Adam, for instance, notes:

the definitions of civil society and the characters of civil society have been created to contain the neo-liberal policy, the backlash against the neo-liberal policies. (PR retreat, Feb 23rd, 2008)

With this analysis in mind, Hearn concludes her piece by stating:

The dynamic explored in this paper ... illustrate[s] how powerful Northern states are able to create and influence significant social groupings in Africa in order to use 'civil society' as a vehicle for stabilising the existing order. If we can draw one conclusion it is that autonomous social forces are more urgently needed than ever before in Africa, yet are as absent as never before. And, perhaps, the identification of 'autonomous social forces' with the current version of civil society is a spurious assumption to begin with. (2001, p. 52)

While it is easy to agree with Hearn that associating “autonomous social forces” with the term “civil society” is “spurious”, it has to be noted that these forces are not “as absent as never before.” It is rather the theoretical lens through which one looks that predicts whether one can see these autonomous forces or not. After all, it is not like the VAT demonstrations she talks of came from nowhere.

This, then, is the jumping off point for the use of social movements as a category of investigation in the Ghanaian context, given the way in which civil society as a term is deeply implicated in the neoliberal transnational governmentality Ferguson (2006) describes. From the analysis Hearn provides, it
becomes clear not only how but when the notion of civil society began to be emptied of any of its emancipatory potential in the Ghanaian context. Any reference to it now must be understood not only as a convenient collapsing of the multiple interests in civil society – in contrast to the Gramscian interpretation where civil society is the battleground for hegemonic control – but it must also be understood as a Foucauldian mechanism for disciplining and control, or for what Kapoor (2005, p. 210) calls the “taming of the grassroots.” So, in this sense, our study purposefully avoided civil society as a category of inquiry, choosing instead to focus on social movements. As Kofi notes, “I was reflecting yesterday and this focus on movements is good. Civil society is too much a donor term” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Yet, in order to better situate Ghana’s contemporary movements within a broader set of definitions and explorations of the term *social movement*, our study introduces the parameters of these definitions and explorations in the next section.

**Social movement studies in Africa and beyond**

In the section that follows a variety of ways of understanding movements, their formation and their strategies will be laid out. Given the nature of the 2nd objective of our research – *To establish the ways in which social movements have been contesting and negotiating the democratic terrain over the last 15 years* – it is critical to situate the “ways” of Ghanaian social movements in the broader literature. Of particular interest in this discussion is the tension between Old Social Movement (OSM) and New Social Movement (NSM) theoretical approaches, as well as the ultimately revealing post-colonial critiques of both of these positions – ultimately revealing because this critique not only highlights the Eurocentrism at the heart of both these other theoretical approaches, but also suggests the ways in which movements in post-colonial settings use the discourses of both approaches depending on the context. However, before turning to this theoretical discussion, some initial comments on the use of *social movement* in the Ghanaian context are necessary.
Unlike in other places in the global south, Africa, and especially West Africa, has yet to see an emerging literature on social movements. The only real exception to this is Mamdani and Wamba dia Wamba’s 1995 study of social movements, largely inspired by the mixed results of different democracy movements across the continent – further explored in the post-colonial section below. The only other exceptions across the continent are mainly Southern African in focus, with many of these studies surfacing in literature collections that aim for global coverage and provide the African example (c.f. Ballard et al, 2005; Bond, 2004; Habib & Valodia, 2005; McKinley, 2004), or are restricted to discussions grounded in Southern African issues alone (c.f. Cock, 2004; Desai & Pithouse, 2003; Egan & Wafer, 2005; Hassim, 2004; Khan & Pieterse, 2004; Dwyer, 2004).

In contrast to this limited literature, in Latin America, the study of social movements has become widespread – literature on the Landless People’s Movement (MST) of Brazil could fill a room of its own (c.f. Wright & Wolford, 2003; McCowan, 2003; Knijnik, 2007). In fact, the Latin American literature has become so pervasive that its influence can be felt elsewhere, where social movements have emerged as an important component of post-development alternatives to Western led development initiatives and concepts of progress (Escobar, 1995). As Peet and Hartwick (1999) explain, post-development scholars “shared a critical stance with respect to established [Western] science; an interest in local autonomy, culture, and knowledge; and a position defending localized, pluralistic grassroots movements” (p. 150).

In fact, part of the inspiration for Abrahamsen’s (2000) examination of democracy movements across Africa – and in Ghana – is informed by this post-development connection, where she draws on Escobar (1995) when he argues for a resistance to Western led development that can avoid being co-opted by its regime of truth:

16 These are the first three hits on a Google Scholar search that included over 13,000 others.
Social movements and antidevelopment struggle may contribute to the formation of nuclei of problematized social relations around which novel cultural productions might emerge. (p. 217)

Therefore, for Escobar it is in social movements connected to articulations of new forms of knowledge around cultural production that resistance to the dominant development discourse can best be enacted. Similarly, for Abrahamsen it is through a new articulation of the movements that led to democracy across the African continent that a discursive challenge can be levelled against the neoliberal discourses of good governance and democracy.

As noted in the previous chapter, Ferguson (2006) also privileges social movements as an important source of resistance to what he calls transnational governmentality, a position that also echoes Escobar. Yet, for Ferguson, this new modality must be pushed by his reconstituted notion of topographies of power. He asks:

Are we ready for social movements that fight not “from below” but “across,” using their “foreign policy” to fight struggles not against “the state” but against the hydra-headed transnational apparatus of banks, international agencies, and market institutions through which contemporary capitalist domination functions? (p. 107)

In this sense, Ferguson is pushing away from the localized vision of Escobar and other post-development scholars and instead presenting a vision of movements that are embedded in a different iteration of the “grassroots”: one that is “not local, communal, and authentic, but worldly, well-connected, and opportunistic” (p. 107). In many ways, this vision echoes Peet and Hartwick (1999) when they call for the “coalescence” of local movements into “regional and global oppositional movements” (p. 205) – an argument also made by other social movement scholars (Khagram, Riker & Sikkink, 2002). Ironically, despite the African focus of Ferguson’s writing, the example he draws on to demonstrate this new “parallel structure” it is not African but rather the Zapatista movement in Mexico (p. 107) – an example Peet and Hartwick also use (p. 205). This choice is at once indicative of Latin America being the leading example of social
movement activism in the global south, and at the same time revealing of the absence of African social movement writing.

**Contemporary Theories**

In order to better situate this emerging focus on social movements in literature critical of civil society, good governance, democracy and development in general, it is necessary here to lay out the recent uses of this term and debates surrounding its definition. Although some scholars of social movements retrace the origin of the term to the late 19th Century (Welton, 1993; Holst 2002) – often called “old social movements” (OSMs) for the purposes of the first part of discussion – it is enough to zero in on debates surrounding the term in contemporary times. For Carroll (1997), two major schools of thought have emerged in the last 40 years: the resource mobilization theories (RMT) and the new social movement theories (NSM). These two schools can be divided based on how they study social movements. As Carroll (1997) notes:

We can, at the outset, draw two distinctions between the paradigms. Firstly, resource mobilization theory (RMT) – the predominantly American approach – focuses primarily upon *how* movements form and engage in collective action; the more European new social movement (NSM) formulations focus primarily on *why* specific forms of collective identity and action have appeared in late twentieth century Euro-North American societies17 … Secondly, RMT offers a conception of movement practice that emphasizes the *shared interests* underlying the process of mobilization: in forming a movement a social group engages in the rational pursuit of its common interests. NSM theory, in contrast, views movements less as agencies of common interest and more as new forms of *collective identity*, which not only transform people’s self-

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17 Holst (2002) has also noted this differentiation.
understandings but create cultural codes that contest the legitimacy of received points of view. (p. 8)

This distinction is important even as it makes it clear that these paradigms are both grounded in “Euro-North American” examples. Although RMT is largely not featured in the discussions associated with this study, it is briefly mentioned in one of the only existing texts on Ghanaian social movements (Prah, 2007).

RMT has been mostly dominated by two theories (Carroll, 1997). The first of these is McCarthy and Zald’s Entrepreneurial Mobilization Theory, which focuses on the professional organizer, and “draws on organizational theory and Olson’s (1965) rational-choice political theory” (Carroll, 1997, p. 9) (c.f. McCarthy & Zald, 1973; Zald & McCarthy, 1983). According to Carroll (1997), this “rational-choice theory presents a model of instrumental rationality according to which rational decision-makers base their choices on a calculus of costs and benefits” (p. 10). In terms of interpreting the how of social movements, this means seeing movements as being based on rational decisions connected to a given group’s use of their resources to defend their interests. The second analysis that has dominated RMT is Charles Tilly’s political process model, where the focus is on the way in which movements can engage in the politics of a given state. This is particularly relevant in states that “base their sovereignty at least partly on the consent of the governed” (Carroll, 1997, p. 12) as it makes them vulnerable to public displays of dissent (c.f. Tilly, 1988). In this sense, the political process model focuses not just on a movement’s ability to mobilize resources but also on its opportunities to act within a given political environment (Tarrow, 1994). While this interpretation of the how of social movements presents a “reasonably coherent perspective” it has nonetheless been critiqued for the way it understands rationality and connects it unproblematically to “consumerist consciousness,” for the way it reifies and normalizes a deep corporatist organizational structure, and for the way it theorizes consciousness that neglects the “interpretive factors associated with mobilization” (Carroll, 1997, pp. 14-15).

NSM theories – far more relevant to this overall study – have likewise been dominated by two approaches of analysis informed respectively by the
theories of Alberto Melucci and Jürgen Habermas (Carroll, 1997). Both of these are informed by a break with classic Marxist analysis that so dominated the more traditional movements such as those emerging from labour (Finger, 1989; Carroll, 1997). For Melucci, this break is clean, as the emerging Euro-American movements of the late 1960s/early 1970s are viewed to no longer see the state as adversary or state capture as the goal, but are instead interested in building collective identities and challenging dominant discursive regimes of truth (Melucci, 1989). Thus these movements were typified by Melucci as being non-political – a typification that has since been criticized (Bartholomew & Mayer, 1992; Mooers and Sears, 1992; Carroll, 1997). Melucci’s analysis has also been criticized on a number of fronts, form failing to address structural issues as well as placing discursive issues over practical material realities to clearly ignoring their interconnected nature (Bartholomew & Mayer, 1992; Carroll, 1997).

Habermas, on the other hand, does not completely break with Marxist critical theory, though he does build an analysis that focuses on the communicative rather than on the material (Carroll, 1997). His description of system and lifeworld have had a broad effect on thinking about NSMs, where NSMs are seen as sites of new learning potential for the lifeworld in its resistance to colonization by the system-world (Habermas, 1987). This resistance is centered on what Habermas calls “communicative rationality” that contests the dominance of instrumental rationality – a rationality embedded in the economy and the state that “are the central components of the ‘system’” (Carroll, 1997, p. 20). Like Melucci, the movements in this analysis are not contesting the state, or for state control, so much as the discursive “grammar of forms of life” (Habermas, 1987, p. 392). Yet, also like Melucci, Habermas has been criticized for cultural reductionism, which ignores the material realities of people’s lives, as well as the consequences of not contesting state power. As Ray points out:

Not only is it difficult to separate symbolic from material objectives, but identity politics can involve a privatization of political questions into sub-cultural movements which eschew engagement with the state and thereby conspire in their own marginalization. (1993, p. 177)
At the same time, Habermas’ analysis has also been critiqued for being too focused on Euro-American movements, ignoring the current realities of globalization (Thiele, 1993).

**OSM and NSM: counter vs. anti-hegemony**

Before taking up this critique of Euro-American focus, that could be levelled against many current social movement theorists, it is important here to introduce the tension at the heart of much contemporary Euro-American social movement theory: the goals of social movement activism. Here, according to Holst (2002) and Finger (1989) the tension can be described as being drawn between the grand narrative of Old Social Movements – associated directly with the Marxist-Leninist-Gramscianist traditions of socialism – and the plurality of identity of New Social Movements – associated with NSM theory described above, along with post-structural and postmodern theories. Carroll (1997) sees a similar tension, but describes it as the liminal between the goal of counter-hegemony as and the goal of anti-hegemony. In this sense, Carroll provides one of the key theoretical underpinnings of this study in associating counter-hegemony with a Gramscian inspired notion of social movement activism, and in associating Foucault with the anti-hegemony strand. Carroll (1997) sums up the counter-hegemonic position thus:

> For Gramscians and Neo-Gramscians the contradictions and crises of capitalism limit the lifespan of any hegemonic order, and as the material basis for consent deteriorates opportunities open for constructing hegemony in a second sense, namely an alternative hegemony the unites various subaltern groups into a counterhegemonic bloc of oppositional forces committed to an alternative social vision. (p. 25)

Putting this alternative social vision, or hegemony, in place:

> Entails a protracted “war of position” in which a coalition of oppositional movements wins space and constructs mutual loyalties in
civil society, the state, and the workplace, thereby disrupting and displacing the hegemony of the dominant class and its allies. (p. 26)

As will be evident in the discussions of Holst’s (2002) theories of social movement learning in the chapter that follows, even this Gramscian approach ignores the potential represented by OSM approaches of not only building a counterhegemonic bloc in order to shift hegemony through a war of positions, but also of including what Gramsci (1971) called the war of manoeuvre, meant to lead to revolution and state seizure. This addition is important as it has direct implications on the story being told here, especially when considering the shift in activist-educator thinking from state seizure to a more protracted war of position in a democratic state.

Alternatively, Carroll (1997) suggests the radical pluralists, inspired by NSM, poststructural, and postmodern theory, reject the “universalizing tendencies of a Gramscian (counter)hegemonic project … as little more than variations on themes that have themselves been central to the hegemonic discourse of modernity” (p. 29). Thus:

The quests for a shared vision, for a unified strategy, or for an integrated historic bloc are seen as totalizing political moves that carry potential authoritarian subtexts. (p. 29)

In contrast to this, and drawing on Foucault’s analysis of power – “web-like and without any point of origin, agent or predominant directionality” (p. 31) – a plethora of sites of resistance open up:

The omnipresence of power means that no one site is privileged as a locale for political activism; hence a multiplicity of resistances is given validations within a Foucauldian perspective. (p. 31)

In many ways, this description also connects with the emerging realization in the post-Kume Preko period that perhaps more could be accomplished to guarantee and extend the rights and freedoms of Ghanaians by resisting in many locations at once, and in many directions at once. This also is relevant to discussions of power within and between movements, especially where leadership begins making strategic decisions for the broader movement – discussed below. And while
Carroll (1997) provides an important critique of this theoretical extension of Foucault’s thinking, noting the difficulty in resisting an all-encompassing and ever-changing notion of power. He also ignores how Foucault describes subjugated knowledges as a form of resistance that not only resists local deployments of power, but also discursive regimes of truth. Foucault even goes so far as to note it is through such subjugated knowledges that critical scholarship “performs its work” (1980, p. 80). Furthermore, Carroll ignores the possibility of these two polarities existing in mutual cooperation and to mutual benefit – a possibility Mark Olssen (1999) has articulated well.

Building a bridge between Gramsci and Foucault – something returned to in the final chapter – Olssen (1999) provides an important recontextualization of each theorist’s work, and in the meantime allays some of the polarities Carroll establishes. While there is no need to over-develop this bridge here, it is perhaps apt enough to point out that in practical reality – at least in the Ghanaian context – Ghanaian movements have often gone back and forth between using the language of radical pluralism and new social movements – or a plethora of sites of resistance and directions of resistance – and the language of class struggle and old social movements. In fact, it is precisely this slipperiness between OSM and NSM constructions of movements in post-colonial settings that has led theorists like Mamdani & Wamba-dia-Wamba, as well as Kapoor, to question their automatic portability into non-Western spaces – where movements are deemed to fit into either one category or another, ignoring their potential use of both.

Post-colonial re-articulations: moving beyond the OSM/NSM dichotomy

Mahmood Mamdani & Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (1995) are the co-editors of one of the only articulations of social movements in the African context (outside of Southern Africa) especially as they relate to the problematic of the failures of state-led and market-led development models, as well as a complex thinking through of the links between social movements and democratization in the African context. In the collection’s introduction, Mamdani (1995) underscores an
important shift in thinking captured in the various chapters, as authors in their
network entitled “Social Movements, Social Transformation and the Struggle for
Democracy in Africa” critically challenge their own connections to a strictly
structuralist, Marxist, materialist and dependency informed position with a
position much more deeply informed by the problematic of the state in the African
context. In echoing our PR group’s own departure from the use of civil society,
Mamdani (1995) describes the starting point of this collective endeavour:

The notion that provided the starting point of the network, and around
which different studies came to anchor themselves, was that of social
movements, not civil society. (p. 6)

What followed this decision, according to Mamdani, was a “spirited discussion”
as to what qualified as a social movement (1995, p. 6). One common agreement
that resulted from these discussions saw the categories of new and old movements
as too limiting:

The ‘new social movement’ orientation now widespread in Europe,
North and Latin America, which distinguishes ‘new’ community-based
movements from ‘old’ class-based movements was rejected as too
restrictive. (2005, p. 6)

With this critique of the application of external strictures in mind, the Mamdani
and Wamba-dia-Wamba’s collection is very much an extension of Mamdani’s
thinking expressed later in his seminal text, *Citizen and Subject* (1996).

In *Citizen and Subject*, Mahmood Mamdani (1996) argues that
dependency theory and orthodox Marxism reveal “ahistorical structuralism” based
on viewing social reality “through a series of binary opposites” – a practice that
limits analysis:

In the event that a real-life performance did not correspond to the
prescribed trajectory, it was understood as a deviation. (p. 9)

In this sense, African experiences are constantly viewed through the historical
strait-jacket of these deterministic grids. By the same token, Mamdani also levels
a similarly potent critique at poststructuralism:
If structuralism tended to straitjacket agency within the iron laws of history, a strong tendency in poststructuralism is to diminish the significance of historical constraints in the name of salvaging agency. (p. 10)

In each of these and in contemporary mainstream Africanist writing, Mamdani sees a tendency to “write” African “history by analogy.” He asks:

What happens if you take a historical process unfolding under concrete conditions – in this case, of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Europe – as a vantage point from which to make sense of subsequent social development? The outcome is a history by analogy rather than history as process. Analogy seeking turns into a substitute for theory formation. (1996, p. 12)

Whereby:

The central tendency of such a methodological orientation is to lift a phenomenon out of context and process. The result is history by analogy. (1996, p. 12)

In Mamdani’s articulation of an African context, therefore, we can see a pushing away from the limitations of both structuralist and poststructuralist positions, while attempting to place at the center of this analysis the phenomenon too often analogized in the past:

I seek neither to set the African experience apart as exceptional and exotic nor to absorb it in a broad corpus of theory as routine and banal. For both, it seems to me, are different ways of dismissing it. In contrast, I try to underline the specificity of the African experience, or at least a slice of it. This is not an argument against comparative study but against those who would dehistoricize phenomena by lifting them from context, whether in the name of abstract universalism or of an intimate particularism, only to make sense of them by analogy. In contrast, my endeavour is to establish the historical legitimacy of Africa as a unit of analysis. (1996, p. 13)
This scepticism, as well as attention to context, is important particularly in an African as well as more generally in a post-colonial context. This more context-driven approach is also how those collected in the Mamdani and Wamba-dia-Wamba study concluded “understanding the course of democratic struggle in different country situations” could be achieved (1995, p. 7). In this way what matters most is the local conditions through which movements manifest themselves, and how these movements use different strategies and discourses to achieve their ends. However, Mamdani notes, what is not important is how they fit the “distinctions which have almost reached the status of fad amongst an array of social movement theorists around the globe” (1995, p. 7). As the discussion of movements below will indicate, it is precisely this resistance to categorization that has been “a key” to “understanding” Ghana’s own story of “democratic struggle” as well as the movement-stories that have since erupted.

Kapoor (2007), writing from the Indian context of Orissa state, describes a similar phenomenon of the colonization of categorization in connection to social movement theories:

The OSM/NSM categorization has … generally been adopted when considering the development of movement taxonomies in the south … despite their (OSM/NSM) combined disregard for the issues, concerns and historical trajectories and experiences of subaltern groups and their movement specificities in the south. (2007, p. 9)

In this sense, Euro-American social movement theory, captured in the OSM/NSM divide, is considered “portable” and can therefore be used to unpack struggles in locations far outside their context:

Some adherents are in danger of appropriating peasant, indigenous, and/or rural movements and struggles in the recently independent countries and regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa “into” peasant/industrial Marxist political-conceptual trajectories on the one hand or “into” a civil society concept and middle class urban consumerist politics, preoccupied with questions of identity, individual rights, environment, and gender which, in turn, are exclusively
embedded in enlightenment onto-epistemic and axiological origins.
(2007, p. 33)

He criticizes these associative appropriations, suggesting:
The “portability” of these Eurocentric-theoretical projects that have emerged in industrial contexts is questionable, both in terms of possible epistemic colonizations (a tendency to speak for all spaces, peoples/cultures, and times) or in terms of an insensitivity to the contextual embeddedness of theorizing when applied to rural and peripheral movements in recently independent nations and regions.
(2007, p. 33)

Instead, Kapoor suggests movements such as those in the Adivasis (original dweller) context he studies in India, should be viewed through the lens of subaltern studies and post-colonial theory – a link Mignolo (2000) also makes in bringing Foucault’s notion of subjugated knowledges into dialogue with his description of local histories contesting global designs. Subaltern studies, he notes, has a history of contesting the application of Marxist interpretations on Indian contexts:

Subaltern studies took issue with the conventional Marxist readings of modern Indian history, where peasant and labor movement studies concentrated more on economic conditions and the predominance of Left organizational and ideological lineages and affiliations. (Kapoor, 2007, p. 36)

In contrast to this, subaltern studies argues that “subalterns are the subjects of history and makers of their own destinies” (2007, p. 36). Nonetheless, Kapoor also acknowledges criticisms of subaltern studies, and suggests that building in an awareness of these criticisms makes the approach stronger: first, by questioning the assumptions of “homogeneity/unity of political coalitions between and within subalterns” (2007, p. 36); second, subaltern studies must be properly situated in their contexts including “a re-engagement with Gramscian-Marxism and the critiques of Marxism” that allows for an analysis of the “social order, institutions, and the history of material relations that mediate, shape and/or influence the
formation of subaltern/other subjects … provided Adivasis [or local] interpretations and aspirations define these ‘Left-encounters’” (2007, p.37); third, the related critique of cultural reductionist tendencies in subaltern and post-colonial theory that ignore the substantive material realities of marginalized communities(2007, p. 38). Hence, in this final point, Kapoor is re-emphasizing the need to remain aware of capital and the way it operates even from a subaltern studies perspective.

Ghanaian Social movements and dynamics of contestation and negotiation

Having established the context and theoretical frame of reference for using social movements as our study’s focus, we can now turn to explore the contributions to this conversation our study is making, especially in the Ghanaian context. These contributions can be divided roughly into two categories. The first contribution made to social movement knowledge is a detailed discussion of six movements, or groupings of movements. These include the women’s movement, the people with disability movement, the socialist movements of the 1980s, the democracy movement, the anti-neoliberal movements, and the anti/fair mining movement. The democracy movement and the socialist movements of the past have already been well articulated in the previous chapter – though the current articulation of Ghana’s socialist movement is captured below as part of the anti-neoliberal movements. The description of each of these movements or group of movements is based on both interviews of those involved in the movements, and a further analysis, validation and deepening of inflections by our PR collective. Also, where available, these descriptions are drawn into dialogue with any relevant literature that helps situate each particular story.

The list of movements covered here does not aim to cover all the current movements in Ghana, but rather focuses on the main movements identified in preliminary discussions with our PR group members as the most important movements of the current democratic period. Since, ultimately, this period is the guiding bracket of this study, focusing on these movements helps provide a
picture of the ways in which the democratic terrain is being constituted, negotiated and resisted. Some of the pitfalls in choosing this approach are explored in the methodology chapter above.

The second contribution is the articulation of two typologies of social movements in the Ghanaian context, as they evolved from our PR group’s collective analysis. They are intended as a heuristic contribution not only to general understandings of social movements, but also to discussions of social activism and movements in the Ghanaian social movement community. Unlike some of the writing on social movements explored above, a unique feature of these heuristic typologies is that they focus on the way in which movements communicate, mobilize and learn, rather than on the issue they address, or the class/community from which they emanate. However, it should be noted from the outset that these typologies are intended to be heuristic devices for conceiving of movement issues, rather than definitive categories. In fact, in the concluding section, these typologies are both used to further discussions of the various movements in the Ghanaian context. Two movements are explored fully through these typologies in order to both show how they fit the descriptions, but also the ways in which through a few changes they could more closely fit the other typology. As will be discussed further in the concluding chapter, these heuristic typologies also serve an action-oriented purpose, as our group plans to present them in different forums, and through different mediums to provoke debate amongst Ghana’s activist community with an aim at inspiring reflections on how movements can become more dialogue-centered.

As the explanatory note at the beginning of this chapter explains, the descriptions of movements that follow are largely drawn from interviews of the wider group of movement activist-educators. As mentioned in the previous chapter, as well as in the chapter on methodology, these interviews could not be recorded; therefore, the information drawn from these interviews is largely paraphrased – except where a direct quote was captured in my field notes – or is presented as part of my research reflection blogs. However, the analysis and reflections of our PR group are also drawn into dialogue with the information
drawn from interviews. Also, an attempt has been made in the descriptions below to connect these movement descriptions to any available literature about them, weaving it into the description. Where our group articulated a number of different interpretations of a particular movement, or moment within a movement’s history, the complexity of this re-storying process is maintained – revealing the collaborative but not necessarily consensus-based approach of our PR group.

**Overview of movement information**

As has been previously discussed, Kwame Ninsin (2007) has intimated that Ghanaians do not have an active tradition of activism. This remark is strange given the consistent pressure of various Ghanaian social movements around such issues as women’s rights, the privatization of water, the effects of globalization in such areas as mining, agriculture and timber, as well as the repeated defence of democratic processes in the face of real threats of cooptation and corruption. In the previous chapter, the story of this last instance was laid out, and was connected to the socialist movements of the 1970s and 80s. We will not repeat this information here, but will rather focus on those other movements that have had a major impact on the national democratic terrain. However, it should be noted that there are many connections between these movements and the democracy movement, especially if one traces the formative roots of many of the activist-educators embedded in these other movements. The exception to this direct interconnection with the democracy movement is the people with disability movement – a fact that is explored next.

**People with Disability Movement**

*The information here is largely drawn from two interviews, one held at the national headquarters of the Ghana Federation of the Disabled with PN on January 17th, 2008, and the other held at a regional level in Northern Ghana with*
According to PN, some activity on people with disabilities issues had been ongoing throughout the 60s, 70s, and 80s, but this activism was largely conducted on behalf of the disabled, rather than by them (interview, January 17th, 2008). It was only with the return to democratic rule in 1993, and the adoption of the new constitution that enshrined the rights of people with disability that the disabled themselves began to organize, connecting their emerging voice to the slogan, “nothing about us, without us.” However, PN notes that even this new constitution did not include people with disability at the table – a big reason why their movement has had to struggle for the follow-up Disability Act (interview, January 17th, 2008).

Currently, the national people with disability (PWD) movement comprises a number of associations of people with various disabilities, as well as allied organizations. The leading body within this constellation is the Ghana Federation of the Disabled. Its current members comprise The Ghana Society of the Physically Disabled (GSPD), the Ghana Association of the Blind (GAB), the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD), the Parents Association of Children with Intellectual Disability (PACID), The Society of Albinos Ghana (SOAG) and Share Care Ghana (an organization of people with neurological difficulties) (PN interview, January 17th, 2008).18

With the assistance of many outside organizations (such as the UK-based Action on Disability and Development and the local Center for Democracy and Development), the various PWD organizations began to merge more cohesively into a federation during the current democratic period, and the federation began to make better efforts to link up with regional and district level branches (PN interview, January 17th, and BT interview, January 28th, 2008). As a result of this greater national coverage, the PWD movement began to push more forcefully for

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18 For more information on the composition of the GFD, please see their web site, [www.gfdgh.org](http://www.gfdgh.org)
a recognition of PWD rights as enshrined in Ghana’s 1992 Constitution (PN interview, January 17th, 2008). In the lead up to the 2000 election, progress had been made with the NDC government to put in place a Disability Act, and even a Disability Strategy had been approved. However, after the change in power this act was put on the back-burner (PN interview, January 17th, 2008). It was only after a prolonged process of activism, largely paid for by outside donor sources, as well as the inclusion of the Disability Act in donor conditionalities for aid, that the NPP government got serious about the act (PN interview, January 17th, and BT interview, January 28th, 2008). As a result, the 2006 Disability Act was passed, which spells out more clearly what exactly needs to happen to better guarantee the rights of PWDs.

Since the act has come into play, the movement has become more of a funding seeking enterprise than a social movement, as it sources funding for various types of projects meant to help PWDs (BT interview, January 28th, 2008). None of these, however, link up with a socio-economic analysis that ties the poverty of the movement’s membership with a failure to address inequity within society (BT interview, January 28th, 2008). This oversight is exemplified by PN, a member of the national leadership of the movement, when he declares a need to address the streetism associated with people with disability not because of the poverty and lack of options this streetism represents, but rather because it does not reflect well on the movement (interview, January 17th, 2008). Another major tension within the movement is between the national leadership, which tends to take the lead in garnering funds from donors and charities, and the regional and local branches of the various associations, who are rarely given the opportunity to handle these funds garnered on their behalf. In addition to this, the overall federation of the disabled also suffers from fissures between the various associations representing different types of disability (BT interview, January 28th, 2008). As Coleman Agyeyomah notes:

They are a very complex group, with different needs, that often get lumped together. If meetings are organized and each association is not
properly represented, they won’t come. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

Nonetheless, even if the national leadership has become disconnected from its broader membership in the regions, and if there is some infighting among the different associations, Kofi Larweh notes:

The PWD movement is alive, but in a different dimension. It depends on the local environment. In my area it is still alive. They continue to work on the perceptions and attitudes towards people with disabilities on an ongoing basis. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

Yet, even as this may be true, it is also clear that the PWD movement faces its own peculiar challenges compared to other movements in the country. There are real cost implications if, for example, the PWD movement wishes to mobilize on a local or national level to demonstrate. Since the infrastructure in Ghana for people with physical disabilities is not there, it costs an enormous amount just to get people to the demonstrations. This is in addition to the special needs of the blind or deaf in such a demonstration.

Finally, the movement’s interaction with other social justice movements or organizations is also tense, as the national headquarters of the GFD consistently ask for money to take part in any actions, even if they are in the interest of their membership (Al-hassan Adam, PR group meeting, Feb 23rd, 2008). Gifty Dzah recalls attempting to dialogue with them on the topic of the women’s manifesto (addressed below) – a manifesto that categorically addresses the discrimination of women with disabilities:

We tried several times to get in touch with their main woman organizer, but it never happened. We tried over and over, because the manifesto has elements that deal with disability in there. But no one ever came to work with us, or told us how we could work with them. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

It is in these senses that the PWD movement comes across as being two movements, where local and regional branches of the movements are constantly prepared to work with others to help combat attitudes towards them, yet at the
national level, there is a strong mercantile sense to the way in which the leadership is operating.

Women’s movement

The information here is largely gathered from recent literature on the movement, as well as from four interviews and from an intensive discussion about the movement in our PR group. The interviews were with AK, a senior member of the movement (January 14th, 2008), NK, a junior member of the movement and worker in a leading women’s rights organization (February 6th, 2008); RK, a leader of the movement and director of a leading women’s rights organization (February 14th, 2008); and, BK, a member of the more radical group within the movement pushing for more class based analysis (January 23rd, 2008). Finally, it should be noted that a member of our PR group, Gifty Dzah, is also a movement member. To these reflections are added our own PR group’s re-storied analyses.

While the current manifestation of Ghana’s women’s movement needs to be understood in its own right as having emerged in the run-up to the 2000 national elections, it is also clear from both the conversations during the course of the interviews and our PR retreat that this current iteration needs to be understood within the broader history of the struggle for women’s rights in Ghana over the last 30 years. To do this, it is useful to draw on Mansah Prah’s (2007) recent contribution to the study of Ghana’s women’s movement, as well as Fallon & Aunio’s (2006) piece. For Prah (2007) there are two clear trends of women’s activism in Ghana. The first of these has been a part of Ghanaian politics since the anti-colonial struggle and subsequent emergence of Ghana as an independent state in 1957. According to Prah, the success of the independence movement was credited, in part, to women’s activism. This activism later transformed under the new Ghanaian government into a Women’s Wing of the ruling party, Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party (CPP). While, as Prah notes, this time was seen as productive for women’s rights and visibility, any forward progress was
associated directly with the ruling party, which when ousted in a coup in 1966 led to the “natural death” of this progress (p. 5). However, the idea of a women’s wing did not die with the end of the CPP. In Prah’s recounting, the coup/revolution of December 31st, 1981, led to the creation of a women’s wing associated with this revolution, called the 31st December Women’s Movement (31st DWM) and led by Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings, Jerry Rawlings’ wife.

The second of Prah’s (2007) trends of women’s activism involves a different relationship with the state – an example of which can also be found in the revolutionary timeframe. Both our PR group discussion and the various interviews of people associated with the movement tell of an alternative movement of women around the time of the 1981 revolution, named the Federation of Ghanaian Women (FEGAWO), which had strong links to the other socialist movements of this period (AK interview, January 14th, 2008). Tanko Iddrisu has noted how the FEGAWO was not linked to the 31st DWM:

There is no direct link between the federation of women and the 31st December women’s movement, because I am trying very hard not to see the 31st December movement as one of the agents of the PNDC revolution, but rather came after, created to serve as some kind of memorial for the 31st revolution to serve as a political tool of PNDC/NDC continuum. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

The importance of this alternative movement has been underscored in both the interviews and our PR group analysis as it not only represented a non-coopted space of women’s activism in the beginning stages of the 1981 revolution, but it was also a formative space for many of the women who would later take on a leading role in the current iteration of the women’s movement. As Gifty Dzah notes, in the lead up to the formation of the contemporary movement, the “people behind the Ghana federation of women were still there” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). Yet, as Prah (2003) notes, the federation stood little chance of survival in the face of the state sponsored 31st DWM:

Unfortunately [FEGAWO] did not succeed in spreading its influence throughout the country, and was to be completely eclipsed by the 31st
December Women’s Movement (DWM), which was launched in May 1982. The FEGAWO, an organisation which had its roots in civil society, could not compete with the DWM, led the by First Lady and enjoying the full support of the PNDC government. (p. 8)

Before turning to look more closely at the current iteration of the women’s movement, and its link to the FEGAWO, the 31st DWM has to be properly contextualized. As Gifty Dzah notes, “you can’t write the history of women in Ghana without mentioning the 31st DWM” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008).

Founded in May of 1982, the 31st DWM quickly took over the space of women’s activism not only from FEGAWO, but also from the national women’s government machinery, known as the National Council for Women in Development (Prah, 2003). In contrast to FEGAWO, which was composed of mostly educated women, and of the NCWD, which was made up of female bureaucrats, the DWM drew most of its membership from rural women’s associations. Yet, this mobilization was also wedded to the personality of Mrs. Rawlings. As Kofi Larweh notes:

Instead of strengthening the arms of the NCWD at that time, [the PNDC] decided to create the 31st December women’s movement out of the general mobilization that characterized the governance in those days. Then, out of the blue, the whole system was hijacked, that was when it became a personality cult, where the more you can dance to and to please Mrs. Rawlings then you are seen as a leader. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

But he also points out that we can’t forget that much was accomplished through the 31st DWM:

The personality cult was both positive and negative, positive in the sense that if this is the President’s wife and you were not responding, it was perceived that some big whip was going to come from somewhere to blow you, and so you were coerced to support one way or the other. But visibly, in the communities, some people actually bought into the idea and they were supporting what women were doing in those days. The
unfortunate thing is that it was hijacked at the national level to look like it is an institution. A lot of people were still supporting of their free will. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

All of this,

[W]as happening at the lower level, [while] at the national level, people turned it into a corporation and had to employ, and seek funding and other things. So that is what happened, but at the end of the day it opened the space for people to say that this particular activity, this particular agenda, how has it catered for women. So it brought about the consciousness of people to see to it that women and their needs, women were seen as one of those groups that were grossly marginalized, and whatever development initiatives or attempts that are being made should be targeted at them. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

However, in everyone’s view, 31st DWM should not be understood as a movement, but rather as an organization. Al-hassan Adam sums it up best, arguing Mrs. Rawlings “had a women’s organization but it wasn’t a women’s movement … and she was its clear leader” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). Yet, even though the DWM was used as one way through which the PNDC and then the NDC could maintain power, it nonetheless helped to set the stage for the 2000 women’s movement that was to come.

We must however be clear that the power and influence of the 31st Dec movement was ubiquitous throughout the 1990s, which meant no alternative women’s movement or mass mobilization could emerge (Prah, 2007). Mrs. Rawlings saw the 31st DWM as her personal fiefdom, and therefore there was little if any room for people who wanted to present an alternative idea of what was important for women in Ghana (Prah, 2007). As Gifty Dzah notes, as the Ghanaian public became fed up with the NDC and Rawlings and his wife, the “people behind the Ghana federation of women were still there, and it was the spark of the killings of women in Accra that brought the movement out” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). Here, she is referring to the killing of over 30 female sex workers. The killings occurred in the run up to the 2000 election and
led to the formation of new collectivities of women that both demanded action on the killings and criticized the DWM for failure to intercede on behalf of women (Fallon & Aunio, 2006). While it could be seen that this activism helped in facilitating the transition in power, unlike in the past, this movement did not then become part of the ruling government’s machinery (Fallon & Aunio, 2006; Prah, 2007). In this sense, the second trend of women’s movements in Ghana, where this new movement kept its distance from the state, came into full fruition. With the change in government in 2000, there emerged a strong “gender activism emanating from civil society groups which,” according to Prah (2007) “has the characteristics of social movements” (p. 19). Thus this movement stayed away from the ruling party of the day, the NPP, preferring instead to use:

- Campaigns, demonstrations, petitions by networks and coalitions of groups to the government on specific gender issues. (p. 19)

In this sense, this new trend of activism, according to Prah (2007), became a social movement. Prah (2007) derives her understanding of social movements from Tilly and other Resource Mobilization (RMT) theorists (discussed above). In this typification, what surfaces is the fact that the mobilization of women in the aftermath of the serial killings led to a movement that pressurized government through particular strategies. However, unlike the description of civil society articulated by Hearn above, the women’s movement has largely eschewed donor funding, especially for its main political purposes (RK interview, February 14th, 2008). Following the RMT logic, Prah notes “Members’ logistical support in the organization of campaigns and demonstrations was crucial for the success of the activities” (p. 25). Despite these successes though, Prah (2007) states the “greatest challenges [facing the movement] are transcending its middle-class nature, and maintaining the momentum to achieve sustainability” (p. 29). The first of these challenges was also noted in our study, and will be focused on in a moment. First, however, it is useful here to describe Ghana’s current iteration of the women’s movement.

Gifty Dzah describes the contemporary form of the movement:
I would say we have three key coalitions that form the women’s movement in Ghana, as I see it: there is the Women’s Manifesto coalition, there is NetRight, and then there’s the DV bill. The domestic violence bill. So these three coalitions, or networks, come together to form the women’s movement. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

Explaining the different focuses of these networks, she adds that:

In the DV bill [coalition] there were a lot of lawyers, yes there were social, there were some other people in there, also struggling to see that domestic violence bill was passed, but it was a lot to do with getting this policy in place, getting the legal framework, so it had to do with a lot of lawyers. Then the Women’s Manifesto is looking more at, ok, it involves almost everything, because it covers policies, it covers social, it covers some political, but it’s more to do with social, getting in place, because it has a lot of demands. Then NetRight is trying to look at economic justice issues. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

In many ways the decision to remain separate from the ruling government has had its own problems – this despite the fact that the NPP government established for the first time a Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC). The movement has remained relatively unified in the face of a state attitude of confrontation, where the first Minister of MOWAC targeted many of the leaders of the women’s movement for their demands. The movement has also been characterized by a fixation on the legal-regulatory system that governs women’s lives. The culmination of this unity and focus was the passage of the domestic violence bill in 2006.

Since 2006, however, the attitude to the state has changed for many of the liberal women involved in the movement. Since the Minister of Women and Children Affairs is now a close ally to many of these liberal legal practitioners, the movement has fractured between those that believe they can work with the state and those that believe they must remain distant from the state.

These problems also connect with ideological differences between members, as a core group of the women who started the Ghana Federation of
Women are an integral part of the movement and have helped mobilize its most effective demonstrations. This leftist core has much different beliefs than the women who are now advocating for a cosier relationship with government. Gifty Dzah notes:

> When we talk about feminism, there are various ideologies, some of them are liberal, some are radical, some are socialist. So then that also comes in place and that has a lot, I don’t know about other movements, but socialist is easy to say that it’s from a socialist perspective, but there are socialists in the women’s movement, there are capitalists in the women’s movement. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

Also, one of the lessons that has begun to emerge in the minds of this leftist core is that issues of socio-economics have also been left out of any work the movement has done (BK interview, January 23rd, 2008). Likewise, there has been a marked failure at reaching out to rural women who used to feel connected and powerful in the 31st DWM (BK interview, January 23rd, 2008). Rural analysis and membership has been absent from this current version of women’s mobilization. Gifty Dzah captures these tensions at the heart of the movement when she argues:

> The women’s movement is there [in] pockets … [but] the decisions are taken by a few, then they are supposed to trickle down to the grassroots. There isn’t really a connection … I don’t believe there is anyone representing market or rural women on NetRight’s steering committee. Meanwhile, NetRight’s core is social justice and economic justice. So, if the women who form the majority part of the market are not [in the movement], when we would all try to effect policies, like trying to review GRPS II [Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy II] … there’s no direct link with the grassroots. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

Equally important within the movement is an age hierarchy that has blocked the movement from successfully reaching out to the younger generation, and even those young women who do take part are frustrated in their attempts to have the movement reflect their priorities. For Gifty Dzah, the frustration of the
younger generation suggests a form of “elitism” that could threaten the movement:

So the majority of the young have had the majority of their lives under [the NDC] regime. So they haven’t experienced, really. So all you have to do is to read, but you weren’t there, when this core group of women who form the core of the women’s movement now in Ghana were fighting. So sometime you would understand that ok fine, they have had those experiences, and they have had that path, and you understand why they are still within the core, but a movement is a movement and it involves everybody, because if you don’t get all manner of women and cluster involved, then it doesn’t become a movement at all, it becomes a group of elitists. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

It needs to be noted, however, that many people within the women’s movement are aware of these challenges and are debating how to address them, as well as acknowledging a need to establish a well debated and strategic relationship with the state and with foreign donors (BK interview, January 23rd; AK interview, January 14th; RK interview, February 14th, 2008). Some efforts to think through these issues in the movement have begun, but they remain in the nascent stage. But all of this doesn’t put aside the question asked in our PR group by Coleman Agyeyomah, “Is there a women’s movement in Ghana?” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). This question led to a debate, where Al-hassan and Coleman advanced the theory that in 2000 there was a women’s movement, but that since then, this movement has largely been co-opted into donor sponsored issues, or has been successfully NGOized:

In 2000, there was a women’s movement, but what we have now is a women’s organization. (Al-Hassan, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

This is based largely on the fact that the movement no longer represents the needs of the larger women’s population, as it fails to reach out to market women’s associations and rural women. Gifty and Kofi disagree with this
typification, and it is largely out of this productive re-storied debate that our heuristic typologies outlined below emerged.

**Anti-neoliberal movements**

*The information presented here comes from a number of sources of literature, as well as from interviews and our PR group reflections. Three interviews inform the backdrop of most of this section: one with KE, a activist involved in the socialist movements, the democracy movement and currently helping start a new socialist movement (February 4th, 2008); one with OF, a long-time union member (February 5th, 2008); and finally one with Al-Hassan Adam of our PR group (January 23rd, 2008).*

Before discussing the most recent manifestations of what could alternatively be considered the Ghanaian articulation of the anti-colonial, anti-globalization or anti-neoliberal movements, it is important to situate them in their historical context, or what Ferguson (2006) calls a history of “external domination” that goes back to colonial times. During Ghana’s colonial past, the country’s economy was reconstituted to suit British colonial needs (Songsore, 2001). Gold is a perfect example of this reconstitution, though slavery could be considered an earlier example. Here the contemporary effects of external domination in the Ghanaian economy will be explored through an examination not only of the gold mining industry, but also the agriculture sector.19 These effects are then connected to the wider effects of neoliberal structural adjustment on average Ghanaian livelihoods.

Gold mining was of pre-eminent interest in the colonial era – so much so that prior to independence the colony was called the “Gold Coast”. At that time, as is the case now, large scale mining operations were dominated by external sources that left little of the profits they reaped behind as dividends for Ghanaians

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19 Examining these two areas of the economy is relevant as gold and cocoa remain Ghana’s two main exports (Amponsah, 2007)
This situation has become even more pronounced since the advent of structural adjustment in Ghana. As Gavin Hilson (2004) has pointed out, with SAPs came a massive deregulation of the industry, and a massive increase of mining production (an increase of 500% in gold mining alone). This increased activity has had many detrimental effects, especially on rural communities living in the areas affected by mining:

[The] perpetual expansion of mining and mineral exploration activity has displaced numerous subsistence groups outright and destroyed a wide range of cultural resources. Operations have caused widespread environmental problems, including excessive land degradation, contamination, and chemical pollution. (Hilson, 2004, p. 54)

And, as in the colonial era, Ghanaians see little benefit from these extreme dislocations:

Furthermore, despite the rises in production, Ghana’s mining sector continues to contribute comparatively little to national GDP, which suggests that a significant share of extracted product is being exported overseas. (Hilson, 2004, p. 54)

Many activists and scholars have also described the way in which mining companies large and small defy Ghanaian government environmental regulations, as well as abuse the human rights of those who live in or near the mining operations (CHRAJ, 2008; WACAM, 2006; Campbell, 2004; Hilson, 2004; Ayine, 2001). With the transition to democracy, the access of foreign mining firms has continued to increase, culminating in the recent opening of protected forest reserves for mining exploration and exploitation by the current government (Tienhaara, 2006). As Kylie Tienhaara (2006) notes, the liberalization of the mining industry has forced governments of countries such as Ghana to open up protected environmental areas in order to fulfill their commitments to neoliberal deregulation, as well as to compete against other southern nations. In spite of all this massive investment in mining, and the important role it is supposed to play in the economic life of the country, Ghanaians fail to see any dividends from the
industry’s activities. All they see is the dislocation it causes and the environmental devastation it leaves behind.

A similar story can be told in Ghana’s agricultural sector. Despite the growth of cocoa and other export crops, the vast majority of farmers since colonial times have relied on domestic consumption in order to earn their livelihood. Additionally, Saaka (2001) has pointed out that the framework of colonial labour relations in Ghana has continued into the contemporary post-colonial nation-state. The three northern regions of the country provide not only the labour reserve for the south of the nation, but also the majority of its domestic foodstuffs (Saaka, 2001; Songsore, 2001). This foodstuff production and labour supply are both efforts to make “Northern peasants bear the responsibility of helping the state mediate in the contradictions between labor and capital in the industrial sector” (Songsore, 2001, p. 212). This role often places the poorest sector in the country in the longest period of food deprivation, as the crops the regions produce are consumed in the large urban centers in the south (Songsore, 2001).

While some efforts at state support to domestic agriculture were put in-place in the 1970s, the SAPs implemented in the 1980s devastated the domestic production of foodstuffs in maize, soybean, rice and other staple foods (Raman, 2006; Tsimese, 2003). As Songsore explains, “SAP has had the effect of progressively turning the terms of trade against food producers in relation to non-food consumer items from the industrial core region” (2001, p. 216). The diminishing terms of trade have been further exacerbated by first, the 1992 decision to widen access to Ghanaian markets to foreign imports – (un)coincidentally arriving with the transition to democracy – and second, the dumping of US agricultural surplus in Ghana since 2001 (Alhassan, 2009; FIAN, 2006). Even in those areas of the north where value was being added to foodstuff production through the canning of tomatoes, the opening and liberalization of the market has virtually eliminated this as a viable form of production (Raman, 2006). The dramatic deterioration of livelihoods has also affected those farmers who have attempted to diversify through poultry and other small ruminant farming
(Alhassan, 2009; Christian Aid, 2005). Essentially, the only areas of the agricultural sector that gained ground under the auspices of structural adjustment reforms were the export oriented crops, such as cocoa – a crop grown in the south that has been a consistent source of capital for the elite since colonial times (Saaka, 2001). While the negative effects of SAPs have certainly been most acute in the three northern regions, the effects are not unique to these regions; throughout the country, rural poor without access to export crops have had their livelihoods dramatically altered since the beginning of SAPs, and this situation has only been exacerbated since the advent of democracy in the country. Given these realities, it is easy to imagine how many rural farmers would not consider the last 16 years of democracy to have paid them any dividends.

Structural adjustment in Ghana has had an equally devastating effect on other economic stakeholders as well. As Essuman-Johnson (2007) notes, Ghana’s Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of formal economic positions, and the massive burgeoning of the unstable informal sector. He notes further, the ERP,

Exacted a severe toll on workers as represented by the immense and increasing gap between the minimum wage and the real cost of living.

(p. 212)
Takyiwaa Manuh (1997) has equally noted the severe effect the ERPs had, particularly on women due to their precarious economic position within Ghanaian society. Finally, Essuman-Johnson connects the effects of structural adjustment to the contemporary democratic period, where “the liberal state … came into being with the same economic policies prescribed by the IMF/World Bank that had been

20 Cocoa is an interesting case, though, where the vast majority of cocoa farms are roughly 2 acres, partially as a result of the land tenure system in Ghana, where it is difficult to gain access to large swathes of farm land. This has the beneficial result of making cocoa farming a largely egalitarian economic crop (discussed further in concluding chapter), where it can be grown. Yet, the new World Bank sponsored Land Title Acquisition Program (LAP) threatens this process, as it will make land into a commodity to be sold, allowing for much easier accumulation of land for large scale farms.
pursued by the [previous military regime]” (2007, p. 213). In this sense, the
democratic dispensation that many had fought for in the hope of addressing the
transnational governmentality of neoliberalism never manifested itself. As noted
in the previous chapter, Rita Abrahamsen (2000) has discussed this contemporary
African phenomenon at length: where populations that are crying-out for an end
to governments that place the needs of foreign capital and foreign nations over
their own populations have witnessed the formation of democratic states in
response to their cries, yet have seen these states continue to ignore the core issue
at the heart of their populaces’ demands. In Ghana’s case, this is a terrain anti-
neoliberal movements continue to contest, attempting to use various different
strategies to challenge the way transnational governmentality reigns over Ghana’s
democracy.

In this sense, the category of anti-neoliberal movements is very much an
offshoot, if not, in some cases discussed immediately below, a synonym for the
democracy movement. The various movements captured under this banner have
the strongest contemporary links to the socialist movements of the 1980s.

There are two versions of this movement that have splashed across the
headlines of Ghanaian politics. The first of these was the resurrected MFJ,
renamed after the 1992 loss to the NDC as the Alliance for Change (AFC),
discussed in the previous chapter. This alliance between elements of the left and
right contested many of the neoliberal policies that those on the right (later elected
to power) continued to uphold. The most electrifying moments of this alliance
were the Kume Preko demonstrations in 1995 against VAT – a policy foisted on
the NDC by the IMF. To this day, this is still considered the biggest
demonstration in Ghana’s political history. It is also critical in discussing this
grouping to not lose sight of the important role of the labour movement in these
processes. As OF notes, the younger labour contingent that set off the Kume
Preko demonstrations made the link between neoliberal policies and the eroding
working conditions of Ghanaian workers. This same contingent has been
peripherally involved in much of the anti-neoliberal activism since, including
supporting the rice and poultry movement described below, as well as helping
agricultural workers in general respond to the eroding terms of trade (interview, February 5\textsuperscript{th}, 2008).

As also discussed in the previous chapter, the Alliance for Change movement also has links to the contemporary Committee for Joint Action (CJA). Like the iteration of the AFC movement, it contains elements of the political party in opposition – in this case the NDC. However, and keeping in mind our PR group’s own debate about the CJA, it needs to be recognized that it also contains elements from the left who were also involved in the AFC. The “Whahala” and current “Yeewu o” demonstrations have in many ways picked up on the issues left hanging by the AFC, and continue to connect with Ghanaians not because of the opposition NDC presence in their ranks, but because the issues of oil price hikes and liberalization of the economy continue to be the things that effect Ghanaians. In fact, even this link to the NDC is in question now, where the return to power of the NDC has not led the CJA to stop demonstrating against government policy – as was explained in the previous chapter.

Our PR group called these two movements “anti-liberalization movements” both in recognition of Abrahamsen’s (2000) analysis of this strong core of desire for change behind the mass support for the movements, but also because it helps identify the antecedent links these current movements have with the socialist past. The issue at stake here for some of those who have been consistently fighting neoliberal policy enforcement in Ghana for the last 20 years is not about who joins them, but that they connect with the issues that matter to Ghanaians. This is a point made by KE, described above (interview, February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). For KE and other long-time activist-educators involved in CJA, for instance, it doesn’t matter who comes to join these public movements, but rather that they place the issues that matter to Ghanaians at the heart of their actions.

A third offshoot of this type of anti-neoliberal movement is the new socialist movement called the Socialist Forum. A direct descendent of the socialist movements of the 1970s/80s, this movement aims to reconstitute the cadre educational model at the core of the socialist movements. However, as TO notes, this time the movement is committed to using “no shortcuts,” such as the
Rawlings revolutions – meaning the recaderization must be allowed to fully develop (interview, January 31st, 2008). KE, Al-Hassan and TO all note that an important point of this process of gradual maturation is an insistence on self-generated funds/resources (KE interview, February 4th; TO interview, January 31st; Al-Hassan interview, January 23rd, 2008). For instance, KE and TO both describe how the Freedom Center, the headquarters of the Socialist Forum in Accra, was built using funds generated from within the vestiges of the antecedent socialist movements (KE interview, February 4th; TO interview, January 31st, 2008). Additionally, many in the wider activist community are supportive of this new endeavour. AC, for instance, describes the “Socialist Forum as an important new effort” (interview January 15th, 2008). Yet there are problems too. As Al-Hassan describes, the Forum has been plagued with ideological confrontations:

The socialist forum, we had a confrontation with a certain group. They came and said “If you are not a Marxist-Leninist, you don’t belong in this thing.” So we said, “This thing is not Marxist-Leninist thing.” And initially we left, but then our position won out of opening up the socialist forum for people with progressive ideas, to build a forum to debate anti-neoliberalism. (PR group meeting, Feb 24, 2008)

The wider implications of this confrontation are explored more below. In terms of process, the Forum attempts to build critical cells of dialogic learning at the Freedom Center, and in universities and secondary schools. In many ways this work is the inspiration behind one aspect of our PR group’s planned action emanating from this study. Yet it also can be criticized for largely focusing on youth already embedded in neoliberal educational institutions, rather than focusing on the sites of struggle embedded in the communal defence of livelihoods – like the anti-neoliberal movements contesting the on-the-ground effects of neoliberalism (BK interview, January 23rd, 2008). These types of anti-neoliberal movements are the second type our PR group focused on.

Thus, the second type of anti-liberalization movements contains movements that are in reaction to the commodification of communally owned resources, such as water, land, and natural resources such as salt, as well as those
that spring from the direct impact of neoliberalism on livelihoods. Water has been one of the most successful of these movements, where the National Coalition Against the Privatization of Water (NCAP of Water) has mobilized successfully for over a decade to resist attempts by both the NDC and the NPP to privatize urban water systems. While this resistance has largely been directed against the national government, there have also been clear links drawn by the movement to the neo-liberal agenda that informs these attempts at privatization. For instance, the World Bank and IMF have consistently pushed this agenda in their negotiations with each successive government – a connection NCAP has highlighted in all its activism (Prempeh, 2006). Similarly, the NCAP has linked horizontally with other water defence movements in places like Bolivia to both bolster its case in the public, and to garner mutual support in contesting neoliberalism at the transnational level (Al-Hassan Adam, interview, January 23rd, 2008). Yet, Al-Hassan worries that the movement is becoming too institutionalized and is no longer connected to broad issues that mobilize people:

We are beginning to face [institutionalization] in NCAP because NCAP is becoming more elitist than the community based organizations. So this is what, for the past few months, we have been battling with, how to get back into that route of horizontal organization. (PR group meeting, Feb 23rd, 2008)

This is a concern he also raises with regard to the women’s movement, mentioned above. Along similar lines, Tanko also points out that for some elements within the NCAP movement privatization is not really the issue:

The NCAP thing we are talking about. There was a point in time, where we were opposed to privatization of water, but you hear, there were muted voices within the NCAP fraternity who said, “look, if it is nationals who have money and can …” so then the principle is not against privatization, but that we don’t want some foreigner coming in. (PR group meeting, Feb 24th, 2008)
This is an important example of the internal power dynamics within a movement, where there is a potential for the movement to be co-opted by the leadership for their own ends.

Nonetheless, Al-Hassan notes that NCAP is currently successfully drawing thousands of urban dwellers out to contest the management contract the NPP put in place for water, which has seen partial-privatization lead to massive service-cost hikes with no commensurate improvement of service (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). Because of this groundswell of mobilization, he believes it is possible to challenge some of the ulterior motives of aspects of NCAP leadership – critical if the movement is to remain rooted in the everyday needs of the average Ghanaian.

Likewise, another example of this type of anti-neoliberal movement is the rice and poultry farmer movement that emerged in the mid-2000s. As expanded upon by Songsore (2001) above, neoliberal policies have had a devastating effect on domestic agricultural producers. During the early 2000s, this situation became even worse as new liberalization of market access led to dumping of US agricultural products such as rice, soybeans and maize (Alhassan, 2009; Raman, 2006). When the current NPP government read its 2003 budget – nicknamed the “Import Substitution Budget” – many domestic farmers thought that their luck had changed; there was actually a national government willing to place their needs over the needs of transnational interests. Yet, this hope was quickly dashed as the new tariffs for rice and poultry included in the budget were never enforced. A call from the local IMF representative led to the suspended enforcement of the tariffs, despite their having been approved by Ghana’s parliament (Christian Aid, 2005). The telephone call by the IMF was further reinforced by James Wolfensohn, the President of the World Bank at the time, when he went out of his way at a conference in Greece to tell Ghana Government officials to “scrap the higher import duties” (Christian Aid, 2005, p. 34).

Over two long years, the movement of rice farmers, poultry farmers and a number of allied organizations (local and international) fought to have the tariff enforced. This long fight led eventually to a successful challenge of the lack of
enforcement in the Ghanaian courts. In a landmark decision, the High Court censured the government in general and the customs agency in particular for not implementing legislation passed by parliament, an action that contravenes the constitution (Christian Aid, 2005). Yet the victory was short lived, as within days the government forced an emergency session of parliament where the act containing the tariff was repealed. Again, pressure by the IMF to eliminate these tariffs was understood to be behind the hasty – and counter to parliamentary procedure – repealing of the act (Alhassan, 2009; Jones & Hardstaff, 2005; Christian Aid, 2005).

This second version of anti-neoliberal movements is important, as it connects with our PR group’s identification of what we called “unbranded” or “organic” movements. This analysis is discussed below, but what is important to mention here is the way in which Ghanaians whose livelihoods are being affected by neoliberal globalization on a daily basis have been organizing to contest these impositions through various movements, and using various strategies. What is relevant to their categorization here, is the way in which they could potentially link these local acts of resistance to a larger scale contestation of transnational governmentality. To expand on one resource defence movement that has begun to converge some of its local acts of resistance into a larger scale movement, it is useful to look at Ghana’s anti-mining movement.

**Anti-mining movement**

*The information presented here comes from a number of sources of literature, as well from as interviews and our PR group reflections. Three interviews inform the backdrop of most of this section: one with CK and one with AK, both long-time activist-educators in the anti-mining movement and interviewed the same day (January 23rd, 2008); and one with a RD, a mining sector advocacy specialist with a leading allied organization (February 12th, 2008). To this is added a recent feature article on the movement (Boateng, 2008), as well as a recent case study (Kwai Pun, 2007).*
Another example of the second “unbranded” or “organic” type of anti-neoliberal movement is Ghana’s anti-mining movement. It is singled out here for further detail both because it provides a useful example of a movement beginning to converge local acts of resistance, and dealing with the problems associated with this convergence, and also because it serves as one of the examples used in the typology section below. Although the above anti-neoliberal section provides the necessary background to understand the context of the anti-mining movement, it is still useful to highlight one or two issues facing communities affected by mining and the movement that has sprung from their struggle. First, there is the positive public perception of the mining industry in Ghana that is tied into the historical formation of the colony and, since independence, the country. For many of the older generation, even for those who lived close to the mines, mining meant wealth for the country and jobs for many people (RT interview February 10th, 2008). This perception could persist as the technique used at the time, deep shaft mining, had little adverse effect on nearby communities, land and the environment. With the liberalization of the mining sector after the signing of the 1983 ERP, increasing numbers of communities across Ghana began to come face to face with foreign mining companies (Kwai Pun, 2007). At the same time, as Hilson (2004) notes, by 1986 an increasing number of these mining concessions were for strip rather than deep shaft mining. The results of this, where age-old relationships between farming communities and the land were put aside in the interest of these concessions, are noted above in the anti-liberalization section. Key in this whole process has been state complicity not only in uprooting communities from their land, but also in either explicitly or complicity aiding these mining companies in their interactions with affected communities (CHRAJ, 2008). Here, we will focus in on the struggles of these communities in the face of what AK calls the triple challenge of mining company power, state complicity, and public apathy, and the emergence of an anti-mining movement despite these challenges (January 23rd, 2008).
In a recent publication celebrating a decade of activism with and by communities affected by mining, the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) notes:

For many years, multinational mining companies had a field day in Ghana and other developing countries due to the absence of social movements to galvanize the struggles of affected communities into a legal pressure and resistance against the injustices associated with mining operations. (Boateng, 2008, p. 3)

In Ghana, according to Coleman Agyeyomah, this has changed as individual communities began to organize to resist the actions of mining companies:

You come to Brong-Ahafo, you come to Fumbesi-Siliase and Tongo areas and all those things, there is the emergence of a movement, but that movement is not branded. (PR meeting, Feb. 23rd, 2008)

However, he notes that even in this pluralistic emergence, there is a strong link between local resistance and a critique of neoliberal globalization:

Most of the farmer based associations, in Asonafo and elsewhere, have turned overnight into anti-neoliberal movements. (PR meeting, Feb. 23rd, 2008)

And he also notes that WACAM, and allied organizations like WACAM, are playing an important role in converging these multiple sites of movement mobilization into a national struggle:

The emerging mining communities, it’s now that WACAM is trying to organize them into a national movement. (PR meeting, Feb. 23rd, 2008)

In this sense, we can understand the anti-mining movement as being an important balance between community struggle and allied support. To briefly provide an example of this support, and to suggest the character of the relationships in between these communities and their allies, it is useful to expand the description of WACAM here.

Starting in 1992, activist-educators involved in other struggles – including the socialist struggles of the early 1980s, and the democracy movement – and based in the Wassa area began to link up with communities facing the above listed
challenges of dealing with mining companies and a complicit central government (Boateng, 2008; AK & CK interview, January 23rd, 2008; Kwai Pun, 2007). As a result of this beginning dialogue between communities and these activist-educators, a decision was made to try to publicize what was going on:

In an effort to support the struggles of affected farmers, the [activist-educators] realized that the mining companies had great support from state agencies and therefore had to resort to independent popular mobilization of the affected communities as an effective way of struggling against the negative effects of mining. A decision was thus taken to organize a Christmas party in December 1995 and some of the affected people … were invited to tell their story at the party which was attended by activists and those with nationalistic sentiments. (Boateng, 2008, p. 3)

This Christmas party provided the initial funds necessary for communities to meet together and dialogue on the issues they were facing. This also later led to assisting communities to take legal action against mining companies and state agencies – something many of the other allied organizations and coalitions have undertaken to do (such as Third World Network, Africa and the National Coalition on Mining) (RD interview, February 12th, 2008). Importantly, according to CK and to RD, this has also led, over time, to the pre-emptive contact between communities already facing the challenges of living with or being displaced by a mining concession, with those that are slated to become one of the former in the near future (CK interview January 23rd, RD interview, February 12th, 2008).

Although this has not slowed down the concession granting process in Ghana, nor stopped the expropriation of community land, it has meant that communities can at least bargain more effectively for their compensation (CK interview, January 23rd, 2008; Kwai Pun, 2007).

The current strategies of the movement focus on building relationships between communities that are affected by mining, where new communities can go on exchanges with those communities with experience dealing with companies (CK & AK interview, January 23rd, 2008). Likewise, WACAM has begun to
focus some of its attention on educating the press in order for them to see first-hand the devastating effect of surface mining (Boateng, 2008). At the same time, much of the work going on is about making the international headquarters of mining companies, and their shareholders, aware of the complaints of communities in Ghana, and also strengthening links with international solidarity organizations (Langdon, 2008).

Like other movements with links to the antecedent socialist movements of the 1980s, there is a strong consciousness in this movement of the ways in which the issues in mining are linked into the forces of globalization and liberalization. This has become part and parcel of the popular education processes used by the movement in mobilizing communities around the particular issues they face in their day to day struggle with mines.

**Social movements in Ghana: heuristic typologies that emerged from PR process**

Although there has been some recent literature on social movements in Ghana (c.f Prempeh, 2006; Prah, 2007; Fallon & Aunio, 2006; Kwai Pun, 2007), this work has not provided an overview of the multiple movements in the country, or any background into the antecedents of these movements – focusing instead on one movement alone. As such, it has fallen to those involved in this research, whether interviewed or part of the PR group, to provide this type of overview of social movements in Ghana. As a result, two axes of analysis emerged in both the interviewing process and the subsequent PR group collective analysis. The first axis takes the labels of “new” and “old” social movements and reconfigures them in the post-colonial and Ghanaian context. The second axis, based on analyzing movement patterns of organization, communication and learning, yielded two heuristic typologies for categorizing movements in the Ghanaian context. It should be noted that due to the lack of literature to build on to elaborate a detailed articulation of Ghanaian social movement trends, our PR group decided to focus
on providing heuristic typologies in order to begin a discussion in the larger Ghanaian activist community as to the nature and composition of Ghana’s contemporary movements. These two typologies are further used below to discuss a number of different contemporary movements in Ghana.

**Post-colonial inflections of “old” and “new” movement labels**

The first axis falls along a similar line as the Euro-American literature on social movements, in that a line of tension emerged between old and new social movement interpretations. As discussed briefly above, what could be classified as the old social movements (OSMs) of organized labour and socialist party structures grew to prominence in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Ghana. Since that time, and especially since the return to democracy – and some would add most especially since the NDC, or the civilian version of Rawling’s government, lost power – there has been a proliferation of issue-based movements, such as the women’s rights movement, the environmental protection movement, and the people with disabilities rights movement. In many ways, these movements suit the descriptions laid out above of new social movements (NSMs) (Habermas, 1981). Yet, the clear lines of distinction between these movement labels are blurred when one considers the links between many contemporary, or apparently “new,” movements and the “old” socialist movements of the fairly recent past. In this sense, it is apt to draw comparisons to Mamdani’s (1995) critique of using either Marxist or Postmodern lenses to unpack African social movements, and Kapoor’s (2007) warning against facile distinctions between old and new social movement strategies in a post-colonial setting, given their interchangeable use by movements at different times.

This nuance is further underscored as this first OSM-NSM axis of analysis is expanded to include what our PR group called organic or unbranded communal-resource based movements. While communal defence of natural resources has been identified elsewhere as an important mobilizer of social movements (Peet & Watts, 2004), what emerged in the Ghanaian analysis as
critical was the way in which this defence is embedded in deep structural critiques of globalization. Kofi Larweh notes, “These [resource based] movements are embedded in people’s livelihoods” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008), meaning that it is in communities where the direct effects of neoliberalism are being felt that organic movements are mobilizing. Here, critique of the global and national economy is intertwined with the issue-based critique of the rights of rural communities to land access and decision-making rights to their land and natural resources. When this is coupled with strong spiritual and ancestral connections to these resources and land, as well as deep localized knowledge about the land and resources, the implications not only on everyday livelihood issues but also on cultural reproduction become clear. Coleman Agyeyomah connects this point to the anti-mining movement, noting that “most of the farmer based associations, [in mining affected communities], have turned overnight into anti-neoliberal movements. They are doing that because it has been necessitated in the current [neoliberal] environment” where their livelihoods have been destroyed (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). Based on this analysis, our PR group decided the Ghanaian anti-mining movement is a perfect example of communal resource defence movements. In these communities affected by the “perpetual expansion of mining and mineral exploration activity [that] has displaced numerous subsistence groups outright and destroyed a wide range of cultural resources” (Hilson, 2004, p. 54), a critique has emerged that combines the erosion of cultural ways of life as well as livelihoods into a strategy that uses both human rights discourse as well as a quotient critique of capital exploitation to defend their ways of life (c.f. Owusu-Koranteng, 2007; Boateng, 2008). The Ada Songor defence movement example discussed further below – as well as in the concluding chapter – is also indicative of this intertwined balance.

Movement typologies based on organization, communication and learning patterns
According to our PR group analysis, movements in Ghana should not only be analyzed by what they are interested in, but also by the ways in which they organize, communicate and learn. This is the second axis of analysis. Based on these criteria, the PR collective concluded that there are two types of movements in Ghana (Figures 4 and 5).

1. Event/Conflict/Moment of Learning in Struggle

2. Momentum building and Professionalization of organization

3. Strategic decision making made by directive leadership with didactic plans to “educate” and “build awareness”

Figure 10: Strategic and Didactic model of Ghanaian social movement (re)mobilization
As can be seen in Figure 4 and Figure 5, the two heuristic typologies – or typologies designed not as definitive models but rather as learning tools to provoke dialogue and debate within the broader Ghanaian activist community – are described as either strategic/didactic movements (Figure 4) or communicative/dialogue based movements (Figure 5). In many ways, the language that emerged in our PR discussions around these two models is grounded in Freire’s (1970) differentiation between dialogue-based and didactic learning, as well as in Habermas’ distinction of communicative versus strategic action (1984; 1987). Introducing this terminology was one of the contributions I made to our analysis. This aside, both of these theorists helped our PR collective frame some of its thoughts around these two types of organizations, but

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21 There are a few moments like this in the text, where I attempt to actively point out one of my main roles in our collective PR work, namely connecting some of our analysis to theoretical writing that supported or complimented it well.
it should be noted that the differences emerged prior to the introduction of these theories.

According to our group analysis, movements often emerge or are re-energized in similar ways, but the way in which a given movement mobilizes and organizes can be seen in two ways: one that is grounded in the larger membership of the movement and one that is professionalized and begins to take over the leadership. For instance, here in this working illustration of our PR group understanding, the beginning point of the cycle in both figures (Step 1) is a particular event/conflict/moment of learning that represents the catalytic moment of mobilization. The catalytic moment of movement mobilization is usually linked directly to the felt needs and/or concerns of the particular group beginning to move. For instance, the murders of sex workers in Accra sparked widespread concerns about gender-based violence and sparked the beginnings of mobilization of the women’s movement. However, as both models proceed, a difference emerges: mobilization leads to professionalization in the case of figure one, and a loosen organizational impetus in the case of figure 2. While the professionalization of movements is not a new phenomenon (McCarthy & Zald, 1987), for our PR group it begs the question, “How rooted in the people’s needs are the decisions made by this elite leadership?” It is in answering this question that our group articulated a clear difference between the two models.

The clearest split in the two models occurs in the 3rd step of the cycle, and this break speaks directly to the issue of communication that will be discussed more fully in a moment. Here, on the one hand (Figure 4) the movement is professionalized, as it turns into a bureaucracy that is directive of the movement, and generates a leadership that makes strategic decisions in the “best interests” of the larger movement membership/community. This leads to didactic forms of education (we are here to educate you), which – according to our PR group – ultimately lead to either a break or disconnection between this leadership and the larger movement that mobilized in the first place, as the strategic movement heads off in another direction than the wider membership needs.
On the other hand, according to our PR group, we see an example in Figure 5 of an emerging leadership within the movement that may be providing some organizational framework and direction, but we also see a constant cycle of return into the larger community of members of the movement. This cycling back is where the dialogue process continues, and where the aims, needs and strategies of the movement are regenerated and re-enlivened through this mutual learning process (though this process is far from “rosy” as it can often involve misunderstandings, suspicions, high expectations, complete revisions of approach and an ongoing process of challenging those facilitating or attempting to lead/direct the process – in a very real sense this is complex conscientization in action).

The learning that emerges from these two models of movements is also telling: where the first is didactic and strategic, instructing the movement on its goals and further “educating” the membership as well as the wider public on what they “need to understand,” the second is seen as communicative and dialogue-based – recycling all learning and decision making back into the wider movement. Finally, for our PR group, the single biggest contributing factor that leads to the differentiation in the two models is a loss of sight of the shared interest of the larger community, indicated by the “Deracination of the movement” in Figure 4.

The differentiation between these two types of movements is key for what our PR group identified as the most important characteristic for the successful emergence of a movement that is communicative and dialogue-based within the Ghanaian context. Building on the natural resource defence model discussed above, where a way of being as well as a way of life is being defended, our group discerned that dialogue-based movements are most likely to emerge around communally held resources whose protection implicates a community as a whole. In many ways, it is the constant return to the necessity to communally defend a resource that helps generate the reflexive process that finds dialogue as its most potent learning and communication tool. For the PR group, movements based on these communal resource defences should be understood as organic and/or
unbranded. As Al-Hassan notes, these are “Indigenous or organic movements … which don’t have any names”:

they fight around the issue and don’t brand themselves any name, but the movement is there. So when the movement ceases to exist, people cannot identify it because it had no name, no big name and also no big figures around it. These are movements without brands, unbranded movements. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

In other words, this communal connection, when threatened by external – or even internal – capitalist exploitation can lead to an organic or unbranded movement: one firmly grounded in the needs and the way of being of that community. Here ‘needs’ are very much understood as being mediated both by the influence of and resistance to capitalist hegemony as well as by the strategic agency of marginalized communities embedded in their own histories of land use and natural resource management. Thus, for Al-Hassan, organic and unbranded “movements are stronger when you have collective access to assets, but the moment that collective access is broken, the ability of the community to stand as a collective is also broken until you devise another strategy to mobilize” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). It is precisely the history of this re-engagement with the forces that threaten this collective access that gives these unnamed movements their strength. As Kofi notes, “when people’s livelihoods are at stake, then they see that look we have to do something, that is when the movement becomes strongest, and so there is a little spark and then it goes off” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

In this way, this type of unbranded organic movement was seen by our PR group to be a building block of many resource-based movements, including the anti-mining movement – part of the reason they have been successful at impacting decisions around mining despite an incredible uphill battle (c.f. Owusu-Koranteng, 2007).

Based on this definition of unbranded organic movements, our PR group decided – as part of the action to emerge from this research – to begin working with a local movement defending the communal ownership of the Songor salt...
flats in Ada (a town a short way east from the capital, along the coast). This movement is fully described in the concluding chapter of the document, where all the actions emerging from the research are discussed. Nonetheless, the movement warrants a brief description here as a connection to the action of the unbranded organic movement and as a sense of where our own group action is heading.

The Songor lagoon salt flats are sustainably maintained through a traditional ownership arrangement that sees none of the chiefs who surround it having overarching rights to the resource. In practical terms, this has meant anyone – even those not from Ada – can win salt from the flats, so long as they pay a small amount of what they win to the authority upon whose land the salt is collected (Langdon, 2009). The Songor movement of Ada22 has successfully defended this communal ownership process despite successive governments’ attempts to expropriate it for use by foreign and national capital. At one point, during the military regime of the 1980s, the defense of this resource resulted in a confrontation between troops and the local citizens where a number of people were wounded and a pregnant woman was killed (Radio Ada, 2002). To this day, a statue dedicated to this woman stands in one of the villages near the salt flats. In contemporary times, this highly successful organic movement has begun to face new challenges as new forms of capital exploitation emerge. Some of the land surrounding the lagoon that transforms into salt flats has been enclosed by local chiefs, effectively blocking-off a large chunk of the land by which people have traditionally accessed the flats to win salt (see concluding chapter for more on this problematic connection to local chiefs). Young people associated with the movement mobilized and destroyed these walls and, in the aftermath, were jailed for destruction of private property (Langdon, 2009). The community is uncertain how to advance, since some of the entrepreneurs are also local chiefs, or have ties to these chiefs – the supposed custodians of Ada’s traditions. This clash of

22 This is our PR group’s name for the movement, as it is a prime example of the unbranded movements and as such has no official name. Even the anti-mining movement is like this, as it is also often called the fair-mining movement, or the social movement around mining (CK interview, January 23rd, 2008).
loyalties has meant that the movement must engage in a much deeper reflection on how this emerging form of capitalist exploitation could alienate them from this resource as well as split their movement – a perfect example of Foley’s (1999) notion of contradictory and ambiguous learning in social movements that is discussed in the next chapter. This process of re-engagement, as well as the Ada movement, is further discussed in the concluding chapter.

While the differentiation between didactic and dialogue based movements is based on shifting from classifying movements by their links to old or new movement labels, to classifying them based on the way they organize, communicate and learn, this is only one way in which our PR group analyzed learning in social movements in Ghana. The next chapter presents the three lenses that emerged from our PR group for thinking about learning in social movements. Each of these lenses highlights a different aspect of learning in social movements, and – as will be noted in the next chapter – they are all interlinked with the typologies of movements our PR group articulated.

Based on our group’s analysis, Ghana’s most recent manifestation of the women’s movement is suggestive of the didactic model, as it has been dominated by an urban professional elite that has failed to connect with a wider cross-section of rural and market women’s issues. The anti-mining movement, on the other hand, is an example of the dialogue-based movement as it is a pluralistic movement constantly re-grounded in the needs of the communities affected by mining.

**Strategic/Didactic movement example: the women’s movement**

Although the women’s movement in this account is being understood through the lens of the strategic rather than dialogic form of communication, it is important to quickly point out the problematic nature of any such modeling. Therefore, in order to try to maintain a complex stance in re-storying both this movement and the anti-mining movement, the accounts will focus on how they both fit into and deviate from these typologies. It is important to note that the critical description
of the women’s movement emerged from a wide array of sources – as can be seen in the description of the movement above. In fact, more than one respondent asked the same question as the one attributed to Coleman Agyeyomah above, namely “is there really a women’s movement in this country?” (BK interview, January 23rd; AK interview, January 15th, 2008).

The key tensions as a result of the gap between urban and rural based women, as well as between educated and non-educated women, are explored above in the women’s movement section. What needs to be highlighted here is the way in which these gaps, or disconnections, have led to a shift from the point in 2000 where according to Al-hassan Adam “there was a women’s movement” to the situation now where that movement “is now a women’s organization” (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). Al-hassan describes the difference in membership and organization between these different stages:

The loose coalition, called the Sister’s Keepers, was key in the mobilization [of the movement]; it was where you had all the market women, the rural women. But after 2000, Sister’s Keepers died a natural death. It included people who had fallen out with the 31st [December Women’s movement], but also all the professional and middle class women, some who were in parliament and others who wanted to be in parliament. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

After this broader-based movement died, a more professionally oriented movement, or what Al-hassan calls an “organization” emerged and institutionalized itself as the Ghanaian women’s movement, and has been in place since. This stasis is largely due, according to Coleman, to a certain degree of stability having been achieved by senior members of the movement (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008). As a result of this professionalization and stabilization, the movement is largely considered to have lost touch with the wider issues that affect all women in Ghana. Yet, as noted above, there is a growing recognition of this problem in some pockets of the movement, and there are some efforts being made to open up the movement to broader issues and membership.
However, there are two quick pieces of complexity our PR group added to this picture, both of which may go some way to explain why it is only within the last couple years that the larger collection of women’s organizations has begun to respond to some of these criticisms. First, as was discussed above, the 31st December Women’s Movement (31st DWM) organization (the government NGO run by Mrs. Rawlings) was linked in name and in personality to the socialist revolution of 1981. This revolution and its subsequent decree of accepting “nothing less than the total transformation of society” (quoted in Shillington, 1992, p. 80) was one of the only times in this country’s history where real widespread violence was perpetrated, but also where the average Ghanaian was not the main target of the violence. Committees for the Defence of the Revolution targeted people who had two cars and two houses, and toilets that flushed. In many ways, this world upside down time led to a strong rural and working poor identification with Rawlings, an identification he can still mobilize today. This loyalty stretches to rural based women as well, as it was in rural towns and villages that 31st DWM concentrated most of its efforts and distributed most of its funds. As Gifty Dzah notes:

The 31st [December Women’s Movement] had the face, and all other women movements were lost, and because they had all the political backing; there was a point that funding, you had to go to 31st, because everything that came in for gender things was going to 31st, so they were able to go to the grassroots, they had branches in almost every market, everywhere. So, in terms of raising the consciousness, … it raised some awareness in some level, because they were able to go to almost every part of the country because they had the political backing. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

In fact, it is often the case that in gender-based rural work today the most vocal, outspoken and capable women leaders encountered are likely products of the 31st DWM (Coleman and Kofi, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). So, it is somehow understandable that the movement that came with the end of the Rawlings era was not rural and not basic-needs focused. But this does not change
the fact that the current version of the women’s movement in Ghana is not focused on a dialogic process of engagement with these elements from past efforts at mobilization, and as a result is largely only effective at generating legislation, and not in seeing this legislation meaningfully implemented anywhere but in capital, nor in addressing the gender dimensions of neoliberalism as it has eroded the social support network across this country – something Manuh (1997) has argued affects women most.

Second, it is important not to downplay the success of the current version of the women’s movement in getting important legislation passed. With the passing of the domestic violence bill – a major undertaking that took years of hard fighting – many elements within the loose affiliation of women’s organizations have turned to look at some of the broader issues affecting women outside of the capital. In some ways the movement could be forgiven for choosing its battles and concentrating on the DV bill first; after all, concentrating on legislation was also a necessity with the NPP government, as they remained largely fixated on passing legislation, and mostly ignored issues of wider economic and social malaise – predictable given their liberal social and fiscally conservative heritage. This is not to mention the contribution of the aid regime to this obsession with bills and laws – a great impact level assessment outcome that evaluators can track and reward.

But nonetheless, one cannot ignore that there is a legitimacy gap in the women’s movement, and unless it shifts from a strategic and didactic approach to its goal setting and educating, it is likely to remain a movement deracinated from its wider roots.

**Communicative/Dialogue-Based movement example: the anti-mining movement**

Turning to the anti-mining movement, a different set of circumstances are seen, and as a result a highly different movement – much less centralized and much more pluralistic in its processes, its communication, and learning patterns. First, as noted in the discussion above, the origins of the mining movement come from
community conflicts with mining companies and government as a direct result of neoliberal shifts in policies in the country. Prior to the mid-eighties adoption of economic recovery programs, mining in Ghana was seen as beneficial throughout the country – even in those communities directly next door to its activities. Large scale mining was largely deepshaft mining with few of the wide-spread environmental and economic effects of industrial mining today, and it was labour intensive, leading to numerous jobs for the communities living close by. However, with the opening of the economy in the 80s to a number of new surface mines – a process that only deepened in the new democratic era despite the democracy movement’s strong link between democratization and the end of neoliberalism – conflicts between neighbouring towns and these new mines erupted. The nature of these conflicts and the emerging resistance from communities is well captured in the description of the movement above.

As a result of this ongoing resistance, a number of long-time activists involved in resisting Rawlings’ regime – having started out their days in the socialist student movements of the 1970s-80s – came together to form the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM) and began to work closely with the communities affected by mining to develop some processes of engagement to a) help those communities already affected by mining to better contest and defend their rights to land and to remain living in their villages – or failing these things to at least receive fair and adequate compensation for the livelihood lost through the displacement, and b) to build up a process of engagement and experience sharing with communities slated to neighbour or be swallowed by new mines, so that they can think through the best way to defend their ways of life by learning from the struggles those “who have gone before” can share (AK & CK interview, January 23rd, 2008). Out of these processes of ongoing dialogic engagement, a number of allied organizations (like WACAM) have been helping these communities to better explain the struggles they face to a Ghanaian public that still sees mining largely as a good thing (Kwai Pun, 2007). It should be emphasized here, however, that it is largely the communities that are in the lead of these struggles. This constant, sometimes messy process of dialogue
and mutual ownership of the way in which community desires are represented has meant the mining industry in Ghana has had a very hard time discrediting those allied organizations as instigators of conflict (AK & CK interview, January 23rd, 2008). For instance, in a recent situation where local WACAM volunteers were arrested by police and charged with impersonating mining officials, members of the community where it happened went to court en masse to contest the charge and stated “if they [the volunteers] had been from the company, we would have chased them out of town” (WACAM, 2007). This situation is further described in chapter 5.

Al-Hassan Adam provides a description of the way in which communication occurs in the movement between communities and allied organizations such as WACAM that is suggestive of the pluralistic way in which it works:

So once in awhile, when the hard facts hit the communities themselves, they go and do their march before WACAM would now come [to help connect the struggle to the media] because the radio stations are so lazy that they don’t go to the community, when they hear a community is fighting with a company they call WACAM, so WACAM will go and get the information. So for me, it’s not always that WACAM is at the forefront of the community mobilization, I know independent things that come up sporadically because people are just fed up mining companies are doing, then WACAM will come around to get abreast with the situation. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

In this sense, WACAM is not leading this pluralistic movement, but is rather helping communities interconnect with each other, as well as get their critique of the neoliberal mining sector and its relationship to government to a larger public audience. AK and CK emphasize this relationship when they both state the “aim of WACAM is not to organize and then be at the forefront, but to create a platform for communities to get their own issues out” (interview, January 23rd, 2008).
Yet some complexity needs to be added to this seemingly rosy picture: while the anti-mining movement is a great example of pluralistic ownership and dialogue based learning-in-struggle, it has also become a battleground of sorts for “ownership” of the movement (CK interview, January 23rd, 2008). The allies that have been a big part of the ongoing process of building the movement through broadening the membership by connecting new communities affected or to be affected with those who have gone through it are now, because of the ever changing realities of transnational capital, surviving on less and less funding for their work (a direct result of neoliberal attacks on state-support of oppositional ideas) and are therefore now in ever increasing competition for survival (Kwai Pun, 2007). The results of this can be seen in other instances of communication, where communities go to their allies for support and are instead used as “evidence.” Al-Hassan describes one such instance:

For instance, NCOM, which is the National Coalition on Mining, more or less the community will be beaten before the community will come to Accra, mobilize themselves, come to Accra and then report to NCOM that we were beaten and brutalized by the police or military, before NCOM will organize a press conference for them, and then NCOM will be the lead spokesperson, and the community will only be there as a reference point, evidence. That is the same thing, going back to [the donor provided civil society funds] RAVI and GRAP, when they tell you evidence based advocacy, oh ok, if it’s a human being then go and bring them as evidence. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

The clear connection between this recent turn in the relationship between communities mobilizing against mining and their allies and a broader turn in donor support for particular kinds of advocacy – not activism – is apparent here. A new hierarchy is also clear here, where the community is no longer involved in leading or speaking, but is rather merely evidence and a mark of ownership – that NCOM as opposed to WACAM has brought this issue to light, for example. This competition is sad to see, as those activists who have been so instrumental in bringing a pointed level of critique to the struggle of communities are now unable
to collaborate to fully dialogue with the ever expanding number of communities who are facing the triple challenge of a forced loss of livelihood from mining construction, a government that actively backs companies in any resulting conflicts, and a Ghanaian public only now becoming aware of the devastation mining has caused on rural communities in Ghana.

Based on the complexity added to both examples of our typologies, it should be clear that while both these typologies are indicative of what is happening in particular movements in the Ghanaian context, there is still a strong potential that any one of them associated with a particular typology could begin to more closely resemble the other type – even in the two examples that best exemplify each of the typologies.

Concluding thoughts: contributions of Ghanaian social movement dynamics to social movement theory

The second objective of our research is “to establish the ways in which social movements have been contesting and negotiating the democratic terrain over the last 15 years.” In the above descriptions of the various movements covered by our study, along with the typologies our PR group articulated above, we have gone a long way to meeting this research objective. Yet, it is appropriate here to conclude this chapter be adding three additional inflections that emerged in the course of our collective deliberations. Importantly, these inflections have a bearing on discussions of social movement dynamics outside the Ghanaian context, as the first two inflect the categories of OSM and NSM debates of social movement goals, yet they are very much based on our analysis of the Ghanaian situation. This approach responds well to Mamdani’s post-colonial critique above that African phenomena not be analogized to other historical/geo-political moments and spaces, but rather be situated within their own context and history. These three inflections are on movement leadership, power within and between movements, and the importance of evaluating movements on the ways they mobilize and learn rather than only the issues they confront. It will be noticed that
these thoughts reveal the inner debates, or processes of re-storying within our PR group around these issues. In this way, it is our aim to reveal the openness of these discussions, rather than present them as conclusions.

**Movements and Leadership: Old social movement inflections**

*Although the thoughts captured here are an extension of our self-reflexive conversation captured in the methodology chapter above, here they are presented more fully in connection with a debate around the role of leadership within movements.*

Our PR group collectively feels that the more movements remain closely linked to the broader forces that begin a struggle (i.e. the dialogue-based movements), and resist the temptation for the leadership to take on a strategic and directive role, the more impact the movement will have on the real felt needs of that particular community. Yet, it is also our sense that this is so often not the case of what happens. As Al-hassan Adam describes it:

> The people who generate the movement, at the end do not control the movement, and when they lose control of the movement, the movement turns into an organization and dies. (PR group meeting, Feb 24, 2008)

It was in trying to grapple with these very difficult questions, of how movements die, how they can remain connected to their wider community, and how they develop leadership and direction, that the typologies emerged as heuristic devices meant to provoke dialogue not only amongst our group, but among the wider Ghanaian activist community. Yet, these questions also became the preoccupation of much of our group’s self-reflections on our own roles as activist-educators (detailed in chapter 2) as well as on broader theoretical issues pertaining to struggle and mobilization in general.

For instance, in our discussions a strong tension around the role of leadership emerged, where some felt leadership was an important element in the survival and success of a movement, while others raised concerns about
leadership, noting that if leadership emerged from outside the struggle itself it would result in the cooptation of the movement. For instance, on the one hand, Kofi argues that there must necessarily be two groups in any successful movement, “one group will ignite, but another must take the mantel” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). For him the key is “connection, fusion, for the two groups to be able to hold things together, which has not happened up to now” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). On the other hand, Al-Hassan and Coleman are suspicious of social movement leadership, especially in the way they are often products of and implicated by neoliberal globalization and education. Al-Hassan explains:

Leadership of social movements are the product of the neoliberal. We [the leadership] jump ahead and give the leadership because the social movement, if they are going to communicate their ideas, they need to communicate it through some written document, some movies and stuff. And those things, who has the skills to do that? The person they can get closer to do that are progressive, but is also a product of the same system that they are fighting. And its us, so we act as a buffer. That is why when a company is looking for somebody to do social responsibility they will not go into the business-economy classrooms, where people have made up their minds … they go around and find out who are the guys who understand these social movements. So for me, it’s a contest of class.

(PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008)

While this debate was described in chapter 2, it also connects with debates surrounding leadership that surface in Marxist literature (Holst, 2002) where leadership must emerge from class struggle if the struggle is to avoid co-optation.

At the same time, our discussions of Marxism also emphasized steering clear of dogmatic uses of socialist rhetoric, even while acknowledging the way in which the language of socialism has been under attack in many quarters. For instance, while Al-Hassan makes the connection between class and leadership of movements, he also critiques the Bolshevik revolution as an instance where the educated class took over a workers uprising (PR group meeting, February 24th,
2008). In another instance, however, he agrees that waiting a hundred years for the proper circumstances to arise for a revolution to spontaneously arise is also useless. “We must get involved,” he adds, but at the same time he underscores his scepticism of this involvement and the way it can co-opt movements (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). Continuing this line of nuanced analysis, Al-Hassan also describes how important it is that the socialist forum has moved away from the dogmatic positions of orthodox Marxist-Leninism:

The socialist forum, we had a confrontation with a certain group. They came and said “If you are not a Marxist-Leninist, you don’t belong in this thing.” So we said, “This thing is not Marxist-Leninist thing.” And initially we left, but then our position won out of opening up the socialist forum for people with progressive ideas, to build a forum to debate anti-neoliberalism. (PR group meeting, Feb 24, 2008)

Yet, even while there is some flexibility emerging within Ghana’s socialist left, Coleman Agyeyomah also points out that even the most innocuous socialist language is discounted in many forums supposedly about advocacy and the rights of the “marginalized”:

[Neoliberalism] is beginning to affect our language, you go and sit somewhere and talk about the struggle, people will say don’t bring your socialist nonsense here. Even the choice of words, [instead of struggle] they say ‘challenges.’ And if you want to mention contradictions, or talk of dialectics, people tell you to mind your language. If you say there is a class struggle instead of saying there are people marginalized from power, they need to be empowered. Unconsciously, we have fallen down and they have reoriented our education. (PR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008)

This reorientation of education is precisely what Al-hassan underscores above as a major criticism of the educated who take leadership of social movements in Ghana. Coleman further draws the link between neoliberal discourse and the cooptation of activism:
Those parlances of participation, empowerment, the World Bank has appropriated those terms today. It talks it more than anybody, but is it real participation, is it real empowerment. So they are able every time, they will even fund leadership of social movements, and the findings they use to map out strategies and appropriate the language of the movement. (PR group meeting, Feb 24, 2008)

In many ways, these discussions circle not only our debate about the role of leadership, but also the way in which discourse and choice are being contained. Yet what is key here is that these are discussions grounded in practical experiences of mobilizing in the Ghanaian context, where these theoretical debates have been experienced first hand by our PR group members. In this sense, what is captured here is the way in which Marxist debates about leadership and class, as well as the vagaries of the uses and abuses of Marxist rhetoric, are manifesting themselves in the Ghanaian context – a reality that shows the way in which this interpretive lens is reconfigured to fit different situations in Ghana depending on its usefulness.

**Power in and between movements: postmodern radical pluralism reconfigured**

Our discussion of leadership was also inflected by an awareness of the ever-present fact of power, and that there are no pure moments or pure movements where some kind of alliance or compromise will emerge, or where a really powerful movement does not risk becoming the new orthodoxy. This debate very much connects with Foucault’s ideas around power, social change and mobilization. One of the most pointed moments in these debates surfaced in connection with the goal of social movements in Ghana, between state capture and state/international pressure. In this debate, Kofi asked, “which is better, to be in power and be forced to do things against your will by international donors and business, or to be out of power and hold those in power to account to do what you want to see done?” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). According to Kofi, it
is better to hold those in power to account, since taking power always seems to lead to compromising the ideals and interests of the marginalized. This provoked Al-hassan to ask, “but who is in power? It is the elite. The workers have never been in power in this country” since even the socialist revolutions had quickly been taken-over by “Rawlings and his close allies” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). Tanko Iddrisu echoed Kwame Ninsin’s analysis that “there is no clear alternative to the current dispensation [of democratic elitism]” and then went on to add that part of the problem is the “weakness of the left” rather than the “strength of the right” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). For Tanko, this weakness of the left, and the potential for cooptation, is also an issue at the transnational level, where the World Social Forum has become elitist, keeping local people out through exorbitant fees, while apparently speaking for the dispossessed.

With this nuanced set of discussions as a backdrop, our PR group brought our discussions to bear on the heuristic typologies we had earlier articulated. One key difference in our group’s view is captured by Al-hassan here:

The social movements that have become organizations [i.e. strategic/didactic movements] see themselves as being not part of the state, but rather pressure points on the state; but the organic social movements [i.e. communicative/ dialogue-based movements] are rather coming up and questioning the fundamental frame within which the state operations happen. (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008)

This fundamental difference provides important insight into the relationship these two different typologies have with the state, and, following Ferguson’s (2006) thoughts about the state in Africa, with transnational neoliberal governmentality and capital. It also has deep implications for the kinds of learning that will evolve in either type, where one type sees the state being normalized in its position above society, and the other sees learning provoke questions about the legitimacy of the state.

In this sense, our PR group has provided two views of power and how it operates within the Ghanaian context. In favouring the second vision of a more
pluralistic and dialogical approach to both understanding how power operates and how it can be contested, our PR group is connecting with radical pluralist ideas of movement effectiveness. Yet, even as our group connected with this space, we continued to see strong ties between our understanding of these dialogue-based movements and a loosely coordinated contestation not only of neoliberal governmentality, but also of class domination as articulated by Al-hassan, Coleman and Tanko. This slippery use of both radical pluralist lenses of interpretation as well as Marxist informed lenses is important most especially because it is based on our group’s direct experiences of struggle in various movements in Ghana.

**Learning as way to differentiate movement dynamics**

In both offering a useful bridge to the next chapter and deepening our first reflections on learning, the discussion of dialogue-based and didactic movement typologies also provides an important connection to the work of Paulo Freire as well as that of Jürgen Habermas – two theorists referred to in the next chapter as important figures in debates around movement learning as well as being theorists who can cross the OSM/NSM divide. The distinct difference between social movements that are communicative/dialogue-based as opposed to strategic/didactic is indicative of models of communication and learning identified by both Paulo Freire and Jürgen Habermas: both Freire and Habermas are concerned with methodologies of education and communication that would increase plurality in decision making processes and in knowledge production. While they have named these processes differently (conscientization and communicative action respectively), there have been substantive studies that have compared their approaches and found them synchronistic (Morrow & Torres, 2002; Endres, 1998; Teodoro, 2003).

23 For an explanation as to how both of these theorists defy the OSM/NSM divide, please see next chapter.
For both theorists, a dialogical approach that focuses on subject-subject communication is the centerpiece of their theoretical model. For Freire (1970), conscientization is linked with dialogue between equals, rather than a banking model where knowledge is both transferred and extracted didactically. Conscientization is also linked with a reflective process of learning from dialogue and also stepping back from what is accepted as the norm to see its broader implications. This difference is critical if one thinks of the power dynamics suggested by the two approaches of social movements in Ghana. The first model establishes a clear hierarchy, where it is the organizational center that dictates the goals and strategies, and who suggests when and how to mobilize, and the ways in which members of the movement must come to understand issues. This is a one way street of communication and learning similar to the banking method of teaching described by Freire (1970). The alternative approach involves any attendant institutionalization being inflected with a constant attempt to reconnect the wider movement members with the leadership.

This second approach must rest on open communication, and on a mutual learning process grounded in conscientization on all sides, where all learn from one another, and from reflective problem-posing. This approach is also indicative of the communicative rather than strategic form of discourse, as described by Habermas (1987). Again, here it is instructive that Habermas points out how strategic thinking limits consensus building, and an openness in communicative processes. And, in terms of demonstrating the impact of these two approaches on the longevity of a particular social movement, it is easy to see that those who remain above the felt needs of the wider movement are bound to become deracinated, and what they end up fighting for are things that are a) issues disconnected from the most lived needs of the movement membership, and b) the least disruptive of the status quo. This is indicative of the distorted communication process Habermas has described (1987). This helps explain why movements such as the women’s movement and the PWD movement are fighting for policy changes that the status quo will grant them, rather than a complete reconfiguration of how they are dealt with. Neither of these movements have
strong links to the large majority of people that supposedly make up their numbers; as a result, it is a small professional core that decides what the goals and strategies of the movement should be. Likewise, it is this core that “organizes” mobilization for specific effects – a sort of parading out the numbers when necessary – and dictates to this membership what is important to fight for. In many ways, this hierarchy is maintained through resource access and control, where the organizational center has successfully inhabited the space as the face of the movement and receives international and national support as a result, and dispenses resources from this position of privilege.

The resource defence based anti-neoliberal movements, on the other hand, remain strongly rooted in the felt needs of Ghanaians, though the collaboration among the elements within this broad category is very weak. In some ways, they may demonstrate an effective ability to dialogue and learn within their movement, but they have failed to be able to dialogue amongst the various different manifestations of struggle. Nonetheless, there is a demonstrated level of dialogue in these movements. For instance, in the anti-mining movement, there is a grounded methodology of approach that connects with the communities affected by mining. This necessitates a dialogical process of mutual learning. Water privatization has also shown its responsiveness to the needs of its constituents – though Al-Hassan and Tanko both have their concerns about potential co-optation in this movement. As part of the conclusions of the PR collective, it was decided that making some effort to deepen this tendency towards a rooted approach to communication was essential, as was building a better platform for mutual communication and consensus building among the various strands of the anti-neoliberal struggle. These attempts at consensus building will always be provisional – something acknowledged by both Freire & Habermas (Morrow & Torres, 2002) – but the architecture to allow for this type of convergence can be actively maintained, so long as the movements remain rooted in their respective constituent communities.
Explanatory note:

Like the 2 previous chapters, this chapter aims to address one of the objectives outlined in this document’s introduction. Here, we will address objective 3 - To establish the ways in which social movement contestation and negotiation reflects learning in struggle, and the ways in which this learning could be enhanced through locally determined methods. The co-constructed meaning here comes both from our collective deliberations as well as from the wider activist-educator interviews. The chapter continues the discussions begun in the last chapter where Ghanaian social movements were understood through typologies based on the way they communicate and learn. Key to our PR group’s articulation of these typologies is terminology derived from both Paulo Freire and Jürgen Habermas – a connection made in the last chapter. Freire and Habermas’ concepts of learning are connected here to theories of learning in social movements, as they have evolved largely in the field of adult education. Out of this review of the literature, a case will be made to view social movement learning in Ghana through the lens of Griff Foley’s (1999) notion of learning in struggle. Adding to Foley’s original conception, our study will extend this notion based on the co-constructed reflections from our group to include two further lenses of learning through and learning to struggle. These multiple lenses through which our PR group analyzed Ghanaian social movements learning are instrumental to the action we see emanating from our study. The chapter concludes by hinting at this action – something that is taken up in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

Introduction

In the last chapter, the typologies we developed in our PR group meeting were laid-out. Unlike in much of the traditional social movement literature, our
typologies did not dwell on the issues being addressed by Ghanaian movements, nor look at why they mobilize in the first place, but rather examined the way these movements communicate and learn, and what that says about the relationship between leadership and a movement’s broader membership. In the closing section of the chapter, the language we have used to unpack these typologies is connected to the theoretical constructs of didactic and dialogue-based learning, developed by Paulo Freire, and of strategic and communicative action, developed by Jürgen Habermas. Considering how influential both of these thinkers have been on adult education, broadly speaking, and more specifically on social movement learning theory, it should not come as a surprise that they are referenced in this process of unpacking learning within Ghanaian social movements. However, what is perhaps surprising to readers familiar with debates in social movement learning theory, is the unusual practice of reading Freire and Habermas’ constructs in tandem with reference to social movement organization – as was done in the concluding section of the previous chapter. In a very conscious sense, this bringing together of Freire, who is often drawn on by Marxist and OSM theorists such as Holst (2002) below, and Habermas, who is often drawn on by NSM theorists such as Welton (1993) below, speaks to the heart of our study, where the tensions between these two modalities for understanding movements are seen much more flexibly by our group than the literature might otherwise suggest – something we clearly connect to the way in which the OSM/NSM tension is reconfigured in post-colonial settings such as Ghana. This is the first of three concluding links between our study and the broader social movement learning literature – explored at the end of the following section. The second concluding link builds on the first, and reconnects with the typologies of the last chapter, in making the case for analysing movements based on how they learn, and the way in which this approach to learning provides clues to the values of particular movements – rather than attempting to view all movements in one particular way or another along the OSM/NSM divide. Finally, the third concluding link between the literature and our study connects this differentiated view of movements and how they learn with the ambiguous nature of power – both as it confronts movements, but also in the
way it circulates within them. This nuanced view provides a perfect opening for connecting with Foley’s notion of learning in struggle as a way in which to come to grips with the informal learning that occurs within movements, and how this learning is interconnected with power and its circulation. In this sense, and linking back up with the typologies of the last chapter, the way in which learning occurs has direct – though often ambiguous – relations with the way in which power manifests itself and operates in social movements. These three concluding, or framing, links provide the bridge to the three lenses through which our study viewed learning and struggle – lenses that take inspiration from Foley’s (1999) notion but also extend it further to correspond to the locally contingent ways in which our PR group, as well as the wider activist-educator network, understand learning in Ghanaian social movements in the contemporary democratic era.

Social Movement Learning

As with both previous chapters, discussing the research objective and the resultant contributions emanating from this objective needs to be placed within a theoretical context. Here, extending from Hall & Turray’s (2006) State of the Field study, the fairly recent term social movement learning is used as way-in to articulating a theoretical framework from which the results of objective 3 can be explored. Without spending too much time on this choice of terminology – as Hall & Turray (2006) undertake a comprehensive explication of its emergence in the late 1990s – social movement learning as a categorization of learning is highly useful for this study not only because it provides a logical extension from the focus of objective 2 on social movement dynamics, but also because it allows for a tightened focus (i.e. it is not necessary here to review general theories of adult education in order to establish the basis of social movement learning). However, extending from Mamdani’s warning in the previous chapter, it needs to be noted that there are virtually no studies of social movement learning outside of southern Africa, and therefore scant theorizing of social movement learning that has an African-centered frame of approach (Hall & Turray, 2006). Similarly, as was the
case with social movement theory – expanded upon in the previous chapter – Walter (2007) notes that social movement learning theory “has followed either in Marxist traditions of class analysis (Holst, 2002; Spencer, 1995) or adopted European traditions of NSM theory (Finger, 1989; Holford, 1995; Kilgore, 1999; Welton, 2001; 1993)” (p. 251). Given Kapoor’s (2007, p. 33) warning against the portability of these theories into what he calls “recently independent countries and regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa,” what can be thought of as Euro-American traditions of the OSM, or Marxist, position and the NSM, or radical pluralist/postmodern, position need to be inflected with a post-colonial and African centered lens if they are to be useful to a study of Ghanaian social movement learning. This point is especially important in the realm of social movement learning theory, where “a healthy body of theoretical debate” has emerged, while at the same time “very few empirical studies [have emerged] to inform this theorizing” (Walter, 2007, p. 251). This critique is important, especially when one considers Mamdani’s invective against the application of foreign analogies on African phenomena. Along similar lines, Shirley Walters (2005) – who has done much to study learning within South African social movements – argues that the learning forms that movements take are in large part determined by the cultural and material conditions in which they are grounded.

Therefore, based on this opening, the theoretical framing that follows will endeavor to introduce the three lenses that influence this study – namely OSM/Marxist, NSM/postmodern, and post-colonial – in such a way as to provide a useful set of views on social movement learning from which the reflections emanating from our study can be contextualized. Key to these three lenses are the voices of Habermas and of Freire, whose suggestive convergence ended the previous chapter. Here, their influences will be tied to either OSM or NSM traditions, and in the emerging frame section that follows, the usefulness of their convergence will be expanded upon. At the same time, the importance of Griff Foley’s (1999) notion of learning in struggle will be highlighted for its role in this study’s discussions of social movement learning. A third element of this emerging frame will also be fully articulated – an element drawn directly from Mamdani,
Kapoor and Walters’ guiding thoughts: Ghanaian movement learning cannot be fully understood through either OSM or NSM theorizing, and must instead be seen to be selectively reconfiguring these theories to fit their ongoing localized needs.

With this structure in mind, John Holst’s (2002) study is a good place to introduce the ongoing discussion of theories of social movement learning, especially as it provides a detailed account of contemporary radical adult education contributions to this discussion. Holst’s study is equally compelling for its insistence that to begin discussing learning in social movements necessitates a discussion of broader sociological debates concerning social movements themselves – something the last chapter delved into. In building his bridge to recent radical adult education writing, Holst identifies two ways in which social movement learning has been understood. “First,” he argues, “social movements, through public protest that can take various forms, attempt to educate and persuade the larger public and politicians” (2002, p. 81). “Second,” he continues, “there is much educational work internal to social movements, in which organizational skills, ideology, and lifestyle choices are passed from one member to the next informally through mentoring and modeling or formally through workshops, seminars, lectures, and so forth” (2002, p. 81). This distinction between insider and outsider learning is useful, as it distinguishes the educative strategies of movements from the learning of these movements and their membership. In many ways, this current study is more interested in the second of Holst’s categories, although it must be acknowledged that the ways in which learning occurs within a given movement also affects its approach to educating others. In any case, in the sections that follow, some of the central debates to thinking about learning in social movements will be explored. As with chapter 3 and chapter 4, much of the discussion will revolve around the tensions among Marxist, post-structural and post-colonial interpretations of this learning – even as, wherever relevant and possible, the chapter will again draw links to African inflections of these discussions.
Marxist Traditions

Continuing with Holst (2002), his study is also instrumental in laying out a contemporary Marxist reading of learning in social movements. Drawing on the writing of Marx, Engles, Gramsci, and Rosa Luxemberg especially, Holst builds a strong critique of recent adult education “theorists influenced by postmodernism” (p. 81) that is grounded in a return to what he calls a “classical Marxist position” (p. 9). While his critique of these postmodern theorists will be unpacked and combined below with similar critiques from Foley and Freire, the focus here is on Holst’s articulation of a classical Marxist perspective on learning in social movements.

Building on Youngman (1986), Allman and Wallis (1995), and Griff Foley (1999) – whose work we will turn to in a moment – Holst introduces a “framework for the analysis of adult education in social movements” from a socialist/Marxist perspective:

First, adult education practice must be analyzed within its social, political, and economic context. Second, the mode of analysis must be the political economy of the Marxist tradition. Third, education or praxis involves developing a dialectical understanding of the contradictions of social life in order to find avenues of action to overcome the problems facing those with whom we work. This process will inevitably lead to the necessity of confronting and taking power in society; a complementary educational element is the acquisition of the technical and scientific skills and knowledge to make this possible. The development of a dialectical political economic analysis of contradictions and power in capitalist societies, the confrontation of power, and the acquisition of technical and scientific skills in the struggle for power is the development of hegemony. Fourth, this process of critical investigation and action must take the form of a dialogue; this does not negate the fact that leaders will initiate and emerge from the process. Fifth, because we begin with the premise that ideas and beliefs
emerge from lived experience (Youngman, 1986, p. 70), the practice of
dialogical educational social relations prefigures socialist relations and is
essential to the creation of a new hegemony. The nature of this
dialogical process of the creation of hegemony and the development of
leaders are fundamentally organizational questions. (2002, pp. 92-93)

In linking this five point framework to organizational process, or what he calls a
“pedagogy of mobilization” (p. 87), Holst is connecting with earlier themes in his
work that suggest that contemporary issues facing social movements are the same
as those faced in such European historical moments as the failures of the 1848
revolutions. It is in this connection that Holst draws on Rosa Luxemberg’s work,
where the practical questions of organization must be addressed through the
theory of scientific socialism:

The principles of scientific socialism … impose clearly marked
limitations to practical activity – insofar as it concerns the aims of this
activity, the means used in attaining these aims, and the method
employed in this activity. (1900, p. 123, quoted in Holst, p. 4)

In unpacking the central question of organization in socialist social movements,
Lukács (1971) also draws heavily from Luxemberg. Of primary importance to
Lukács is the question of the method of organization in revolutionary praxis. It is
in pursuit of the answer to this question that he draws on Luxemberg, as her
writing is unequivocal that it is only by remaining faithful to the rigours of
scientific socialism that a true socialist movement can emerge – one that is
beyond the temporary nature of spontaneous movements, though it builds on their
momentum.24

24 In his chapter “Towards a Methodology of the problem of organization” in History and Class
Consciousness, Lukács articulates a detailed and far reaching theory of mobilization and
organization where he draws heavily on Luxemberg. What is interesting from a critical stand point
is how his narrative in fact reveals the very different context of today as compared to the time of
Luxemberg and Lukacs, precisely because of the far reaching power of the Marxist-Leninist
organization, as “opportunists” and the politics of the Internationals – of which Lukacs was a
victim – lead to failed attempts at organization.
In elaborating the issue of organization, Holst brings to the surface his secondary goal of rescuing Gramsci from radical pluralist and neo-Marxist readings. Unlike Lukács who concentrates on the writing of Lenin and Luxemberg to lay-out a theory of revolutionary organization, Holst concentrates on Gramsci’s framework that emphasizes the critical nature of a revolutionary party, potential cross-class alliances, and the emergence of not a counter-hegemony, but rather a proletariat hegemony. What is important to emphasize here is that Holst underscores the educative role the revolutionary party is to play in the alliances that can lead to a historic bloc informed by a proletariat hegemony. In this sense, Holst’s vision for the contemporary application of a socialist form of learning in social movements suggests that a) spontaneous movements that he likens to New Social Movements cannot be the basis of a sustained challenge of capitalism; b) it is only by linking these types of movements to the Old Social Movements of the working class that real learning for change can occur; and c) building on Lenin, it is “through agitation” that the working class becomes conscious for itself and can begin to lead/teach and learn the notion of the historic block (cited in Holst, 2002, p. 113). It needs to be underscored here, however, that in Holst’s view there is only one destination for social change and that destination is Marxist socialism.

Unlike Holst, who ties his framework clearly into an articulation of organization for the seizure of state power, Griff Foley (1999) uses a socialist political economy perspective to situate incidental and informal learning in contemporary case studies of social movements in many geographic and socio-economic locations. In this sense, Foley grounds his articulation of learning in struggle in a critique of the shifting face of capitalism and its internal and external implications for, and effects on, social movements.

In re-emphasizing the importance of a political economy analysis, Foley – like Holst – critiques those educational theorists who have analyzed social movement learning from a strictly post-structural point of view, such as Holford (1995) and Finger (1989). For Foley, focusing solely on the discursive and ignoring the complex interplay of power and capital in social movement
formation, mobilization and learning is “idealist and simplistic” (p. 143). But unlike Holst, Foley does not dismiss the discursive as irrelevant to the deployment of power relations. His use of discourse is, however, linked to a Gramscian informed reconfiguration of ideology. Before going on to look at the important link Foley provides in ensuring the effects of capital not be overlooked in the processes of social movement learning, it is first necessary to problematize his own break from Foucauldian informed conceptualizations of power.

In describing the use of discourse in analysing social movement learning, Foley (1999) first notes:

Satisfactory accounts of learning in struggle make connections between learning and education on the one hand, and analysis of political economy, micro-politics, ideology and discourse (or 'discursive practices') on the other. (p. 9)

Here, Foley has clearly established that the study of discourse is important – unlike Holst. However, elsewhere in his introduction he notes, “Historical materialism is the rock on which my analysis is built. Marxist political economy, history and cultural analysis are fundamental to my thinking” (p. 11-12). In this sense, he follows Holst in reapplying the Marxist privileging of material reality by insisting the analysis of capital must be the primary form of investigation. Foley is therefore going part way in mediating Holst’s classical Marxist view, but he still maintains a footing firmly in the Marxist camp. When it comes to his analysis of discourse, however, his footing is based on a false reading of Foucault’s description of power. To elaborate, Foley describes Foucault’s approach to power as being indicative of certain of the case studies he describes in his book, yet then notes:

These concepts drawn from Foucault construct a bleak and deterministic view of the dominative power of discourse and ideology. Yet as we will see in the studies discussed in this and subsequent chapters, dominant ideologies and discourses are continually challenged by resistant or 'insurgent' ones which people learn in struggle. (1999, p. 13)
What is strange here is how Foley has overlooked this same flip-side to Foucault’s analysis of power in discourses, where every dominant discourse also always already contains subjugated knowledges that contest its truth regime (see chapter 2 and chapter 4 for more details). This alternative reading is important, since in many ways the description of power Foley lays out contains the very complexity that Foucault has helped to articulate.

Looking at this conception of power, Foley (1999) embeds an awareness of capital in a complex and multifaceted conception of power and how it operates: People’s everyday experience reproduces ways of thinking and acting which support the, often oppressive, status quo, but […] this same experience also produces recognitions which enable people to critique and challenge the existing order. (p. 4)

In this sense, he presents a vision of emancipatory learning which is both complex and contradictory – sometimes leading to moments of broadening of emancipation, and other times leading to other moments where resistance actually contributes to new forms of oppression. In this sense, Foley is employing a Foucauldian sense of power and embedding it in a recognition of the role capital plays in these moments of contradiction. This nuanced concept of power is important as it helps to unpack the analysis our PR group uses both in the previous chapter and below.

Both of these two other dimensions of Foley’s analysis of social movements are intertwined with a reconceptualization of struggle as learning. For Foley, this notion goes right to the heart of his argument about the primacy of informal learning over more formal educational processes. More importantly for the analysis here, it also provides a key conceptual hook for understanding how learning occurs in social movements. While Foley’s case studies provide a variety of instances of “learning in struggle” – learning often overlooked by those involved because it is embedded in the struggle – he does not make an attempt to classify or breakdown these different types of learning in struggle. Without starting out with this intention, the study presented here organized itself along the
lines of Foley’s theoretical hook, and has provided three categories, or ways of
thinking about learning in struggle. These are expanded upon below.

The final voice that needs to be added to this discussion of
socialist/Marxist readings of social movement learning is Paulo Freire’s. In
Pedagogy of Hope (1995) – where Freire returns to the themes, the production
and the effect of Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) – he reflects on a life lived
for social transformation through radical education. One of the most important
realizations presented in this book bears directly on the present discussion, where
Freire’s experience as Education Secretary taught him the importance and power
of social movements and their learning in advancing what he terms “progressive”
goals (p. 10). In doing this, Freire re-articulates the important elements he sees in
a progressive education program leading to social transformation. Much like the
two voices introduced above, he critiques what he terms “neo-liberal” or “right
wing” “postmodernity.” But unlike his colleagues, Holst and Foley – who cite
him heavily as a socialist thinker of note – he does not dismiss all the
contributions of postmodern thinking, instead speaking of the importance of
recognizing the critiques and contributions of a progressive postmodernity, a
postmodernity of the left. Much of Pedagogy of Hope (1995), based on practical
reflections on a life of active engagement in struggles in various parts of the
world, is a strong argument against the limited didacticism of those he calls
“sectarians” (p. 105). Speaking directly of the history of socialist revolutions that
“perish[ed] at the height of their power,” he brings to the fore the context through
which the emergence of postmodernity needs to be understood (p. 174). Rather
than a vision of either a classless society, which the postmodernity of the right
would like to have us believe in, or a sectarian vision of the left with “the
excessive arrogance of certitudes, and the inevitable lack of humility that such
certitudes entail,” he sees a different contemporary field of struggle:

Postmodernity, as I see it, has a different, substantially democratic, way
of dealing with conflict, working out its ideology, struggling for the
ongoing and ever more decisive defeat of injustice, and arriving at a
democratic socialism. (p. 175)
While ensuring to point out that this historical moment is not so unique it implies the end of class or history, he underscores the importance of learning in this progressive vision of postmodernity:

In fact, this is why one of the learning processes that a progressive postmodernity calls upon us to accept is the process of our apprehension that the total victory of the revolution in the present does not guarantee its existence in the future. (p. 175)

It is in this context that Freire calls for re-interpretation of the notion of alliances articulated by Gramsci – different, certainly, than Holst’s. “Concessions, then, are the best way of coming to win” he says, but quickly adds that this is true “only if, sooner or later, they actually win the fight that is never over and done,” meaning “winning the fight is a process of which it can never be said, ‘We’ve won, period’” (p. 175). This is the true contribution of postmodern thinking, as it inflicts the notion of social change not with a paralysis of action, but a need for continuous action. As Freire concludes, a learning process could emerge from the process of struggle and negotiation, whereby: “the crushed, the forbidden-to-be, the rejected” would evolve a learning process “that would teach them that, through serious, just, determined, untiring struggle, it is possible to remake the world” (pp. 174-75). Furthermore:

The oppressed may learn that hope born in creative unrest of the battle, will continue to have meaning when, and only when, it can in its own turn give birth to new struggles on other levels. (p. 175)

This is where he points out that,

Finally, it may be learned that, in a new democratic process, it is possible gradually to expand the space for pacts between the classes, and gradually consolidate a dialogue among the different – in other words, gradually deepen radical positions and overcome sectarian ones. (p. 175)

What is especially important in Freire’s re-articulation of this vision of activism for social change, coming after a lifetime of reflection and experience, is that constant struggle is a necessary ingredient in progressive social change; that one vision, one “certitude” of the end goal of social change has been shown time and
again to lead to “the authoritarian exercise of power”; and, that a learning process
is necessary if postmodernity is to progressively alter these struggles over time to
refuse stasis and to take on board the challenge of building alliances through
dialogues that do not end in simple reformism but rather keep giving birth to
ongoing substantial social change.

**Post/civil-societarian/pluralist positions**

There is an interesting reality in beginning to unpack postmodern/poststructural
time theory informed positions on learning in social movements: there is a heavily
debatable labelling process for those included here. There is an irony in this,
especially if one is interested in a) seeing how this broad set of literatures can
apply to the Ghanaian context, and b) making an attempt to dialectically bridge
what can be seen as a false schism between many of the writers herein
represented. The irony is that most often this labelling process is done by others
rather than an author her/himself. Perhaps indicating the very porous nature of
these debatable terms, postmodernity and poststructuralism, the authors herein
represented also have very different interpretations of what new social movements
are, how they are different from old social movements, and what they mean for
learning. Even the theory they draw from is diffuse, although Habermas and
Foucault seem to feature prominently (both of whom in other instances have been
labelled modernists). \(^{25}\)

For instance, those Holst (2002) labels as radical pluralists, such as Welton
and Finger, have completely different interpretations of NSMs. Where Finger
(1989) describes the “feminist movement,” the “peace movement” and “Third
World movements … that fight for economic, social and political emancipation”
(p. 16), as being part of the old movements, Welton (1993) – who’s interpretation
of NSMs is far more habermasian than strictly poststructural - describes these
same movements as being new social movements:

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The term “new social movement” has gained “wide currency” (Cohen, 1985, p. 663), and it is standard practice to identify peace, feminist … and local … autonomy movements as exemplars of new social movement vision and practice. (1993, p. 153)

Likewise, the two profoundly disagree on what the educational goals of new social movements are. On the one hand, Finger (1989) argues NSMs differ from OSMs in their belief in the “failure of modernity” (p. 18), as well as the way NSMs “redefine the aim of education, which is no longer to achieve societal goals, but to induce a process of personal transformation, which, they think, will inevitably have an impact on social, political and cultural life” (p. 18). On the other hand, Welton critiques this privileging of the individual transformation in Finger’s description. Instead, he suggests:

My analysis differs from Finger’s in several respects. First, I argue that the NSM actors selectively radicalize rather than reject modern values. Second, I argue that the NSM must be understood as collective actors, and that one cannot separate personal fulfilment from collective action. (p. 153)

Similarly, where Welton draws heavily on Habermas’ concept of the life-world in describing how NSM actors radicalize modern values in their attempt to “create an autonomous exuberant civil society,” Holford (1995) – another of Holst’s targets – draws on Foucault, Habermas and Gramsci in describing how:

The theory of social movements, if cast in terms of the sociology of knowledge, provides a basis for a radically new understanding of the relationship between adult education and the generation of knowledge. (p. 95)

In this sense, Holford makes the argument that “the concept of social movement” is “a central analytical category” to the pursuit of adult education (p. 95).

In many ways, Holford (1995) is likely the most closely aligned to poststructural positions. His description of new social movements indicates this leaning:
[The new social movement approach] rejected the modernist assumptions of growth and control over nature, and emphasized instead changing attitudes to nature, work, gender relations, consumption and production. It stressed their preference for small-scale, decentralized, anti-hierarchical organizational forms, and the shunning of formal political associations. It emphasized their distinct constituencies, chiefly those suffering from, or structurally sensitive to, problems of modernization, industrialization, and economic growth. Lastly, the new approach detected “a dramatic change from materialist to post-materialist values” (Klandermans, 1991, p. 27). (1995, p. 100)

From this approach to analysing new social movements, Holford builds a conception of learning in social movements that sees movements not only as sources of struggle in an oppositional politics but as important sources of knowledge creation. In this way, learning moves from:

> The appreciation that social movements are important phenomena in the learning process of the individuals (and even collectively of the groups and organizations) which compose them, to a view that they are central to the production of human knowledge itself. (p. 101)

It is here that Holford (1995) inserts the Foucauldian notion of knowledge/power. Arguing that adult education should not only see knowledge as either a “given” or a “social product,” he notes:

> What rarely emerges at the level of theory is a sense that images of society compete, that people themselves may contribute to the shaping of social knowledge in important ways, or, most important, any problematization of the relationship of knowledge to power. (p. 101)

Critical pedagogy has, according to Holford, gone part-way to addressing this problem, at least in the context of schooling. Through the use of a Foucauldian sense of power, critical pedagogy suggests power is embedded in everyday existence through the circulation of discursive knowledges, yet these knowledges – or truth regimes – are also constantly being challenged by subjugated knowledges (Holford, 1995) (discussed in chapter 2 and 4 above). However,
critical pedagogy fails to provide a theorization of how social movements can be part of this process, which leads Holford to draw on the work of Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) concept of cognitive praxis. Grounded in Habermasian thinking—especially his notion of communicative action (discussed at the end of chapter 4), where communication itself can be seen as learning (Ewert, 1991)—this concept has three dimensions: the cosmological, the technological, and the organizational (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991). It is the third of these that Holford sees as critical to social movement learning:

Crucially, the organizational dimension represents the modes of communication which a movement has both internally and with the wider world: it structures how the movement views itself—the movement’s identity. (p. 103)

In this sense, “to study the organizational knowledge of social movements is, in short, to study a key site of interaction between learning, knowledge, and society” (p. 105). From this, it is clear that Holford’s vision of movement learning comes closest to our PR group’s typologies discussed in the previous chapter.

Additionally, as our own typological analysis of Ghanaian movements notes, studying movements through their learning and communication practices should not be done uncritically, as movements impose their own regimes of truth (O’Sullivan, 1993; Gore, 1993). And it is here that Holford, like Foley above, raises important questions about the way power operates in social movements and their knowledge generation. However, unlike Foley, Holford builds a Gramscian connection that suggests movement intellectuals, a term he likens to Gramsci’s organic intellectuals, are key to understanding organizational knowledge in a movement, as they act as important leaders and producers of knowledge in these movements. This point goes far in underscoring the important knowledge basis of the activist-educators at the centre of this study. He warns, however that these organic intellectuals need to be understood as more than mere “objects of study” as they are “active protagonists in intellectual and academic debate” (p. 108). In this sense, they need to be seen in both a positive and a problematic light, and are “unlikely to provide unambiguous answers” in a study of a particular movement’s
organization and learning. In this sense, our own study has chosen to collectively make meaning based on the accumulated experiences and knowledge of both our PR group and the wider network of activist-educators, even while actively acknowledging the ambiguous analysis that may emerge from our accounts – something restorying helps us capture by showing where our accounts of movements and learning differ.

**Post-colonial/subaltern studies positions**

Much like in the previous chapter, introducing the post-colonial perspective involves returning to the combination of Mamdani’s (1995; 1996) critique of both Marxist and poststructural analysis of African phenomena, and Kapoor’s (2007) critique of the dominance of OSM/NSM interpretations in much social movement learning writing. However, for our purposes here, Kapoor’s (2007) work provides a key starting point for an articulation of a post-colonial perspective, not only because of his critique of the “portability” of OSM/NSM analyses, but also because his study of Adivasi movements in India represents a rare empirical study of social movement learning in general, and in a “recently independent” nation specifically.

In the section that follows, Kapoor’s (2007) study, along with the implications he draws from it for both Marxist and pluralist Euro-American literature will be explored. In this sense, Kapoor’s walking through of the implications of learning in social movements from a subaltern/post-colonial perspective will be explored, and ultimately will also provide a working model of engaging in this type of participatory research in a post-colonial setting. This is especially important as there is no similar example in the African context from which to build. Added to this will be two further inflections of learning in social movements drawn from post-colonial settings. The first of these draws on the work of Choudry (2007) to critique the over-privileging of transnational activism. The second involves reconnecting with Nkrumah’s vision that framed the methodology of this study in chapter 2. His vision helps provide the avenue
through which a bridge can be made from this social movement learning
theoretical discussion to the more practical project of conducting a participatory
research study in Ghana.

Kapoor’s (2007) study of social movement learning in Adivasi
communities in India’s Orissa state represents the most recent and far reaching
articulation of SM learning from a post-colonial perspective. Not only is it
important for what it pushes away from – reminding us that Euro-American
radical adult education writing on SM learning is not adept enough to fully
capture the context of a post-colonial setting – but it also helps articulate
considerations relevant to the Ghanaian context. Unlike above where Kapoor’s
critique of Marxist and Habermasian traditions in SM studies is elaborated, this
section will focus on the contributions he introduces to conceiving of SM learning
from an Adivasi perspective. Many of these contributions present new ways of
speaking and thinking of movement learning, and offer new lenses through which
post-colonial social movements can be understood.

First, Kapoor’s (2007) description places the integrated relationship of the
Adivasi with land, water, forest, and spirituality at the center of the research.
From this, a different articulation of learning in SMs emerges, where colonial and
neo-colonial processes of divide and rule as well as dispossession of land are
problematized and historicized through a number of types of learning. The first of
these, “learning from lamentations” (p. 31) involves a heightened song or
“lament” that expresses the ongoing struggle and its historical connection to
struggles in the colonial and post-colonial period (p. 25); extending this learning,
the second type of SM learning is provoked through the discourses of elders “on
Adivasi ways and contradictions with modern (Sahari) lives” (p. 31) where the
younger generation is introduced to the intrinsic ties between forest and people – a
way of being and knowing not unlike Mignolo’s concept of subaltern knowledges
that directly contest the consumerist individualism of modernization global
designs (discussed in chapter 4); finally, learning is also articulated through the
process of “movement-inspired collective action to reclaim the land and forest
against tremendous odds” (p. 32). This final process involves:
A decolonization of *Adivasi* space that has already placed 6000 plus acres of land and forest in dispute, as people go ahead and cultivate grains, fruits, and vegetables, while increasing numbers of families continue to secure titles to hutment area land, sealing themselves off from random eviction as “illegal squatters.” (p. 32)

It is in achieving results such as these that movement learning takes on deeper meaning:

Movement learning is clearly linked to the achievement of movement purpose around land and forest as collective action has taught people how to “reclaim” land and forests and assert legal and political rights and Constitutional guarantees that are of “selective utility” in realizing *Adivasi* conceptions of sovereignty, while playing a significant part in cultivating a growing sense of the importance of subaltern unity in collective action. (p. 32)

However, even as this last element of learning has clearly produced important material results for the *Adivasi* community, in Kapoor’s description the learning in collective action cannot be separated from the other two elements of learning, since it is through these other processes that unity and purpose are debated and defined:

Appeals to past struggles, lamentations, calls for unity through song, elder parables and collective dissection of the same, continue to massage the maturing sense of the significance of the movement and help to build on community understandings of the stated and evolving [*Adivasi*] movement purposes. Such cultural mediums scaffold the collectivity and provide necessary glue for joint action to address the decolonization of land and forest spaces that are so vital to forest-based cultures. (p. 32)

Thus this complex articulation of learning in a social movement in India provides direct connections to the legacy of subaltern studies, especially as it makes more complex Marxist and culturalist articulations of struggle. In Kapoor’s (2007) contribution, the weaknesses of subaltern studies are acknowledged
(discussed above in Chapter 2) but ultimately provide a way to describe the manner in which:

The assertions of Adivasi ways in the face of colonial denigration provides Adivasi movements and the learning dimensions of these movements with a critical-colonial address that escapes radical adult education scholarship/theorizing of movement learning. (p.35)

It does so by not dismissing such local knowledges as the intertwined nature of forest and land deities with articulations of struggle – labelling spirituality as regressive. For as Partha Chatterjee (1982) has observed from the subaltern studies perspective:

Religion provides an ontology, an epistemology, as well as a practical code of ethics, including political ethics [and that when] subalterns act politically, the symbolic meaning of particular acts – their signification – must be found in religious terms. (quoted in Kapoor, 2007, p. 34)

It is in specificities such as these that learning in post-colonial situated social movements can be more fully articulated, even as issues such as capital, identity, and dominant discourses are kept in mind. As Kapoor concludes, “such movement specificities are too significant to be overlooked in the quest for grand explanations and point out the limits to politico-theoretical elasticity in relation to the kaleidoscope of political cultures” (p. 35).

To Kapoor’s description it is important to add Choudry’s (2007) recent articulation of the power relations between social movements, especially as they move from the context of an indigenous struggle to a transnational context. For Choudry, the power differential between these two different sites of resistance can lead and has led to silencing and dominance by the transnational anti-globalization movement over those forms of local struggles such as the indigenous Maori social movement with which he works. He argues:

“Progressive” organizations/movements and the left in general have not been inherently sympathetic or supportive of Indigenous People’s struggles for self-determination. (p. 100)

As such,
Struggles against “development” and neoliberalism by Indigenous Peoples in the North (e.g., Maori struggles against corporatization and privatization of state-owned assets in the 1980s) … have tended to be overlooked and discounted by dominant narratives of anti-neoliberal mobilizations. (p. 101)

In many ways, Choudry’s example echoes the complex power relations Foley has articulated. For instance, quoting Foley, he calls for a “groundedness of analysis” in the “concrete locations of social struggle” that will allow for the recognition of the ambiguity of power Foley notes. In this sense, Choudry is advocating a move away from the “academic analyses [that] seek theoretically pure forms of social movement or community struggle” (p. 98). This involves not only being critical of anti-globalization movements, but also of “Western scholarship” – including “the limitations of dominant (i.e., Euro-American) strands of Marxist scholarship” – that fail to see what Mignolo (2000) calls the “colonial difference” and equally fail “in acknowledging the validity of Indigenous knowledge/worldviews” (p. 99). In this sense, Choudry is also moving away from Foley in articulating a post-colonial articulation of the blind-spot in Western Marxist critiques of neoliberalism that ignore Indigenous contributions to this critique. It is in this blind-spot that Choudry suggests:

Continued assertions of self-determination and demands for decolonization by many Indigenous Peoples are a rich but woefully untapped source of theory and critique of both capitalist economic systems and the state itself. (p. 101)

What is important to Choudry, however, is being aware of the knowledge being produced by Indigenous movements, and the ways in which this knowledge production could bring new insights, where for instance “international Indigenous networks with a colonial analysis of “development” can offer and share alternatives to the dominant model” (p.108); yet, this knowledge production is too often marginalized as oppositional space is dominated by the larger Euro/North-American movements:
While there are many opportunities to refocus dominant understandings of neoliberalism to situate them in a decolonization frame, Indigenous Peoples and their allies face challenges not only from national and global power elites but from within networks of NGOs and movements ostensibly committed to transformative social change. (p. 111)

This leads Choudry to a conclusion that underscores the “incremental, sometimes contradictory, and often difficult” nature of learning in social action (p. 111), which to him means “if we are looking for neat, replicable formulae for effective pedagogy for instant decolonization, we may be disappointed!” (p. 111).

Here it is perhaps useful to conclude this section with a return to the voice of Kwame Nkrumah whose quote began the methodology chapter above. In the quoted speech, he calls for the re-articulation of the “study [of] history, culture, institutions, languages and [the] arts of Ghana and of Africa in new African-centred ways” (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 129). This call echoes the conclusions of both Kapoor and Choudry – as well as Mamdani’s invective – in that it suggests that the study of Ghanaian social movements must be grounded in “African-centred ways” and must therefore be sensitive to the particular context in which these movements are based. His quote has two important implications for our collective analysis of learning in Ghanaian social movements. First, as was noted in the methodology chapter, Nkrumah’s invocation of the need to contribute to a “progressive and dynamic African-society” and not try to ground research in our own group’s “diverse patterns of education and culture” – including mine as a non-African and non-Ghanaian – is a critical place for our collective analysis to begin unpacking learning in Ghanaian social movements (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 129 emphasis added). This is a point our PR group dwelled on at length, especially in connection with our intention to work with the Songor movement – discussed in depth in the concluding chapter. It is telling that Nkrumah mentions education here in association with culture, as he clearly sees the necessary link between a form of education that can contribute to the enunciation of an African-centred approach, as well as the creation and maintenance of a “progressive and dynamic African-society.” The second important implication of his invocation is
the necessity of building collaborative efforts to help enunciate this African-centred vision. Nkrumah has invited many into this space, and the remainder of this speech is highly suggestive of what Foucault meant when he argued that subjugated knowledges are the site from which regimes of truth can be challenged.26 Yet, Nkrumah invites non-Africans to engage in this collaborative effort only if they are willing to put aside some of their own cultural assumptions and attempt to “reorientate … to our African conditions and aspirations”. Our group has been deeply informed by these words by Nkrumah, as they have implications for us all when we are reminded of Al-Hassan’s point regarding the role of neoliberal education in colonizing Ghanaian movement mobilization – discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 4. In this sense, our collective meaning making captured below in the different articulations of learning and struggle begin from this point of both critical self-reflection and collective action. Before turning to look at these collective articulations, three other key links between the social movement learning theory presented above and our study need to be laid out.

Concluding connections between the literature and our study

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, there are three ways in which literature on social movement learning interconnects with our study:

1. OSM/NSM tension is largely reconfigured in the Ghanaian setting;
2. Analysing movements from the perspective of the way they learn and communicate reveals the false dichotomy between OSM and NSM social movement learning lenses, and it also makes apparent the differentiations among and also within movements over time, as contestation is negotiated – something many overarching theories of social movement learning fail to do as their theorizing aims to explain what all social movements do or should do; and,

26 For instance Nkrumah speaks of the importance of the Ghanaian writer Al-Hajj ‘Umoru’s writing in elucidating a different understanding of the “disintegration of African society upon the coming of the British” in the speech (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 137).
3. A key starting point in building an inflected analysis of the ways in which social movements learn is the link between informal learning within movements and the ambiguous role of power – both as it confronts movements and as it circulates within them. These three points drawn from the literature are crucial in situating our PR group’s co-construction of the learning and struggle lenses discussed fully below.

**OSM/NSM tension reconfigured in the Ghanaian setting**

Building on Mamdani (1995; 1996) and Kapoor’s (2007; 2009) arguments presented above and in the previous chapter – as well as Nkrumah’s invocation – it is crucial that the OSM/NSM paradigmatic divide associated with a Euro-American tradition of analysis does not colonize the discursive setting of Ghanaian social action, even while the rhetorical arguments of both traditions bear weight on Ghanaian movements, their approaches to learning, their history, and their strategies. Reflecting on the convergence between Freire and Habermas articulated at the end of the last chapter, the dichotomy between these two traditions becomes even more problematic. While Habermas and Freire may differ on a number of points, it is clear that their reflections on social action, communication, and learning are remarkably synergistic (Morrow & Torres, 2002). While they have each been interpreted as being rooted firmly in a particular camp, discussion of their actual work in chapter 4 above suggests a much more flexible approach to this theoretical divide. Without re-exploring this in depth here, it is enough to say that synergistic differentiation between strategic/didactic and communicative-dialogue-based movements provides precisely the terminology our study required to capture the clear move our collaborative analysis made away from the simple OSM/NSM dichotomy.

In the discussions below of the lenses of learning and struggle that have emerged in our study, this interpretive flexibility is crucial in understanding not only how movements learn over time but also the ways in which these different discourses of struggle can coexist in the same movement and in the same activist-
educator. In this sense, difficult questions must be asked of theorists who aim for positional purity, and ignore the empirical realities of movements and activists embedded in struggle on an ongoing basis. This is especially true in post-colonial settings where the power/knowledge nexus of the colonial legacy has quotidian implications – even on discourses of dissent that have emerged from colonial epicentres of power. This concluding reflection is crucial in contextualizing the power imbalances in such transnational social movements as the World Social Forum – discussed briefly in the last chapter but also elaborated below. Choudry (2007) has also provided an important critique of these sorts of movements and their implications on local movements, such as indigenous movements.

Therefore, in destabilizing the dichotomy between OSM and NSM theoretical positions, our study makes room for a more complex and differentiated understanding of movements. And, based on the synergy of Freire and Habermas’ terminology, this differentiated approach can be grounded in how social movements learn and communicate.

**The way movements learn is an important way to differentiate and make more complex how they are understood**

The differentiated approach just discussed is the basis of the typologies laid out in the last chapter, along with the way in which our use of these typologies aimed not to strictly categorize Ghanaian social movements definitively, but rather to suggest the ways in which particular approaches to learning and communication in different movements is suggestive of the relationship between movement membership and movement leadership. However, our PR group also does not see these typologies as static, as a particular movement’s stance towards learning and communication may very well change over time depending on the issues confronting or emerging from movements.

With this in mind, a key point in our PR group’s articulation of these typologies was a sense of their contingent nature; in other words, the way in which particular movements could equally shift to become more or less dialogue-
based. For instance, as we co-constructed our understanding of the women’s movement and the anti-mining movement, we articulated not only the ways in which these movements represented the typologies they described, but also the ways in which they blurred these lines – for better and for worse. This contingent analysis comes from the same place as the reconfiguration of the OSM/NSM tension described above, namely our collective experience within and in support of various Ghanaian struggles and movements. In this sense, and unlike much of contemporary social movement learning writing (Walter, 2007; Hall & Turray, 2006), our study is grounded in an empirical reflective process that starts not from our theorizing, but rather is drawn from our own knowledge and experiences. This is even the case for me, someone largely supportive of these movements rather than being directly involved in them, even though my experience is much more limited than that of the rest of our PR group.27

In another sense, our study differs from most SML literature because of its comparative nature (Hall & Turray, 2006). According to Hall and Turray (2006) most social movement learning studies are either theoretical in nature, making meta level comments about the way social movements are and/or should be (c.f. Holst, 2002; Finger, 1989), or focused on singular movement case studies from which theoretical comments can be expounded (c.f Welton, 2001; Walter, 2007). Our differentiated approach here resists the tendency to imagine all movements as similar, and provides a basis from which to analyze the values and goals of movements over time, even as complexity is added to this differentiated analysis. Through this the tensions within and against a particular movement are well articulated, even as the differences between them based on how they learn and communicate are also explored. This nuanced co-constructed approach to

27 As discussed in the opening chapter, this is another moment where the tension around writing a text that is the result of collective deliberations, writing in a genre that requires single authorship, and writing from the position of a non-African, non-Ghanaian in a participatory study embedded in Ghanaian activist-educator experiences is palpable. Pointing out this tension, rather than trying to resolve it, is my writing strategy for acknowledging the problematics these tensions underscore, instead of pretending that they don’t exist.
understanding Ghanaian movements and their learning is not only an effective filter through which our PR group could address the false OSM/NSM divide, but also a way in which to build a more locally-contingent and movement-differentiated lens through which to analyze movement dynamics. Thus, in contrast to Holst (2002), from the Marxist perspective, and Finger (1989), from the NSM perspective, all movements are not read from a particular epistemic perspective – even though our PR group was not shy in clearly favouring the dialogue-based movement typology over the other. In this sense, this empirical co-constructed reflective study provides key localized perspectives on how movements are different, and how these differences are connected to the ways they learn – in contrast to theorizing how SMs should learn, and how they should organize to contest and challenge power.

**Informal learning within movements is a key starting point from which to build this complex understanding**

This then leads to the third link between social movement literature and our study: the importance of understanding the role of learning, especially informal learning, in building a complex view of movements and the ways in which power confronts and circulates within and through them. While Freire and Habermas provide a lexicon through which our PR group has been able to evaluate a movement’s stance towards learning and communicating, Foley’s emphasis on informal learning through social action helps provide the modality through which it is possible to trace how these different stances have daily implications on learning as it happens. As Foley makes clear above, the majority of learning in social movements is informal, and is based on social action or struggle. Equally important, his comparative and differentiated empirical collection of movement learning analyses show repeatedly how power has ambiguous implications on social movement learning – as a campaign may succeed in getting a struggle exposure, but it may also silence members of a movement whose livelihoods are most at stake. This link between power and learning within movements is a key
lens through which the differentiation discussed above is analysed by our group. For instance the typologies our group developed to understand movements are suggestive of a particular set of power relations within a given movement – even as Foley’s articulation reminds us that seemingly positive moments of movement learning can also have negative long-term implications on power relations within and outside of movements.

This focus on informal learning and its interconnection with power makes room for the experiential nature of learning resultant from social action – a cornerstone of our group’s analysis of learning in Ghanaian social movements discussed below. Also crucial for our study, it is through this link that Foley introduces his notion of learning in struggle – a theoretical way of analysing learning that deeply informed how our group came to articulate learning in our study.

Thus, the differentiated analysis of social movements is derived from a close analysis of the ways in which movements learn and communicate, along with the resultant power relations that emerge from these approaches, and the mostly informal learning that results from struggle and social action is the basis of our collective analysis of movement learning laid out below.

**Learning in/through/to struggle**

While the differentiation between didactic and dialogue-based movement typologies discussed in the previous chapter is based on shifting from classifying movements by their links to old or new movement labels, to classifying them based on the way they organize, communicate and learn, this is only one way in which our PR group analyzed learning in social movements in Ghana. In the next section, three lenses for further thinking about learning in social movements are presented. These lenses emerged clearly throughout the research, and are a culmination of mutual meaning making that drew together the reflections of the wider network of activist-educators – as captured in a series of blogs (January 15th & 17th, and March 4th & 11th, 2008) – with the collective analysis of our PR
group. In many ways, these lenses represent the clearest example of re-storying in this research. Each of these lenses highlights a different aspect of learning in social movements, and – as will be noted in the explanations that follow – they are all interlinked with the typologies of movements our PR group articulated. Also, as just noted, it is Griff Foley’s (1999) notion of learning in struggle that has framed the emergence of these lenses – though like the note about Freire and Habermas above, it needs to be clarified that this concept helped our PR group find common language for trends most of us had already noticed, and any expansion of the concept was due to the refinement of the term based on our mutual understanding of the Ghanaian context.

The lenses described below represent three articulations of the link between learning and struggle, where the word “struggle” is understood by our PR group in three different ways. Struggle can be first understood as an ongoing process, as in the struggle by slaves for emancipation; struggle can also be defined as a singular event of struggling over something, such as a strike over working conditions; finally, struggle can be understood as an action, where one struggles to learn a new skill. These different articulations of struggle are indicative of how the combination of learning and struggle can come to mean different things when expanded upon within social movement activism. It should be noted that in describing these three approaches to understanding learning in social movements in the Ghanaian context, our PR group elected to first identify trends in the ways in which the larger group of older generation activist-educators described learning, and then to gloss these interpretations with a collective group analysis.

Learning in struggle:

Of the three lenses through which learning and struggle were analyzed in our study, this first one is based most closely on Foley’s (1999) description – a connection made clear by its direct use of Foley’s term “learning in struggle.” By following Foley’s (1999) analysis of environmental movement learning or of women’s shelter mobilization learning, this lens helps to examine the long term process of learning that has occurred in social movements through the emergence
of new strategies, and through the cycle of external conflicts that arise with the shifting nature of capital and the internal conflicts that often result from these external shifts. This understanding of learning in social movements takes a much longer view than the particular moments of learning through a struggle such as an event or conflict discussed below, or the particular strategies developed by, or emergent from, movements through which people learn to struggle. In this sense, this first view is historical in its orientation, and therefore connects our PR group’s historicized analysis of the various shifts in strategy by movements as well as by activist-educators with the individual reflections on these shifts by the activist-educators involved. Below, four major reflective shifts are presented, the first of these linking back to the story of the democracy movement and antecedent socialist movements discussed in chapter 3; the second reconnects with the women’s movement discussed in chapter 4; the third builds on the long term realization that led to the emergence of the people with disability movement, also discussed in chapter 4; and, the fourth connects with emerging learning of anti-neoliberal movements concerning the ambiguous role of the World Social Forum. In each of these discussions, attempts are made to connect the emergent learning in struggle with its resultant implications on power relations.

1. Learning in Struggle in Ghana’s democracy movement

There are four key interrelated areas of long term learning in the democracy movement that emerged in our study. The first of these was discussed in chapter 3 above, and involves the realization by activist-educators embedded in the socialist movements of the 1980s that human rights and a basic respect for life are necessary before a more equitable society can be achieved. The second major long-term learning to emerge from the democratic struggle is embedded in the shift in goals by the socialist movement membership away from the strictly informed Soviet or Cuban model of state capture and towards a more ongoing understanding of struggle. This was also discussed in chapter 3. The third area of learning is an extension of both the shifts in goals as well as the embracing of
human rights discourse, and involves the pragmatic realization by these same activist-educators that achieving a return to democracy, and through it a first step towards curtailing human rights abuses by the government, necessarily means putting aside some differences with the right in Ghana. This realization is also discussed in the 3rd chapter. Related to this, the final piece of long-term learning in struggle is the reflective realization that the socialist struggles of the early 1980s were too dependent on the models and teaching provided by the Soviet Social Center, and through it the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the socialist state. In this sense, there has been a realization that struggle for a more equitable Ghana must be embedded in Ghanaian histories of struggle, and not the analogies drawn from other settings. As will be discussed below, this realization echoes the thoughts of Mamdani (1995; 1996) – also discussed above.

Without rehashing what is laid out in chapter 3, the long term learning that emerged from the experiences associated with the socialist movements of the 1980s, and their subsequent distancing from and targeting by the Rawlings regime, led to the realization that a baseline of respect for human rights needed to be in place before a concerted struggle for a more just Ghana could begin. AK was the first to articulate this in the interview process, as she underscored how difficult it was to contest the abuses being perpetrated by the PNDC because there was no respect for life (interview January 14th, 2008). KE further emphasized this, as he elaborated how most leading members of the various socialist movements critical of the PNDC knew the inside of the Bureau of National Investigation28 headquarters well, as they would be regularly picked up and harassed – not to mention those tortured and then incarcerated in prisons around the country (interview February 4th, 2008). The weakness of the critical elements of the left, as well as the way in which the PNDC discredited the revolutionary option – discussed below – led many in these critical elements to recognize the “need to rebuild after the failure of the socialist movements” (KE interview February 4th, 2008). AC highlights how the shift to demanding respect for life and human rights

28 Ghana’s equivalent of the American FBI and CIA combined.
along with democracy was critical for creating the space from which to curtail the disrespectful violent behaviour of the PNDC (interview, January 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). In fact, according to KE, the shift to emphasizing human rights discourse had real mass appeal and was critical in generating the support for the return to democracy (interview January 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). AK further stressed how, much to the surprise of some of the activist-educators involved in the socialist and then democracy movement, the human rights discourse emerged as being far more meaningful than anticipated. In fact, CK has emphasized how the human rights discourse still remains very relevant today as a major rallying point for mining community activism.

Yet there are some important critical reflections on this shift. As Al-hassan mentions elsewhere in this document, the human rights discourse and the donor funds that support it, as well as its connection to the 1992 Constitution and associated court action, limit the options of resistance for communities and movements:

RAVI or G-RAP\textsuperscript{29} would be interested in Radio Ada, give Radio Ada money and say you go and do education, mobilization around [the] Songor [salt flat defense movement] and find out how we could have participation, let’s do Community Voices and then we’ll publish it, so that if the community has any grievances or case, let’s go through the court or let’s look at the constitution, what does the constitution talk about your rights and all those things. (PR meeting, February 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2008)

In this sense, the contestation of the community is embedded in a web of power relations that discursively contain the range of choices they can exercise. AC echoes this critique when he notes that the convergence of the human rights discourse with donor funding and democratization and advocacy/rights-based civil society activity has created a false stability in Ghanaian communities and movements directly affected by neoliberal globalization. He concludes, “aid has handcuffed our activism” and therefore has “weakened the left” as a source of

\textsuperscript{29} Rights and Advocacy funds that are supported by a number of donors through pooled resources. These funds are further discussed in chapter 3.
“real alternatives” (interview, January 15th, 2008). As Excerpt 1 below from the blog entry describing our PR meeting suggests, the shift from a socialist ideal of state capture to a more pragmatic approach to human rights discourse and a return to democracy was a major topic of discussion for our group, and came with a whole debate of the changing role and relationships of contestation with the state. This blog entry in many ways captures the results of our collective re-storying of the emergence of the democratic terrain in Ghana, and the long-term learning that emerged in this process. It is also suggestive of the other areas of long-term learning of the democracy movement, such as the need to create a pragmatic alliance with the forces of the right to reestablish a democracy in order to curtail the authoritarian PNDC regime, the shift away from the goal of state capture by social movements, and the need to ground any new articulation of resistance that emerges in local histories and subjugated knowledges rather than simply taking on board Marxist or civil societarian/human rights logic.

Excerpt 2: PR Process Overview (Blog posted March 4th, 2008)

It is necessary [here] to reflect on the changing nature of the state in understanding/situating the emergence and learning of SMs. From our collective perspective, we saw two broad state environments. The first in the early 1980s still was a part of the state-led political-economic model. Even in capitalist formations, the state was considered to be an important if not critical catalyst and leader in development. This model was roundly attacked in neoliberal literature (originating in the Chicago school of economics), and as the Washington consensus emerged the state was identified as a pariah, a blockage to development that had been imposed from outside. This argument and counter-arguments critiquing it are well known, but its affect is important to consider, especially for SMs.

In this first model, it made sense that SM activity was deeply interested in state capture. The Socialist movements of the 1980s and late 1970s were intent on capturing the state and making “a total transformation of society”.

As the 1980s rolled on, not only did the socialist experiments in Russia and
Eastern Europe begin an ideological about face, the capacity and coverage of the state in Ghana was also receding; with structural adjustment taking hold, the social movements began to see the state as a blockage on their activity, as something that needed to be contained within a web of laws and other power sources. The Discourse of Human Rights is a good example of this. The state’s activities in jailing people and torturing them may have previously been viewed as a necessary evil if the state was truly transforming society (the “can’t make an omelette without breaking a few eggs” mentality), yet when it did these things merely to protect itself – to survive – then the state needed to be contained within a system that guaranteed a time-bound, rule-bound system of survival and change => democracy. The democratic terrain, as such, both opened up the terrain from SMs to operate, as many in the socialist movements moved into other protest movements as well as the NGO sector, but also began to erode the idea of popular capture of state power: SMs were something politicians could use as opportunities for launching/boosting campaigns, not for building a revolutionary force to change the structural relations in which people lived. This distinct transition is critical to understand, and it goes a long way in helping to explain why first of all the language of “revolution” has lost all its electricity – becoming a parody of what is once was (it cannot be ignored that the PNDC’s behavior in power also massively contributed to this emptying of the language); secondly, it also helps to explain why many of the most visible and most vibrant activists in the current political landscape have refused to become associated with bids for state power – seeing their role as watching and criticizing government as having more integrity and more effect than the lascivious nature of national political office. It is also relevant here to point out that the distrust for the effectiveness of national level politics within a global system, has also increased the tendency to look for areas to fight from, rather than to look for places to rule from. So, in short, the political environment had changed, and building any movement was less about seizing control of the state and more about being there to effect and enforce progressive change, no matter who was in power. This type of set of relations also encourages a more professional and legal-juristic approach to demanding change: the radical threat removed, what really becomes of concern is losing elections and not one’s way of life. For the more radical groups too, there is a growing awareness that the national is merely the place where transnational relations are legislated and defended. Therefore there is a scaling up of focus for these groups, where the realization is that national power is not going to lead to dramatic change, and therefore the whole global
What the blog excerpt above shows is the interlinked nature of these facets of learning, even as they are separated here for individual scrutiny. In addition, the blog excerpt (Excerpt 1) suggests that closely related to this shift towards human rights discourse was a changing relationship with the state. This involved a reconceived notion of the appropriateness of revolution, as well as a concomitant shift in thinking about the best way to work for a better and more just society. This area of learning had two sides to it: first, that the PNDC revolution was a grave mistake; and second that state capture was not necessarily the best goal for activism.

From the perspective of many of the activist-educators involved in the democracy movement and the socialist movements before it, the possibility of revolutionary change in Ghana was greatly damaged as a result of the PNDC. As AK and GY both note, “Rawlings ruined revolution for Ghana” (interviews, January 14th & February 15th, 2008). In a very real way, from KE’s perspective, the failure of the PNDC revolution discredited the left in Ghana, making the possibility of socialist state capture highly unlikely. Tanko notes how this weakness continues to haunt the left in Ghana today:

I have been struggling to make a couple of points about learning in these movements. I don’t know if we have reached such a stage of honesty, modest admission and all that, but we have yet to offer a clear cut and enduring alternative to all this madness in the system. It’s like so far we have been acting on instincts. We have yet to reach that point. This brings me back to when Al-hassan and Coleman were trying to make some point about capitalism succeeding on its own strength and all that, and I am not too sure whether that has always been the case. There are times that their success is largely dependent on the weaknesses of the left. All the things we are doing, we are not offering any clear cut alternative to the people. The people come and they are wired up and
fired up for action and all that, but then nothing, the words used to fire people up are then empty because some leaders are just saying it. They don’t really want to change how things work. (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008)

Key here is not only the continued sense that the left is still weak, but also that the power dynamics within movements allow for the leadership to seem to stand for one thing but then betray this stance to maintain the status quo. In many ways, this is what happened with Rawlings and the movement that brought him to power, and the ambiguous nature of this process has led many of those involved in struggles to reconceive of the goal of their resistance. As such, even if a state capture option were to re-emerge, the experiences and learning from the past have taught Ghanaian activist-educators on the left that “there can be no shortcut” to truly building a convergence of movements that emanates from the subjugated and is not subsequently co-opted by the elite (TO interview, January 31st, 2008).

Here it is relevant to re-state Al-Hassan’s opinion that there has yet to be a real revolution in Ghana, and that the Rawlings version never had the interest of average Ghanaians at heart (PR meeting, February 24th, 2008). This point connects well with TO’s follow up point of learning that movements cannot be about leadership ego if they are to truly change the relations of power in Ghana (interview, January 31st, 2008). It is largely from these converging lines of thought that the collective conclusion of many activist-educators to move away from a goal of state capture to a stance of constant struggle emerged. As the next section on learning through struggle elaborates, the Kume Preko demonstrations confirmed for a number of those activist-educators involved in both socialist and democracy movements that contestation could yield results in the democratic terrain without necessitating state capture. This experience led KE, amongst others, to conclude that politics was not the domain in which to push for change as the state was largely embedded in what Ferguson (2006) calls transnational governmentality, and therefore any push for changes beneficial to average Ghanaians rather than the interests of external forces must come from movements instead.
Yet, AK also notes that activist-educators should be mindful of imposing their sense of the best way forward on the rest of Ghanaians (interview, January 14th, 2008). She is hinting at what Al-Hassan states boldly above – the possibility of cooptation of movement momentum for elite interest (interview, January 14th, 2008). In this sense, she sees CJA as an interference in the political domain – a domain Ghanaians themselves need to decide. This inflection echoes the debate about the role of movement leadership our group had. In this, it is also connected to the power implications intertwined in the identity of those making the decision to struggle for state capture or not – a connection whose importance is underscored by Al-Hassan’s comment.

Interlinked with these first two areas of learning is the third, namely the strategy by the critical elements on the left of creating a pragmatic link with the right in order to re-establish a respect for life, as well as a democratic accountability to Ghanaians. This decision builds on a self-recognition of Tanko and KE’s point noted above about the weakness of the left, as well as Coleman’s point mentioned in chapter 3 that connected the “brutalization” experienced by members of the socialist movements not supportive of the PNDC with a decision to “form a broader coalition” in order to bring about its end (PR meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Without rehashing the narrative of this process laid out in the 3rd chapter, it is key to point out here how the learning from the experiences of the PNDC era resulted in this strategy, and also how this strategy contributed to other aspects of learning. For instance, the success of the coming together of the elements of the right and the left critical of Rawlings enabled the successful challenge of the PNDC’s vision of a local level democracy – bringing back multi-party democracy instead. Yet the false assumption that this victory guaranteed the right could defeat Rawlings in an election underscores TO’s point above that movement leadership should never assume support for the cause is synonymous with support for the individual. Building on this, the elements on the left who were critical in mobilizing the movement on the ground were shown again how building alliances with the elite can lead to attempts at cooptation. This was also further revealed in the Kume Preko demonstrations, discussed below. Yet, as CK
and AK note, this strategy was also an important moment of unity, where it was clearly shown how placing the good of average Ghanaians ahead of ideology or party-politics generated a ground swell of support (interview, January 23rd, 2008).

Finally, the fourth area of learning highlights the growing reflective awareness of many involved in the socialist movements of the 1980s, and subsequently connected with the democracy movement – that it is necessary to ground every struggle in local iterations and articulations of the ways society should work. Echoing Mamdani’s call for a move away from the Eurocentric theories of both dependency/Marxism and post-structuralism, KE describes his own growing understanding that much of what went wrong in the revolutions of the 1980s was an overarching influence of the Soviet Social Center, and that much of the understanding of socialism was drawn from what Mamdani would call analogies from other places. He notes the “huge dominance of the Soviet Cultural center”, and how the dominance was “totally wrong” for what they aimed to achieve in Ghana because it “ignored local peculiarities” (interview, Feb 4th, 2008). Ironically, this privileging of the Soviet model of socialism ignored Nkrumah’s own attempts to Africanize socialism 30 years before. For instance, in describing the “progressive and dynamic African society” discussed in chapter 2, Nkrumah notes the need for “the African genius, by which he means:

[S]omething positive, or socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional statecraft, our highly developed code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy. (reproduced in Obeng, 1997, p. 132)

From a different perspective, KE believes an unconscious recognition of this overdependence may have led to a strong sense by many in the democracy movement that the version of democracy Ghana put in place must be Ghanaian, and that the greatest way to ensure this was to struggle for it on an ongoing basis – a point which connects well with a reconceived notion of revolution and the relationship with the state spelled out above. Al-Hassan’s description of the recent infighting in the socialist forum, where the orthodox Marxists lost out to a more locally grounded and flexible socialist grouping, also speaks to the broader
manifestation of this reflective realization – discussed in chapter 4. In a very real sense, this realization is also a major part of the thinking that led our group to focus on organic or unbranded movements, as their use of socialist discourse is far more strategic than dogmatic, and in our group’s view their struggle is embedded far more firmly in local histories of resistance and learning, and in local subjugated knowledges that reconfigure discourses of contestation such as socialism in important locally determined ways.

2. Women’s movement learning in struggle

In the case of the women’s movement, there are two major long-term areas of learning in struggle that our study describes. First, extending from the discussions above about the changing role of movement-state relations, the most recent version of Ghana’s women’s movement has experienced its own shift in these relations – even as this shift is the topic of much current debate. Second, the history of struggle of the women’s movement in Ghana is also the site of much reflexive learning, where the movement of today is questioned based not only on the experiences of the past, but also on the needs of the present. Here, continuing on from Foley’s (1999) use of the term learning in struggle, the power dynamics of the current manifestation of the movement are considered, especially where the current version of the movement has become dominated not only by middle class interests, but also by a core group of older movement leaders. Many of the learning themes that make up the areas of learning in struggle discussed below also surface in the overview of movement dynamics, in chapter 4, and in the heuristic typology section, also in chapter 4. Here, it is especially their learning dimensions that will be the focus.

In terms of movement-state relations, the current manifestation of the women’s movement offers an important different articulation of this area of learning in struggle. Unlike the democracy movement, which distanced itself from being an ally or a part of the state from its onset, the women’s movement has a long history of state emersion. As Prah (2007) notes in her study of the women’s
movement, most women’s movements in Ghana have been aligned with the ruling party or government of the day. As the discussions in chapter 4 lay out, this was no different in the PNDC era, with the 31st DWM enjoying prominence in all matters gender related (Gifty, Al-Hassan, Kofi and Coleman, PR group meeting, February 23rd, and AK interview, January 14th, 2008). The prominence of the 31st DWM continued right up to the end of the NDC’s time in office in 2000. As AK notes, the 31st DWM silenced all other women activists who were critical of its behaviour and policies (interview, January 14th, 2008). However, this history of aligning with the ruling power of the day changed in the NPP era from 2000-2008. As Al-Hassan notes, “the time we saw a real [women’s] movement, that was the 2000 election … that was an independent women’s movement which seemed to engage even grassroots women in mobilizing around issues … when these murders came up” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). This shift away from becoming an offshoot of the ruling power represents an important new chapter for women’s activism in Ghana. And even with the success of the movement in pressuring for particular legislative gains, as well as ensuring Kufuor fulfilled his election promises in creating a ministry dedicated to women’s affairs, this independence has been critical, according to RK, in keeping the government on track (interview, February 14th, 2008). In many ways, maintaining this independence, even in the face of temptations to ally with government on particular issues, is one of the biggest areas of learning to emerge from the long-term learning of the movement. Yet, as BK notes, this stance is not without its critics, those who would rather see an alliance with the state – especially with the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs after it was headed up by a minister hand picked from the movement’s membership (interview, January 23rd, 2008). For BK though, this is a false debate and ignores the other important aspect of the movement at 2000 that has disappeared – namely the crosscutting nature of its appeal. For her, and for a growing group of activist-educators in the movement, the need to broaden the reach of the movement so that it represents the needs of rural and poor women more than middle class women is a more important endeavour than how the movement relates to the state. For her, this debate is over,
and an independent movement is the only way to ensure women are not used as mere election props. This tension strikes at the heart of the movement, which as chapter 4 notes is being accused of being NGOized.

Along similar lines, another major emerging area of learning has to do with the internal democracy of the current version of the women’s movement. As Gifty notes in chapter 4, a “movement is a movement [only] if it involves everybody” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). As is becoming apparent to many of the older generation of activist-educators involved in the movement, its strategic and didactic nature is excluding young women from joining in the decision-making process. This is in addition to the women from other class backgrounds who are excluded (BK, AK and RK interviews, January 23rd, 14th and February 4th, 2008). As Gifty notes, this is especially ironic since many in the leadership circle came to be in that position as members of the socialist and democracy movements waging their own fight against the status quo (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). In this sense, the current self-reflection going on in the women’s movement may be suggestive of a change in approach, yet it is clear that the power dynamics currently in place secure the power in the hands of only a few. This is an important realization, if only because it may open the movement up to becoming more dialogue-based and internally democratic down the line.

3. Learning in struggle by the People with Disability movement

For the PWD movement, the main long-term learning in struggle has been taking over for themselves the activist space occupied by non-disabled advocates speaking on behalf of people with disability – often without even consulting them. As PN recounts, the tradition of speaking and legislating for PWDs without consultation goes as far back as Nkrumah’s time (interview, January 17th, 2008). Even in the lead up to the drafting of the 1992 constitution it was non-disabled advocates who lobbied for the inclusion of disability rights in the document, despite the emergent presence of a number of PWD associations (such as GAB and GFD) (PN interview, January 17th, 2008). However, since then, and over the
course of the democratic era, the PWD movement has struggled with increasing success to implement one of their core mottos, “nothing about us, without us” (PN interview, January 17th, 2008). This culminated with the passing of the Disability Act in 2006.

However, as TM notes, the “us” in the movement motto has also emerged as a problematic notion, and clearly reveals the fault lines of power and privilege within the movement (interview, January 28th, 2008). Despite the success of the movement in gaining greater space for PWDs to take over leading roles in their own advocacy, the power dynamics within the movement have led to new forms of exclusion, as PWD leadership in Accra dominates regional branches, and demands strategic central control of all funds (TM interview, January 28th, 2008). For TM, this is especially sad given the way in which the regional efforts are helping tackle the quotidian problems faced by people with disability from average and low income backgrounds.

4. Anti-neoliberal movements and learning in struggle: local registers in transnational forums like the World Social Forum

A major insight that has emerged in recent years amongst the various anti-neoliberal movements is the ambiguity and potential danger of transnational solidarity movements. The danger of this level of activism for local movements, especially in the global south, is captured in Choudry’s (2007) comments above, but has also been discussed by Langdon (2008) elsewhere. For our PR group, the ambiguous nature and potential danger of attempts to create transnational movements is most aptly captured in the example of the World Social Forum. Tanko notes that the Forum was supposed to be “offering alternatives … to serve as a counter to what the World Economic Forum was doing” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). As such, it was meant to represent a site to articulate an alternative to the capitalist discourse of globalization – or what Ferguson (2006) calls transnational neoliberal governmentality. Instead, “it has more or less
become just another annual ritual” (Tanko, PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008).

Along this line, Tanko does not see the forums as “actually offering any clear-cut alternative” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). Instead, the WSFs have become dominated by a wealthy set of organizations – usually transnational NGOs – to the point where they even exclude local activists who cannot afford to pay the entrance fee, not to mention all those from other southern regions who can’t afford the flight let alone the registration costs. Al-Hassan notes that at the latest WSF in Kenya, “the Kenyans wanted to come, but they had to pay and had no money to pay” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). They rioted against the forum, shouting “this is the social forum and so nobody should be excluded based on money” (Al-Hassan, PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). This same kind of exclusion was also visible in the previous WSF in Mumbai, where the mobilization against the forum from local activists was even more pointed, emerging as a movement of its own called “Mumbai Resistance” (Al-Hassan, PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). For both Tanko and Al-Hassan, the way the WSF has failed to truly make room for local struggles and activists, even in the countries that have hosted the Forums, reveals the power imbalance embedded in them. Al-Hassan notes that the way the Forum has become organized has now resulted in the accusation by those excluded that these are just “new elite capitalist enclaves” comparable to the World Economic Forum, rather than its alternative (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). Along similar lines, the concerted effort to “exclude political parties,” such as the communist party, opens the Forums to similar criticism levelled against the Socialist International organization in their day of being ideologically closed to potential allies.

Finally, and most importantly – as the Yamfo example below will illustrate – the greatest danger of the WSF and other transnational movements is the way they also attempt to speak on behalf of all anti-capitalist/neoliberal struggles, yet in doing so co-opt the space from local struggles, from the ones experiencing the effects of neoliberal governmentality on a daily basis, and whose struggles therefore have their own particularities, as well as creative solutions or
strategies for dealing with them. This type of knowledge production is in dialogue with Choudry’s (2007) point above. In this way, the WSF is participating in, if not facilitating, the appropriation of marginalized voices. Al-Hassan spells out a clear example of this in connection with the Mumbai Forum:

[M]ost of the Dalits who came [to the forum] were Dalits who were mobilized by NGOs and all that, but there were a thousand and one Dalits on the outside trying to get in. (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008)

This type of selective inclusion is a dangerous prospect as it indicates these Dalits are likely being used for some attempt at legitimacy, yet there has been no concerted effort to consult with the larger Dalit group demanding entry to the Forum. For our PR group, this type of international solidarity is ambiguous at best, and dangerous at worse. This realization is also a part of the long-term learning of others involved in Ghanaian anti-neoliberal struggles. For instance, in the Yamfo incident described below, anti-mining movement activists have been forced to recognize that international solidarity and pressure may have some uses, but that most often they will serve their own ends rather than placing the needs of a local struggle in Ghana at the fore (CK & AK interview, January 23rd, 2008). In many ways, this has led many of those involved in local struggles against neoliberalism to look to other local movements rather than to the international, as spaces like the World Social Forum can represent merely another form of transnational governmentality (Langdon, 2008). To put it succinctly, Tanko argues, “why look at strangers when you can look at friends right in their faces?” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008).

Learning through Struggle:

In this second lens through which learning and struggle were analyzed in our study the focus is on the learning emergent from a particular moment of struggle, rather than on the longer-term learning that happens over many years, or the ways in which movements/activist-educators reflect on learning to struggle. In this sense, this lens is a tightening of focus, and emerges from the reflections by
our group as well as by many of the activist-educators who discussed how, to quote GB, “the greatest amount of learning happens in these concentrated moments of struggle” (interview, February 14th, 2008). In this sense, learning through struggle is learning that emerges from a particular moment of conflict over resources/issues/policies that leads to a deepened awareness of the political terrain, both on the individual level and the movement level. Along this line, this second lens follows the first in bringing the ways in which power relations are affected by these moments of learning through struggle into focus. This section concentrates on three moments of conflict/struggle to illustrate the concentrated learning that emerges. The first of these is the Kume Preko demonstrations, and the interconnected implications of the learning through struggle that emerged from them for contestation in Ghana’s 4th Republic; the second moment of struggle is the series of demonstrations that erupted around the murders of female sex-workers in the run-up to the 2000 election – demonstrations that launched the new articulation of the women’s movement; the third is a particular moment of struggle in the anti-mining movement, where state complicity with transnational capital is revealed through the arrests of a number of WACAM organizers in Yamfo – a town in Ghana’s Brong-Ahafo Region. Each of these restored articulations aims at revealing not only the parameters of learning associated with these moments, but also the ways in which power manifests itself in ambiguous ways.

1. **Kume Preko**: the demonstrations that shaped the democratic terrain

In chapter 3 & 4 the significance of the *Kume Preko* demonstrations was established. Not only is the series of demonstrations illustrative of the shift in thinking away from state seizure, but it also further underscores the spirit behind the democracy movement in contesting not only the way in which Ghana is governed but also how Ghana is embedded in transnational forms of neoliberal governmentality. The demonstrations also helped reveal the emptied out nature of the notion of civil society, and the use value in focusing on social movements
instead. With that contribution in mind, the focus in this section is on the learning that emerged from the event itself – the learning that emerged through this particular struggle. There are three components of this learning: first, *Kume Preko* taught many that it was possible to resist the will of the government and to affect change without attempting to seize power; second, the success of any major spontaneous movement is the convergence of a number of intangible elements, making it difficult to manufacture; and third, spontaneous movements offer important moments of change, but they can be co-opted as well. While these learning points are indicative of the intense amount of learning through struggle that occurred in the brief period from May 1\textsuperscript{st} to May 17\textsuperscript{th} 1995, it is necessary to make an aside here: what is very telling to me as an outsider is how deeply this learning was felt by my colleagues, as well as the wider group of activist-educators interviewed. I mention this here to signal how this learning is at once at a collective level and at a deeply personal level – a nuance that may not come across in the discussion below, but bears mentioning.

The highly positive side of *Kume Preko* is that it taught many Ghanaians that it was possible to collectively contest the path their government had chosen, and to succeed in shifting or halting that path for some time. This is a clearly groundbreaking path that the NCAP movement and the women’s movement have successfully followed. The significance of this learning point is coupled with the fact that, according to KE, “*Kume Preko* was the most successful demonstration in Ghanaian history” and it brought together “larger crowds than political parties attract” (interview, February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). For GB, the *Kume Preko* demonstrations represent “the defining moment of the 4\textsuperscript{th} Republic” as it proved the above was possible (interview, February 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). KE further underscored the importance of the demonstrations when he emphasized that the people “poured out [to demonstrate] because of the issues, not the personalities in the lead” (interview, February 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). This reflective realization is important, especially considering the way the demonstrations were used by a number of political opportunists to further their own agendas. The significance of the demonstrations is further
captured in this short excerpt from the blog post written after interviewing a number of those involved in the demonstrations:

The importance of *Kume Preko* to an emergent generation of educator/activists is clear. Here it is the back story of the demo, where the rank and file of the labour movement rose up against the government for the first time – and because of the hesitancy of the TUC leadership a vacuum filled by opportunist politicians was created. The lessons from this moment are many, and connect to the need for these spontaneous moments of resistance to connect with a set of educators who can both learn from this learning in struggle moment, but also dialogically place this moment in a larger context, and help it gain the legs and the head needed for it to maintain momentum after the spontaneous moment has come and gone.

This moment, to one of the people interviewed, marks a critical turning point in Ghanaian politics where people realized it was possible to gain power and purchase on an issue without (a) capturing state power, and (b) using militancy to do so. The sheer power of momentum of an idea can carry the mass of people. Here, the reflections of those interviewed was we must not fall into the trap that imagines popular support equals support for individual leaders, or even particular parties. (posted February 18th, 2008)

In the above blog excerpt – the result of restorying a number of accounts of the demonstrations – the significance of the junior ranks of the labour movement rising up to question the application of the VAT, and its role in a constellation of World Bank prescribed policies, is significant on a number of registers. First, according to GB, it represented an important torch passing moment between the old activist-educator guard and a new generation of activists. Second, as Al-Hassan notes, the spontaneous nature of the May Day uprising by the labour ranks created an important moment of contestation – discussed further below:

The whole thing about Kume Preko is that it wasn’t organized, it was a spontaneous movement. Now, when the right went into the movement
for freedom and justice they realized they could not win the election in
1992, and 1996 was coming. What could they do? If they don’t go with
the left, they will lose out. So that’s why they saw the opportunity and
jumped into the VAT, and the VAT thing, the most important thing that
people are not really telling the history of Kume Preko is that it was
basically the younger elements of the trade unions that made it possible.
1st May, 1995, at a rally in Tema, when the Vice President came to read
his speech and wanted to mention VAT, they surged onto the podium
and seized his speech, and tore it, and he didn’t make any declaration on
the VAT. So ten days after that, then the Alliance for Change seized the
opportunity and organized it in Accra. And clearly the people had an
agenda, and it was we want to win the election, and when they lost the
election in ’96 the right lost the election in ’96 they had no faith in
movements anymore. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

What is important to add to Al-Hassan’s telling is the fact that a split occurred
with the labour movement leadership in this important spontaneous moment,
when the leadership decided not to officially get involved in the planned general
strike in Accra (FE interview, February 4th, 2008). GB suggests how it was this
split that allowed for the Alliance for Change – a reconvergence of elements from
the right and left involved in the Movement for Freedom and Justice – to emerge
as the leader of the resultant demonstrations. The vacuum created by the failure of
the labour leadership to follow up on what its junior ranks started is precisely
what allowed the opportunism discussed in the next section to emerge. However,
it is necessary to state that despite this vacuum, the demonstrations that emerged
took on a life of their own – fuelled especially by a photo showing some of
Rawlings’ personal bodyguards going on a retaliatory rampage that resulted in the
deaths of four protesters (GB interview, february 14th, 2008). The
demonstrations led not only to the freeze of the application of the VAT, but also
to the formation of a number of divisions within the NDC, with the Vice-
President joining the opposition NPP in the run-up to the 1996 elections.
The effect of the photo just mentioned is one of the intangible elements that came together to make *Kume Preko* possible. The photo appeared in only one publication, the *Public Agenda* – a newspaper sponsored by the Third World Network Africa (TWN-A) – as other newspapers feared the retribution of the government (GY interview, February 15th, 2008). According to GY, Public Agenda and TWN were where many of those involved in the socialist movements ended up after the return to democracy. He notes how those involved in the paper considered the work “discursive resistance through writing” (GY interview, February 15th, 2008). It was as a result of this stance that the newspaper published the photo that, according to GY, “made Kume Preko possible” (interview, February 15th, 2008). The limited circulation paper, run on a tight budget, showed this photo on its front cover, and travelled across the country from hand to hand, educating the Ghanaian public on the continued brutality of Rawlings’ associates despite the transition to democracy (GY interview, February 15th, 2008). Yet, this photo would not have come forward had the rank and file of the labour movement not been the first to contest the authority of the government on May Day.

According to Al-Hassan, the spontaneity of this uprising had actually been building for some time in the face of growing hardship for workers as a result of structural adjustment:

> Even though the movement was spontaneous, Kume Preko wasn’t spontaneous on the side of the workers. It was a long time coming. They had been angry about neoliberal policies for some time, and eventually they were ready to fight these policies that would erode their gains. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

Along similar lines, had the labour leadership not split with the rank and file in deciding not to engage directly in the demonstrations because “they didn’t want to be seen to be partisan” (FE interview, February 4th, 2008), creating the vacuum that Alliance for Change filled, the demonstrations may have had a different result as well. However, with the decision by the leadership to remain neutral, the rank and file approached their former comrades from the socialist movement days – the activist-educators who came together from the left to form the democracy.
movement – and asked them to carry the momentum they had started (KE interview, February 4th and GB interview, February 14th, 2008). At the same time, this rank and file remained involved, adding to the numbers and mobilization strength of the Kume Preko demonstrations. For instance, FE – a labour organizer – notes how he came down from the north of the country to join in the demonstrations, and how BNI tracked him the whole way, demanding to know why he was coming to Accra (interview February 4th, 2008). The younger labour element’s involvement in the demonstrations was equally matched by a younger cohort of activists who had been involved in the democracy movement as mobilizers (GB interview, February 4th, 2008). GB notes how for many of them, the Kume Preko demonstrations stand out as the most important learning period in Ghana’s new democratic era. This learning was in part enabled by the experience of the older generation of activists involved in socialist movements and then MFJ, as this group had the know how to take over the organization of the demonstrations. Yet, as KE notes, it wasn’t until the deaths of the four protesters in Accra that the Kume Preko demonstrations became a “groundswell” of spontaneous momentum. Nonetheless, the organizational skill of the MFJ leaders, as well as the resources from the main opposition right wing party, were key contributing factors in making the success of the demonstrations possible. However, from the perspective of the younger generation of mobilizers and activists, the MFJ involvement also stifled the potential of the demonstrations, as the “politicization was cut short” by the opposition politicians in their ranks (GB interview, February 14th, 2008). This encounter with cooptation by politicians from the right is an integral part of the third element of this learning though struggle.

Likely the most important element of learning through struggle to emerge from the Kume Preko demonstrations is directly related to the two sides of learning of the younger generation of activists just discussed. The spontaneous and highly-charged nature of the demonstrations put many relationships that had been in the shadows into the light, revealing the way in which power circulates in a way that is only possible in these moments of societal flux. For instance, the
younger and more junior ranks of the labour movement realized how their leadership used neutrality, or a non-partisan stance, as a shield of safety. Likewise, those other young activists that helped mobilize the demonstrations also saw how opposition politicians would come to march out front, pretending they believed in the clear issues being fought for. As GB reminds us, the “new narrative of Kume Preko has occluded the real history” that the demonstrations were not just about the VAT tax, but the way the tax was a part of a neoliberal constellation of changes forced down the throat of average Ghanaians (interview, February 14th, 2008). This is the history that the May Day uprising recognized. And, as KE notes, it was these issues and not the personalities that railed against them that brought out the public support (interview, February 4th, 2008). Yet, as Al-Hassan’s quote above points out, the politicians from the NPP who marched in Kume Preko did so with a clear agenda to use this populism to win the 1996 election. The emptiness of this commitment is clearly revealed by the fact that when they did come to office in 2000 they increased, rather than eliminated, the VAT:

We have zoomed so much on the Kume Preko, and the core issue then of the VAT, but the real thing is that if it was about VAT, now that the opposition then are in power, have they turned the clock round to reverse? No, they’ve worsened it. So it wasn’t about VAT, VAT was being used to achieve their ends … there is a hidden agenda, [that is] capitalized on whatever comes forward. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

Along similar lines, Al-Hassan also points out how the attempted cooptation of the Kume Preko demonstrations for their own ends, and its failure, led the political tradition on the right to also learn through struggle. They realized that populism was not their way:

When [the NPP] lost the election in ’96 … they had no faith in movements anymore. Already it’s not their baby, it’s not their way of working. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)
KE also points out that this attempt at populism also split the right, with the old guard refusing to be involved in the demonstrations (interview, February 4th, 2008). Yet, what is important here is the point GB makes above that their involvement meant the “the politicization was cut short” as many involved tried to use the demonstrations as a vehicle to notoriety by arguing the “opposition is the only legitimate alternative to the government” rather than using the demonstrations to push the anti-neoliberal agenda as far as it could go (interview, February 14th, 2008). This is an ambiguous moment in the success story that is Kume Preko. Yes, the demonstrations reconfigured the political terrain in Ghana, as “Ghanaians learned they could push government” without needing to overthrow it; yes, the demonstration led to “concentrated public education” about the effects of neoliberalism as well as government brutality on their lives; yes, they created an electrifying period of learning for an emergent generation of activists; and yes, the demonstrations “defined the 4th Republic” (GB interview, February 14th, 2008). However, the demonstrations also failed to deliver a lasting change, or to provide a real alternative in terms of leadership – even as opportunists tried to use the demonstrations to launch political platforms, full of what later proved to be empty gestures later down the line when they assumed power.

2. The 2000 Sisters’ Keepers Demonstrations: the spark that rewrote Ghana’s women’s movement

In chapter 4 the current articulation of Ghana’s women’s movement is laid out. While our PR group had some debate as to whether or not it could still be thought of as a movement – or should rather be referred to as what Al-Hassan calls an “organization” – there was a clear consensus that the origins of this current articulation of women’s activism are embedded in the 2000 Sisters’ Keepers demonstrations (see figure 2 below as an illustration of one of the demonstrations). Before turning to look more closely at the learning through
struggle associated with these demonstrations, it is useful to give some background on the demonstrations and how they came about.

Figure 12: Sisters’ Keepers demonstration in Accra (source GhanaWeb: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/photo.day.php?ID=39179)  

The impetus for the 2000 demonstrations was the series of murders of female sex workers that had been occurring in Accra during the three previous years (Fallon & Aunio, 2006). Prah (2007) quotes an “excerpt from an interview with the main actors” of the movement talking about this time:

Towards the end of 1999, when we had the elections coming, some important things happened … the first thing was the mysterious murders of scores of women in Accra. Women, especially gender equality activists, felt that this was too big to be tackled separately. We had to come together so that something was done about these murders. The two

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30 Note how the signs are directed to President “Jerry” or “JJ” Rawlings.
main political parties were busy accusing each other. We suddenly realized that they were actually not interested in these problems. They were too busy campaigning for the elections, while we had this big problem facing women. So this catalysed women’s groups, and they came together in this huge outburst. (p. 22)

Out of this realization that women needed to come together to tackle this problem collectively the Sisters’ Keepers coalition was born, and through it the demonstrations. Importantly, Al-Hassan notes “The loose coalition, called the Sisters’ Keepers, was key in the mobilization; it was where you had all the market women, the rural women” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Fallon and Aunio (2006) note that the name of the loose coalition was designed to invite broad public support as it called “upon the men to protect their sisters … [as] no man would want to see their sister harmed” (p. 8). Prah’s (2007) quoted interview continues the narrative of the growing momentum:

We launched demonstrations, pickets, and marched to the Osu Castle, the seat of government, to protest. I mean, we were desperate. There was a lot of support from the public and the media… They all felt that the NDC government was not doing well. That really built up the confidence of the women’s movement, because in the midst of all this, we had an election which nobody won outright. So we had to have a run-off… Before the run-off, we organized a massive demonstration, we marched to the Castle. The President did not come out to speak to us, and this outraged many. People were saying that women had overturned the government – that there was no way they were going to win the elections! So we came out of all that feeling very energized, and indeed the government did lose the 2000 elections. I am not saying we were responsible, but it was a factor. Our actions and the government’s lack of a proper response exposed it as not having the will to solve the murders. This did not go down well … it fed into the general impression that the government was not concerned about the many problems facing Ghanaians. (p. 22)
Connecting this series of events to the history of the women’s movement recounted in chapter 4, Gifty argues that the killings and the lack of response not only from the NDC government but also from the 31st DWM and Mrs. Rawlings opened the space for the resurgence of the “people behind the Ghana Federation of Women” who formed an important part of the Sisters’ Keepers coalition (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Yet, she notes how “during the demonstrations against the killing of women, there was a lot of mobilization, all women, market, everybody was involved” but after that the movement began to change timbre – something discussed in detail above and in chapter 4 (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). This evolving history aside, it cannot be ignored that the Sisters’ Keepers demonstrations brought women together as a force like never before in Ghana, and importantly, even after the election was over and the government had been defeated, the movement remained independent of the new government. This was one of the components of the learning through struggle that emerged from these demonstrations, others of which include: learning it is possible to effectively intercede in politics without being subsumed under the banner of either political party; learning that there is power in coming together as gender advocates in the face of a major threat; learning that struggle breeds confidence in furthering the struggle; learning that having a strong background of organization makes it easier to mobilize around particular threats – but that this organization often takes over the movement in the aftermath of the conflict.

According to the interview Pr ah (2007) quotes, following the 2000 election, the new women’s movement took the confidence they had gained from the Sisters’ Keepers demonstrations and went to call on the new President, John Kufuor, to tell him that his approach to dealing with women – in creating the new Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs – was “wrong” (p. 23). As RK notes, this ministry was the manifestation of election promises Kufuor was forced to make as a result of the Sisters’ Keepers demonstrations (interview, February 14th, 2008). In this sense, the new articulation of the women’s movement had established itself as an independent political force – one willing to take on any government that did not respond well to issues facing women. This new stance
was learned through the *Sisters’ Keepers* struggle, where both major parties were challenged to take women’s issues seriously, and finally the NPP was supported not because the movement had aligned itself with it, but because the NDC, as the government of the day, had failed to respond in any way (Fallon & Aunio, 2006). As Gifty notes, the new women’s movement is important “because it’s independent, and is not governmental,” even if it has become dominated by middle class interests (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

The second major component of the learning through struggle associated with the *Sisters’ Keepers* demonstrations is reflected in the quotes above, where the wider gender advocacy community realized they needed to come together to tackle the targeted violence against women that the murders represented. This important realization led to the broad base of representation involved in the *Sisters’ Keepers* coalition, noted by both Al-Hassan and Gifty, but this broad base did not survive much beyond the demonstrations (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). BK suggests it would have been hard to maintain this coalition no matter what, as “it is easy to mobilize around violence, but no one was asking how to build a broad consensus after the dust settled” (interview, January 23rd, 2008). Nonetheless, there was an invaluable amount of learning that arose from bringing together all these different forces for women’s activism. In many ways, the current self-reflexive critique about the movement’s class bias is partially fuelled by a re-engagement with the success of the *Sisters’ Keepers* demonstrations. Such reengagements can be seen in Prah’s (2007) piece, as well as BK’s reflections on how the movement could begin to focus more on the socio-economic issues faced by women in more marginalized positions.

Finally, the third point of learning through struggle that emerged from the demonstrations was how organization provides the basis of being able to take advantage of a particular conflict. As Gifty notes above, the suppression of the 31st DWM did not eliminate the core group of activist-educators that formed the Ghana Federation of Women back in the 1970s/80s – many of whom also were involved in the socialist movements and the democracy movement. Their experience in mobilizing protest was an integral part of the success of the *Sisters’*
Keepers demonstrations (Gifty, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Yet, this success also bore with it a cost in the aftermath of the demonstrations. Despite the broad base that the demonstrations attracted, the leadership of the post-demonstration movement was largely centered around the old guard of gender advocates. This has been discussed in detail above, and in chapter 4. What is important to draw attention to here is the way in which this represents another ambiguous moment where the ingredients that helped a movement mobilize to overcome an obstacle are also the seeds of new hierarchies of power that may make the movement less effective later on and/or deracinate it from its roots. In this sense, it is precisely the shape of this architecture that predicts what our group has articulated as typologies in chapter 4.

3. The Yamfo incident: local and transnational implications of learning through struggle in the anti-mining movement

In November 2006, while meeting with community members in the town of Yamfo, Brong-Ahafo Region, 6 WACAM activists as well as an advisor from Oxfam America were arrested by police on what were clearly trumped up charges orchestrated by the Newmont Ahafo mine nearby – charges designed “not only to intimidate community people but also our organizations [i.e. WACAM and Oxfam]” (Owusu-Koranteng & Aidara, 2006, p. 1). The details of the incident are spelled out in a joint press release put out by WACAM and the Oxfam America representative:

The West Africa Regional Governance Advisor of Oxfam America, Ibrahima Aidara was arrested with six other WACAM activists at the Brong Ahafo Regional Police Command at Sunyani on the 27th November 2006, from 12.30 to 16.30, while they were meeting with community people in Yamfo, one of the communities affected by the operations of Newmont Gold Ghana Limited’s Ahafo Mine. Newmont had agreed that Mr. Ibrahima Aidara and WACAM officials should have a mine tour/meeting at the Ahafo Mine Project Site on 28th November.
The meeting at Yamfo was held to give WACAM and Mr. Ibrahima Aidara first hand information on complaints of human rights abuses of some residents of Yamfo and ex-employees of Newmont in order to have effective engagements with Newmont officials on some community concerns. The Police arrested them based on a complaint by officials of Newmont … Though the meeting was held at the Community Centre at Yamfo, the Regional Police Commander, ACP Opare Addo accused the organisers of holding a meeting at public place without permit. The Newmont officials also claimed that the organisers of the meeting used the name of Newmont to organise the meeting. (Owusu-Koranteng & Aidara, 2006, p. 1)

This last charge is further refuted by the press release:

We … want to state that WACAM and Oxfam America would never want to be associated with the name of Newmont for various reasons which we believe would defeat our purpose of being independent of any mining company. We believe that the officials of Newmont framed up [these charges] to set the stage for the arrest of Mr. Ibrahima Aidara and WACAM activists in order to intimidate the people of Yamfo who have suffered human rights abuses. Indeed, the community people who were present at the meeting indicated that if the name of Newmont had been used in the organisational work, they would not have attended the meeting. (Owusu-Koranteng & Aidara, 2006, p. 1)

In addition to refuting the connection to Newmont, the press release details threats made by “ACP Opare Addo, the Regional Police Commander, [who] stated before witnesses that he would not want to come back into the Yamfo community to shoot people as had occurred in the past” (p. 1). This statement clearly connects with the point raised by Mbembe that a major characteristic of democracies in Africa is the privatization of violence by police and paramilitary forces in the interests of capital (Höller & Mbembe, 2007). This type of intimidation is endemic to Ghana, where the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ, 2008) recently released a report condemning the collusion of
Ghana’s police with mining companies. According to Owusu-Koranteng (2007), the incident further implicated the judiciary in addition to the police:

The five community people and activists of WACAM were arraigned before a Circuit Court in Sunyani on a framed up complaint by officials of Newmont to the Police that the activists and the official of Oxfam America convened the community meeting with the name of Newmont in addition to a strange charge that the conveners of the Yamfo community meeting did not obtain a Police permit for the meeting. Under the Public Order Law of Ghana, NGO meetings, social/community meetings are not special events for which Police permits are required. The trial Judge in an open court requested the community people and activists to plead guilty and when they refused, the trial Judge committed them to 2-week Prison custody and stated in the open court that the community people had been disturbing foreign mining companies and the prison custody was to serve as a deterrent to others. (p. 2)

This clear link between police intimidation and setting an example designed to stop other communities as well as activists from contesting mining company practices is indicative of the kinds of collusion ongoing in Ghana. However, the Yamfo incident represents an important case not only because it targeted one of the leading organizations in the anti-mining movement and their work doing “popular mobilization of community people to express their opinion on issues of concern to their lives” (p. 1), but also because it targeted a major transnational NGO involved in social justice work. It is this multi-layered nature of the incident that makes it an interesting instance of learning through struggle. This learning can be broken down into four components: community learning about the power of the mining firm as well as those resisting it; WACAM learning about their own emergence as a target for intimidation; likewise, this incident also provides those struggling in Ghana an opportunity to link their struggle to international pressure on mining; finally, there is learning that emerges concerning the ambiguous power dynamics between these international and local struggles.
For community members from Yamfo, it is clear that this incident is one in a long line of abuses they have faced from the police and the Newmont mine. This is the reason for the meeting with WACAM and the member from Oxfam. Yet, it is clear that this intimidation is not keeping them silent, as they came to the Regional Police Station in Sunyani to formally complain of the arrest and to refute the charges that the meeting was organized using Newmont’s name (Owusu-Koranteng & Aidara, 2006). It is clear that they have learned that it is only by remaining committed to this struggle and working together with other allies in the anti-mining movement, including WACAM and other affected communities, that these abuses can be addressed. In other words, instead of the Yamfo incident leading to the effective intimidation of a community affected by mining, it instead reveals the strength of the commitment of these communities.

For WACAM it is clear that this incident, as with other incidents of intimidation, is difficult to manage but also provides important moments of opportunity. It is plain that the anti-mining movement, and WACAM’s role in it, is having an effect, as this high profile attempt at intimidation was very costly for the public image of the Newmont corporation in Ghana, and provoked a large demonstration at their offices in 2007 (Owusu-Koranteng, 2007). The arrests helped reveal the collusion between mining companies in general and the police, as discussed above. In fact, CK and AK argue that it is largely as a result of these arrests that CHRAJ began its damning in-depth review of the situation in mining communities (interview, January 23rd, 2008). Also, as a result of this incident, 3000 Ghanaians signed a petition condemning the actions of the police, not to mention the international pressure it garnered – discussed next. In this sense, the immediate learning through struggle of the WACAM activists, and also of the movement more generally, was that there is opportunity even as one is being targeted for mobilizing with communities.

Along similar lines, the Yamfo incident also garnered a lot of international attention because of the Oxfam America presence. Not only did the incident surface on Oxfam America’s (2006) site, but it also appeared on a host of other sites monitoring the behavior of transnational mining companies such as
Newmont (Langdon, 2008). These international connections gave WACAM the opportunity to connect the struggle in Ghana to other locations in order to contradict any attempt by Newmont to isolate this case as a singular incident. For instance, the press release connects ongoing intimidation by Newmont in Ghana with attacks on activists in Peru:

We are also worried about the safety and security of our activists working in the Ahafo area since a local FM station had started receiving threats through anonymous letters when they started focusing on the effects of Newmont’s operations on the communities in the area. Our concern stems from the fact that activists in Peru campaigning against the effects of the Yanacoccha mine owned by Newmont have been killed under mysterious circumstances after receiving threats of death.

(Owusu-Koranteng & Aidara, 2006, p.2)

These kinds of connections invite the type of trans-local solidarity that Ferguson (2006) describes, as suddenly Newmont must answer questions not only about their behaviour in Ghana, but also in Peru. Partially as a result of these types of interconnections, the Newmont board was forced to do a complete review of the company’s community engagement practices (Owusu-Koranteng, 2007; Kosich, 2007).

However, these transnational interconnections can also have a more ambivalent set of implications on struggles in Ghana, and this is the final element of learning through struggle that emerged from this incident. CK notes how the Yamfo incident became yet another story used by transnational activists to critique Newmont and other major mining companies, but that these critiques had little bearing on the ongoing struggle in Ghana (interview, January 23rd, 2008). Likewise, CK also observes how Oxfam America worked hard to get its official released but was less concerned with the outcome for the local activists. In fact, it was only in May of 2009, almost three years after the arrests, that the case was overturned by another circuit court judge (Public Agenda, 2009). Needless to say, the international interest in this incident has largely disappeared since the Oxfam official was granted bail and allowed to leave Ghana (CK interview, January 23rd, 2008).
This is the ambiguous nature of the transnational solidarity and social movement connection – discussed above in connection with the World Social Forum. From the perspective of WACAM, as well as the Yamfo community, they have learned through this struggle that international interest may be of some help, but they have also learned that it is likely fleeting, and cannot hope to replace the ongoing struggle and web of alliances that have emerged on the ground in Ghana.

To conclude this section, for our PR group, all of these moments of learning through struggle were seen as the sites of birth or rebirth of movements discussed in the typologies in chapter 4. Similarly, how a movement was organized coming out of these moments of extreme learning revealed to our PR group which of the two types of movements they would likely become, or their potential for shifting typologies. It is a moment like this that the Songor salt-flat defence movement in Ada currently faces, where the community is split between supporting new forms of capital and the movement which is resisting its attempts at enclosure (discussed in the next chapter). How this emerging learning is processed, as well as decisions around how the movement should now be organized will indicate whether it will continue to be an organic movement of the people of Ada, or merely a remnant of a by-gone era. What is key in this process is the way in which power manifests itself, and its ambiguous potential for destabilizing even successful moments of struggle and learning.

**Learning to struggle:**

*At the beginning of this chapter, John Holst (2002) identifies two approaches commonly used to analyze learning in social movements, namely a focus on the way social movements educate a broader populace and politicians about their interests, and a focus on the learning internal to social movements. As was noted in that opening, our study is mostly focused on the latter of these two, though there are clear examples even in the above section of the first of these approaches – the way, for instance, in which WACAM communicated its struggle both to the broader Ghanaian public and the international community. Nonetheless, in this*
final learning and struggle lens, our PR group tightens our general focus on how
social movements learn; in doing this we zero in on how movement activist-
educators understand the process of learning within a movement. In this sense,
learning to struggle draws together the reflections of both the wider activist-
educator group as well as our PR group to cobble together thoughts on how
Ghanaian social movements have approached and should approach learning to
struggle. In cobbling these thoughts together, our PR group did not focus in on
specific instances of approaches to teaching or learning struggle. The examples
are certainly there: the Kume Preko process of learning to question the authority
of the state without aiming to replace it; the women’s movement newly acquired
confidence to stand independently and demand of which ever government is in
power important gender equal approaches; and, WACAM and communities
affected by mining learning to struggle on many fronts at once in order to take on
mining companies. But what was key for our PR group was how learning to
struggle was envisioned in the future by our group and the wider network of
activist-educators. As a result of this approach, our PR group identified two clear
visions of learning to struggle. The first of these visions returns to the past to find
inspiration for the present as it focuses on the caderization process that occurred
around the formation of the socialist movements prior to and just after the PNDC
revolution. For many of those in our study, the caderization process of the past
represents the most important model of critical learning that has been generated
in the Ghanaian context. The second vision turns to the present instead of the past
for inspiration and is therefore focused on how the dialogue based and
unbranded/organic movements currently learn to struggle. For a number of those
in our study, the way in which these ongoing struggles continue to learn is key to
articulating an approach to learning to struggle that is grounded in Ghanaian
histories of resistance. Both of these visions are developed below. Not
surprisingly, these two visions deeply informed our PR group’s decision around
the emergent action our group would take. This action is laid out in the next and
final chapter.
1. A socialist future is still possible: recaderization without the shortcuts

In the learning in struggle section above, TO is quoted as saying “there can be no shortcut” to truly building a convergence of movements that emanates from the subjugated, and that are not subsequently co-opted by the elite (interview, January 31st, 2008). This realization is drawn from his experience in the two Rawlings revolutions, where there were ongoing processes of building momentum for a socialist revolution, but both times those helping to build this momentum were surprised by the Rawlings revolts when they came (TO interview, January 31st, 2008). KE, AK, AC and CK all echo this point (interviews January 14th to February 4th, 2008). Summing up this point of view, TO concludes that the processes of preparation for a socialist revolution were cut short by the two Rawlings revolutions, and that as a result these revolutions ended up being more like “short cuts” to a process of mass mobilization of the disenfranchised to take over the means of production as well as the state (interview, January 31st, 2008).

GY notes how scholars such as Ray Bush described Ghana as having all the necessary ingredients for a socialist revolution (interview, February 14th, 2008). It is as a result of this analysis that TO declares the preparation for the future must be made thoroughly, and cannot be based on ego, nor can they take short cuts in the process of laying the groundwork for this revolution. This is where the recaderization process comes in. For many of the older generation of activist-educators interviewed for the study, the creation of the cadre corps represented the pinnacle of critical popular education success. This conclusion is echoed by Coleman, a product of this process of critical conscientization, not only about his own learning process but also about that of all those who were involved – even those who ended up working with the right-wing NPP later on:

In the process of all [the revolutionary] struggles a greater sense of learning occurred and you see even the products transcend beyond the political divide. Look at some of the products of the process. Mustapha Hamide; he is the spokesperson for NPP, and we trained him. Ask him. We brought him up. So he came to my office and I said “Mustapha” and
he said “yes Coleman, this is where I found myself” and I said “it’s ok”. But at least it’s kind of created a certain learning, it’s produced a certain caliber of people, he still carries his baggage, that learning which has been instilled in you to say “don’t be gullible, be critical, don’t just swallow everything.” That is the baggage he has carried to the NPP and every time he is running into difficulty with them because he won’t swallow everything, if it’s not clear he will question, you know. So those are the kinds of learnings that have occurred, and it wasn’t in any formal school, it wasn’t any formal classroom, it was just the interaction and the processes and the engagements, you know. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

One of the key successes of this process of learning to struggle was the mushrooming of these cadre groups, as Coleman’s comments illustrate. He went from being a cadre to later leading other cadres in the process of informal learning to struggle. From our group’s perspective, Coleman here zeroes in on an important point that was discussed above, namely the essential role of the informal process of learning through “interaction and the processes of engagements.” In some ways, this is a critical difference our group articulated between the current attempt at recaderization being attempted by some (the socialist forum) or called for by others (AK, KE, TO). The caderization process of the 1970s and 80s, even though it was cut short, was embedded in a deep ongoing struggle, and the learning was dialogically emergent from this struggle as a result – much like the learning through struggle discussed above. However, the current versions of recaderization being suggested are much more intentional, and less informal. For instance, AK has conceived of a vision of building a school designed to reach out to underprivileged kids and help instil in them the same critical sense of awareness Coleman describes above (interview, January 14th, 2008). At the same time, some of those who espouse recaderization are focused on spaces more and more removed from direct struggles against neo-liberal transnational governmentality. For instance, AC and KE (interviews, January 15th and February 4th, 2008) both support the increase of critical reflection circles in
universities and secondary schools – spaces at the center of revolutionary action during the 1980s, but now largely commercialized. This said, TO continues to insist that it is only in worker enclaves and poor communities where this type of caderization – grounded in Freirian informed dialogue-based learning – can begin to build the momentum needed to reintroduce the real possibility of socialist state capture (interview, January 31st, 2008). Nonetheless, the emphasis on returning to the cadre model of the past and attempting to duplicate it – however successful it may have been – is “completely out of touch with the struggles of today” argues BK (interview, January 23rd, 2008). It also ignores how these processes have already been going on as some of the cadres of the past have taken this approach to learning to struggle and have taken it into spaces of contemporary struggle. For instance, AK notes how the informal processes of critical dialogue and debate as well as of the action-reflection learning Coleman hints at above have become cornerstones of the processes used by WACAM in their work in the anti-mining movement (interview, January 23rd, 2008). In an important sense, it is precisely these interlinkages between the legacy of caderization and current processes of learning to struggle that build a bridge between this vision of the future for social movement learning in Ghana, and the next one.

2. Unbranded/organic movements and ongoing learning to struggle

For BK, it is a focus on the present and the way in which current movements are learning to struggle that is of critical interest, rather than the processes of the past (interview, January 23rd, 2008). For instance, in her own thinking about the women’s movement, she sees a clear vision of linking up the cells of those already engaged in critical action, and reflection about this action, as the first step in creating a more effective movement – especially where these cells are concerned with everyday struggles faced by women of all walks of life. Her critique is echoed by GB as well as by Gifty. For GB, it is high time the older generation stop framing all discussions of a vision for the future based on the experiences of the past (interview, February 14th, 2008). Likewise, Gifty notes the
dangers within the women’s movement of ignoring the opinions of the young, as well as the need to make the movement more responsive to a wider set of women (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). However, while these contributions are important in moving the discussion away from the dominance of a socialist vision of the future, it is also key to look at the places where ongoing struggle is sparking its own learning. For instance, AK’s note about the ties between the learning to struggle that emerged from the socialist movements of the past and the ongoing learning to struggle of communities affected by mining is a key place to begin unpacking this alternative to recaderization (interview, January 23rd, 2008). As Coleman notes earlier in this document, communities affected by mining are being transformed overnight into members of an anti-neoliberal struggle, and a source of their ongoing informal action and reflection process of contestation is the critical dialogue-based learning approach WACAM introduces. In this sense, the struggle begins from the everyday challenges these communities face as a result of mining companies, and begins to transform into a critical engagement not just with this particular mining company, but with a neo-liberal transnational governmentality that facilitates this mining company’s behaviour – or even right to exist (Coleman, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). It is this example from the anti-mining movement, as well as our discussion of the Songor salt flat defence movement of Ada that led our group to focus on the way learning to struggle is actually ongoing in movements directly challenging neoliberal and capital interests. In this sense, much like the work of Kapoor (2007) elsewhere, the vision for effective models for learning to struggle is based on the very ways in which movements currently are engaged in informal processes of action and reflection. Similarly, communities in the anti-mining movement may use strategies that are drawn from the experiences of the socialist movement and rhetoric, but they might also use rights based language to defend their land. In both of these cases this learning to struggle using either of these discourses of contestation is embedded in the local history of struggle. This process is shown most clearly by the Songor salt defence movement, the focus of the next and concluding chapter. Suffice it to say here that it is precisely by learning to struggle
not through the examples of the past but rather from where this movement stands, and in their local history of struggle for this stance, that the Ada movement has successfully repeatedly challenged capital exploitation. The movement has the potential of extending its contestation to the heart of the Ghanaian Constitution not because of the effective use of the language of rights, but rather because of the contestation of it. In this very concrete sense, the second vision of learning to struggle identified by our group is grounded in ongoing Ghanaian articulations of movements learning to struggle. It is largely with our group’s decision to focus on this more focused vision that we began to shift from analysis to action, as we begin to plan ways for us to take up the invitation from the Ada movement to build a reflective learning process.
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION: FINISHING THE CIRCLE AND FORGING THE NEW PATH

Introduction

This concluding chapter has three main aims. First, it aims to provide a concluding overview of the results that have emerged from this study. As with the three results chapters above, this overview will be divided in three according to the three objectives of the research. The second aim of this chapter is to connect these analytical outcomes with the emerging action our PR group is taking. As such, the emerging action section of this chapter will provide details of the three courses of action our PR group is taking.

The first of these is a dissemination of the results of our study not only within academic circles, but also, and more importantly, within publications, forums and discussions in Ghana with the hopes of sparking debate amongst Ghana’s activist community members as well as the broader public; the second course of action involves a reconnection with the caderization models from the antecedent socialist movements, discussed in the last chapter; and, the third course of action builds on the unbranded organic model of learning to struggle, also discussed in the last chapter, in articulating a PAR process with the Songor movement in Ada. At this time, it is largely this third course of action that has seen the most progress, and as such it is the focus of a significant part of this conclusion. Following from this, the description of a PAR study being developed with the Ada salt defence movement includes the historical background of this movement as well as our PR group’s assessment of its importance.

Finally, moving from an outward connection between our study and future action to an outward looking connection between this study and broader academic literature, this chapter will step back to articulate some of the contributions this study has made to theoretical debates with regards to movement dynamics, social movement learning, democracy in Africa, and building participatory research spaces based on relationship building.
Overview of Results from Study

In the introductory and methodological chapters of this document, the research question and three main objectives of this study are introduced. As a reminder, the research question is **how Ghanaian movements of the marginalized and disenfranchised have been learning to contest, negotiate and transform the democratic terrain over the last 15 years.** Meanwhile, the objectives are:

1. *To establish with these activist-educators what democracy means and what it could mean in Ghana;*

2. *To establish the ways in which social movements have been contesting and negotiating the democratic terrain over the last 15 years; and*

3. *To establish the ways in which this contestation and negotiation reflects learning in struggle, and the ways in which this learning could be enhanced through locally determined methods.*

Here, the results from the collective analysis of our PR group with regards to each of these objectives will be summarized in order to provide an overview of each objective’s results, thereby allowing for a more holistic and intertextual account of the study. From this vantage point, it should be easy to see how the action emerging from our PR group is a natural extension of our collective analysis. This action will be more thoroughly outlined in the section that follows this one.

Objective 1 – Democracy in Ghana

As chapter 3 makes clear, based on our collective analysis, as well as on the analysis of the wider activist-educator network, the mainstream – and most of the critical – stories about Ghana’s democracy overlook the real character of the democracy movement and the resulting impact it had on the democratic terrain. Key to the establishment of this terrain was a shift in goals of protest movements from state capture to constant struggle regardless of who governs. However,
accord-
ing to our discussions, this new position of constant contestation needs to
be understood as emerging from a history of struggle particular to Ghana, where
state capture in the name of socialist ideals led to blatant human rights abuses.
This history led many previously supportive of taking over the state to become
advocates of defending human rights as well as extending the democratic terrain.
In this sense, even though the form of democracy that has emerged in Ghana can
be characterized as elitist and western dominated, the spirit of this democracy – as
most recently shown in the 2008 elections – is grounded in an evolving localized
history of struggle where average Ghanaians are deeply invested in making their
government work for them.

This then is the alternative reading of democracy in Ghana, one that
pushes away from the tale of two traditions – captured so perfectly by Sasha
Marley in his telling lyrics that began this document. As the 1999 painting by
Ablade Glover illustrates, it is the spirit of street activism and the dynamics and
learning of Ghana’s social movement activism that has ensured Ghana’s
democracy does not become hijacked by foreign and elite interests. The legacy of
this activism needs to be recognized in any analysis of Ghana’s current
democratic era.

**Objective 2 – Social movement dynamics in Ghana**

Key to our PR group’s understanding of social movement dynamics in Ghana are
the ways movements learn and communicate. This is in sharp contrast to much of
contemporary social movement theory – especially Euro-American traditions –
that focuses on old social movement (OSM) and new social movement (NSM)
characteristics. In light of this, our group articulated two heuristic typologies
through which we analyzed Ghanaian social movements. Each of these typologies
was based on the ways in which learning and communications manifest
themselves in the movement under scrutiny. These two typologies divide
movements into those that use strategic and didactic approaches to learning and
those based on dialogue and communicative action. For our group, it is the second
of these that is the most promising as it engenders a more open stance to learning and decision making, and therefore remains more firmly rooted in the everyday struggles and needs of those who make up the movement membership.

In light of this conclusion, our group identified resource defence movements – where everyday communal livelihoods are threatened – as the most dialogue-based movements, as well as the most resilient in the face of the changing nature of capital. Our group called these movements organic and unbranded as they are deeply rooted in people’s history and struggle in a particular location. It is based on this reasoning that our PR group elected to take up the offer to work with the Songor salt flat defence movement of Ada, as we surmised this movement to be an important example of an unbranded organic movement.

Objective 3 – Social movement learning in Ghana

Even as our PR group collectively decided that looking at the ways movements learn and communicate is the most useful way to understand movements in Ghana, we also deeply analyzed the ways in which learning is itself understood within these movements. Of primary interest to all involved in this study – both in our group and in the wider network of activist-educators – was the more informal side of this learning, especially where this learning emanated from struggle. Based on this priority, our PR group articulated 3 lenses for analysing learning in social movements in Ghana: learning in struggle, learning through struggle, and learning to struggle. It is primarily this last lens that came to inform our group’s decision around action – discussed in the next section – though it should be noted that this lens is the culmination of the other two lenses, as it represents the collective analysis as to how the convergence of learning and struggle happens most effectively. Based on this analysis, our group identified two approaches to learning to struggle, with the first being grounded in the cadre formation of the socialist past, and the second emanating from the ongoing struggles of unbranded organic movements in the present. As the previous chapter notes, the two models
served as our group’s guide to action. We set up two working groups to pursue both possibilities, though it is perhaps unsurprising that it is the second model that has yielded the most initial success. As the discussion below will share, the combination of the Ada movement’s desire to work with us, as well as our collective analysis of its importance, made it a natural first priority. Nonetheless, it should be noted how its choice also emanates naturally from the conclusions our PR group has drawn in seeing unbranded organic movements as the most promising movements in Ghana, not only for their potential to contest capital, but also for their dialogue based stance to communication and learning.

**Action Emanating from Study**

In the methodology chapter above (chapter 2) an important distinction was made between participatory action research (PAR) and this study’s own approach of participatory research leading to action. One of the main reasons for this distinction is that the current study, unlike a traditional PAR, does not bring direct action into the research analysis, but is rather reflective of activism that has taken place in Ghana since the return to democracy. As such, for our PR group as a whole, the focus on ensuring action would emanate from this research process was of primary importance as it helped us ensure that this study would not just result in an ungrounded theorization of struggle in Ghana, but would rather contribute to this struggle as the reflections it engendered re-engaged with action. It is this re-engagement with action that made the PAR methodology so attractive to our group initially, even if this study did not fulfill all of its characteristics.

In light of this mutual concern with the action emanating from this research, much of our PR group meeting was concerned with the identification and articulation of an action plan out of our collective deliberations. As such, in the concluding day of the meeting, we zeroed in more tightly on how movements learn to struggle and which of these approaches to learning could be the focus of our group’s next collective work of action. As the previous chapter, as well as the
previous section, notes, the two models that emerged from these discussions both feature in our plans for emerging action.

In addition to these courses of action, our PR group was also concerned with ensuring that our reflections were disseminated in the broader activist community as well as in the general public – a key protection against the possibility of our study becoming ungrounded theorizing. In particular, our PR group focused on the two typologies we developed as having the potential to spark debate within the activist community. Following from this, our group has identified a number of local publications as potential starting points for this process, such as Public Agenda (a weekly paper with historical significance to Ghanaian activism that has already been discussed in connection with Kume Preko) as well as the New Legon Observer (a good publication for reaching and challenging the older generation of activist-educators). In addition to these potential sites for publication, our group intends to discuss the typologies on some of Ghana’s private and community radio stations in order to spark broader public engagement with Ghana’s history of activism. Finally, our typology results have already been presented in OURMedia 7, a major conference held in Ghana on local activism in media contexts, to much interest and comment – both from Ghanaian and international attendees (Langdon, 2008b).

Turning now to the second and third courses of action, they are connected to the two models of learning to struggle that were discussed in the previous chapter. The first of these models reconnects with the caderization process in the past. In our mutual deliberations, Coleman and Tanko volunteered to begin looking into the regenerations of a cadre-like critical dialogue circle in Tamale, Northern Ghana. Much like the original cadre approach, the focus of this action would be secondary and university students. To date nothing has emerged from this line of action, largely because our collective energy went into the third aspect of our action plan.

This third aspect took as its point of origin the offer by the Songor salt flat defence movement of Ada to collaborate on reflecting on learning in the movement as a result of the recent shifts in strategies used by capital to enclose
the resource. Action on this was initiated by Kofi, Al-Hassan, Gifty and myself, with Kofi providing the most critical link as he was already connected to the movement and it was through him that the invitation to our group was extended. A meeting was organized with many key organizers in the movement at the tail end of the research period (March 20, 2008), with the intention of developing an initial plan towards articulating a PAR process in the near future. These discussions have since continued with members of the movement, our group, and Radio Ada, the local community radio station. To better situate these discussions, the historical background of this movement as well as our PR group’s understanding of why it is so important will now be elaborated.

**Historical Overview of the Ada Salt Flat Defence Movement**

*Much like in the previous chapters, the historical background laid out is drawn from a number of sources, and is re-storied here in an effort to provide a useful overview. These sources include: our PR group discussion about the Ada movement; a radio program on the Songor salt flats and the movement connected to it provided by Kofi Larweh’s station, Radio Ada (2002); our group’s first meeting with members of the movement; and, an academic piece from the early 90s that is grounded in research on the movement (Manuh, 1992).*

The Songor salt flat is an integral part of the Ada peoples’ history. For generations they have defended their ownership of the Songor lagoon and salt flat, through pre-colonial wars, colonial attempts at expropriation, and contemporary struggles against government and private capital attempts to encircle the land (Amate, 1999). While these efforts at defence have been to ensure ongoing communal access to the salt flats by the Adas, as will be expanded upon below, this access in both historical and contemporary times has never limited access to only the Adas. In fact, in the past as well as in contemporary times, people wishing to win salt from the lagoon traveled from far and wide to the Songor with no one being turned away. This openness has led the traditional salt flat management system to
become identified as an alternative model to capitalist expropriation of natural resources – a point that makes the current challenge faced by the movement all the more poignant.

Here, the description begins by focusing on the recent historical past of the movement defending this broad-based access to the flats, especially as this past is related to the current democratic period. In describing the evolution of the contemporary Songor conflict and the subsequent mobilization of a resistance movement, Takyiwaa Manuh (1992) has shown how the decision to build a major dam on the Volta river in the 1960s led to a dramatic change in the ecology of the Songor salt flats and lagoon in the 1970s, with a massive reduction in salt provision. According to her, it is partially as a result of this dramatic change that a local traditional authority, the Ada Traditional Council, decided to grant leases of land to two companies in the 1970s. However, Kofi Larweh adds important nuance to this interpretation:

There had been attempts, especially in the 70s to take over the lagoon. At some point the local chiefs said they were approached, when government came in to allow privatization. The discussion was for a small parcel, but on paper it was something huge. Ok, that was one of the reasons for the [formation of the movement] because what was discussed was not what was put on paper, and the people were being prevented from winning salt even from the larger portions that was for the local people. (PR group meeting, February 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2008)

In the years following this decision, the prevention of access to the lagoon by one company in particular, Vacuum Salt Limited (VSL), partially precipitated the formation of the Songor movement. Yet, also instrumental to the formation of this movement were also the shifts in power at the national level, when the PNDC took control of the country from a civilian administration. As has been elaborated above, in the early days of the revolution Rawlings claimed it espoused socialist goals meant to “transform the social and economic order of this country” (quoted in Shillington, 1992, p. 80).
This shift, according to Manuh (1992, p. 115), opened the door for one of the local People’s Defense Committees (PDCs) “formed in communities and workplaces following the events of 31 December 1981” to take “over the operations of Vacuum Salt Limited.” However, when the PNDC and Rawlings later took the abrupt right turn discussed at length in chapter 3 and introduced Ghana’s first structural adjustment policy in 1984, the tables were turned. The owners of Vacuum Salt Limited returned and re-introduced their prevention of access to the lagoon, but this time with the backing of local police and military forces. According to Manuh (1992), it was at this point that many of those involved in the PDCs who had been purged and maligned with the shift to neoliberal logic began to organize local salt-winners into a loose co-operative. In many ways this co-operative forms the back-bone of the movement for the defence of the Songor, even in contemporary times where co-operatives in Ghana are a thing of the past. While many other cooperatives existed at the local level in Ghana during this period – a tacit connection to a leftist rhetoric the PNDC still maintained – the salt co-operatives were different and “arose from the struggle of Ada people … to regain sovereignty over the lagoon” (Manuh, 1992, p. 115). At its height, the main co-operative boasted 3200 members, and also fostered many smaller collectives. In contemporary times, despite the much looser organizational framework, this history of struggle along with the co-operatives that emerged as a result of it helps ensure the ongoing presence of the movement – though its existence is largely unnamed, indicating its unbranded nature (Al-Hassan & Kofi, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). In this sense, the co-operative structure provided the mechanism through which a movement could be formed in the PNDC era – an era where many of those opposing the new neoliberal focus on deregulation were targeted, tortured and imprisoned (a point noted and discussed above). It was through this cooperative that the growing arrogance of VSL and the Apenteng family that owned it were resisted.

In recounting this resistance, it is best to draw on the voices of members of this era of resistance as captured by a radio program produced in 2002 by Radio Ada, the community radio station Kofi manages. Albert Adinortey Apetorgbor, a
member of the movement and a National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) organizer, described the situation:

The late Apenteng, especially his son Stephen, would not allow anybody to win salt, let alone keep it in stock around the Lagoon for a better price. One day … he brought some soldiers to the Kasseh market some 20 kilometres away from the Lagoon…The soldiers started beating all the women selling salt at the market and all the vehicles loaded with salt were attacked. (Radio Ada, 2002, p. 3)

The violence used by VSL to guarantee its claim to monopoly over salt in the area helped spark the formation of the cooperative described above. It also provoked an intervention by the local priests who guarded the spiritual essence of the lagoon (Manuh, 1992). Apetorgbor, also present in our PR group’s first meeting with movement members, describes how the local knowledge of preserving the salt formation to ensure equitable distribution as well as maintenance of the ecosystem became a rallying point during the conflict with VSL (Songor group meeting, March 20th, 2008). The practice of fetish priests placing sticks in the lagoon in order to indicate a “ban on entering the lagoon” was used symbolically to challenge the use of the lagoon by VSL. When the company removed the sticks, it sparked large scale anger and acts of resistance against the company and its local police and military allies (Songor group meeting, March 20th, 2008). These acts included burning “a heap of salt kept in storage … most of which belonged to Apenteng [of VSL]” (Radio Ada, 2002, p. 5). As a result, Apetorgbor describes how:

Anybody found in the Lagoon was arrested …They were sent to the Vacuum Salt Company's office. The suspects were given salt to chew and salt concentrates to drink. They were given other unspeakable punishments, as Apenteng directed. Thereafter, they were taken to … Accra, where they were put in cells for three weeks. (Radio Ada, 2002, p. 5)

On May 17th 1985, the violence of VSL against the people of Ada culminated in the killing of Maggie Lanuer – a pregnant woman innocently standing by during
one of the raids by police against members of the cooperative and those attempting to sell salt. She was killed by a stray bullet fired by one of the police officers. After her death, the government formed a commission to investigate the complaints being made by Ada residents, and ultimately banned the VSL owners from operating in and around the lagoon (Manuh, 1992). Yet, this victory is hollow, as what has really been at stake in this conflict is not a simple movement against a particular company, but rather a contestation of a regime of truth that suggests that it is the national government, or the logic of neoliberalism, that should dictate how the salt flats in the Songor are used. In order to explain this, it is necessary to present how this resource has been managed in the past – something alluded to at the outset of this description.

“In the past,” notes Takyiwaa Manuh, “the process of collecting salt from the lagoon demonstrated community management of a natural resource” (1992, p. 104). Yet, as Apetorgbor notes, this was not the only implication of this way of knowing and being:

People from all walks of life come to the Songor Lagoon for salt. Some come from as far as Tamale, Ewe land, Kumasi and other places (Radio Ada, 2002, p. 3). 31

When discussing the Songor in our PR group meeting, Kofi made a similar point:

You have this big salt resource … and you have millions of tons forming there for the people to collect, and anybody at all, the people are so liberal, whatever you are able to collect is yours, you only give some small part as tax to the chief and … the owners (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

Kofi also noted how the traditional resource management system helped guarantee this sense of collective ownership and access:

The [Songor] movement is deeply rooted in the culture of the people, why? Because of the way ownership is conceived. Ada is made up of different clans, about 10 or so 12 clans, and one clan is seen as the

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31 This description implies the wide-scale national use of this resource since Tamale is in Ghana’s North, while Ewe-land refers to Eastern Ghana, and Kumasi is in the middle of the country.
owner of the water body. And there are four others who are owners of the surrounding lands. You look at the wisdom in this … So when you say the owner of the water body is there, and the surrounding lands have also got owners it is a convenient agreement for joint ownership and defence of the resource (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

This resource management agreement is convenient precisely because no one clan can claim outright ownership of the resource (i.e. as the water level in the lagoon rises and falls, the demarcations of ownership change). The implications of this collective ownership process are far reaching, especially when one considers how this ownership process not only benefits all those living in the Ada area, but also other Ghanaians migrating from across the country to win salt. In fact, according to Kofi, this makes the salt flats of Songor a “national asset” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

However, this national character was interpreted differently by the PNDC government in the aftermath of Maggie’s death. Instead of returning the management of this resource to the communities and people who had been successfully maintaining and defending it for generations – as well as sharing its access with any who came – the government enacted PNDC law 287, that was later to form the back-bone of the PNDC’s Mineral and Mining law (discussed further below) that would then surface in the 1992 Constitution upon Ghana’s return to democracy. The essence of law 287 is that salt should be considered like any other natural resource, and in a display of the topography of power of the state Ferguson (2006) describes (see chapter 3), these resources are claimed in the name of Ghana by the PNDC as the national government with a greater claim to generalizability. Yet, as Manuh (1992) notes, this generalizability is actually for hire, as the national government changes sides in local conflicts based on the transnational powers of the day. Because of this unpredictable government behaviour, the claim of ownership by the national government worries those fighting for local control of the Songor lagoon. For instance, Maggie Lanuer’s husband, Thomas Ocloo, states that “it was the death of my wife that led the former President [Rawlings] to make a law to take over the Songor and hold it in
trust for the people of Ada,” thereby taking the resource away from VSL and the Apentengs (Radio Ada, 2002, p. 6). Yet despite this important intervention, Ocloo believes having the resource held in trust by the central government leaves it open to abuse by whoever is in the Presidency and the interests they represent. He notes, “the present government and for that matter the current President Kufuor is doing all he can to take over the resource completely to deprive the Adas of ownership” (p. 6). This has led the people of Ada to realize they cannot trust the national government, as today’s President may support their cause over outside capital, but tomorrow’s may not. As a result, according to Ocloo, “The Adas want the government to hand over the resource to them” (p. 6). In our PR group discussion, Al-Hassan echoed this critical assessment of the notion of holding a resource “in trust” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). He further pointed out that this desire by the people of Ada to question whether it is in their best interest to have the President hold the salt flats in trust means they are not just fighting the government of the day, but “Ada is fighting against the constitution” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). It is precisely this larger implication that makes working with the Songor defence movement so interesting, as the movement’s struggle has implications not only on the ongoing history of defending this resource, but also on the national framework through which transnational neoliberal governmentality is enacted, Ghana’s 1992 Constitution.

**Importance of movement locally, nationally and transnationally**

In our PR group discussion of the Songor defence movement the way the movement questions the 1992 Constitution is only one of three reasons we identified as making the movement important. The other two are the unbranded and organic nature of the movement, and the way the current challenges the movement faces involves questioning not only today’s transnational neoliberal governmentality, but also questioning the colonial legacy of tying land titling to chieftaincy. Here, this section will begin by connecting the Songor movement to the unbranded and organic category our PR group articulated, then unpack how
the movement contests the discursive legitimacy of the 1992 Constitution, and will finally connect the movement’s history of struggle with the current challenges it faces. Importantly, the current challenges faced by the movement, and developing new strategies for dealing with them, are precisely the reason for the invitation by movement members for our PR group to begin work with them – an invitation that in itself is probably the most important reason for our group to collaborate as it implies a partnership from the outset.

“About these unbranded [and organic] movements, Songor is a typical example, and it is rooted in the culture of the people” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). With this statement, Kofi begins our PR group discussion on the Songor salt flat defence movement. He further elaborates how the Songor, like other resource based movements, is “embedded in people’s livelihoods,” and as such is a major source of communal mobilization: “when people’s livelihoods are at stake, then they see that look we have to do something” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Importantly, he notes the movement, as with the way the resource itself is managed, has largely resisted the outright imposition of leadership, making it far more dialogue-based. As such, the communal nature of the asset invites widespread ownership of the movement and its resistance to seeing the Songor expropriated. He notes how recently other radio shows on Radio Ada were taken over by concerns about the Songor:

People have called in on some other programs that we have organized in the community. People have hinted … if you are talking of water, there is a more serious case. If action is not taken, if people do not, if the people who are cheating us are not prevented there will be war in the Songor. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

This type of widespread ownership is critical if the movement is to remain rooted in the communal livelihood needs of the Ada community. Yet, Kofi also points out that the importance of this movement is not just recognized locally, as others from outside Ada have joined in the calls being made to Radio Ada about the latest challenge confronting communal access to the salt flats:
This is not only an issue of Ada. We had calls from the Volta region,\textsuperscript{32} saying that, look we don’t like what is happening, the Adas are not selfish, we know them to be very embracing. (PR group meeting, February 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2008)

This mutual concern of those who also access the flats – as explored above – along with the widespread sense of ownership of the movement and the asset is a continued source of strength of the movement, even as it faces its current, and perhaps greatest challenge – discussed further below. Before turning to elaborate this challenge, it is important to fully develop what was hinted at in the closing lines of the last section: how the Songor defence movement challenges the discursive legitimacy of Ghana’s 1992 Constitution.

As has been noted in other sections of this dissertation, structural adjustment programs in Ghana have had a drastic effect on communities alienated from their land and natural resources as a result of the opening of mineral exploitation to foreign capital (Hilson, 2004). Likewise, this new form of what Ferguson (2006) has called transnational neoliberal governmentality, and its link to democratization in Ghana and elsewhere on the African continent, has led to using national governments to facilitate capital exploitation despite the effects this exploitation has on a government’s own citizens. Mbembe has further pointed out how this process of “partial democratization under conditions of structural adjustment has opened the way for the privatization of violence” (Höller and Mbembe, 2007, p. 8). The Yamfo case discussed in the previous chapter reveals this type of privatization in action. Key to this process, as noted in chapter 3, is the way in which democracy is contained and disciplined through this form of governmentality.

These discursive parameters of neoliberal transnational governmentality in action in Ghana are re-introduced here in order to place the emergence of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana’s 4\textsuperscript{th} Republic in its historical context. The tension at the heart of the democratic betrayal described in chapter 3 – whereby the democracy

\textsuperscript{32} A neighbouring region to Greater Accra, in which Ada is situated.
movement was contesting the neoliberal agenda as much as it was contesting the lack of accountable governance – is also embedded in the fabric of the 1992 Constitution. This is especially true when it comes to the way the rights of communities endowed with natural resources are interpreted by the document. For instance, on the one hand, the Constitution contains important recognitions of human rights, and establishes the autonomous Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to monitor rights abuses, but yet, on the other, it continues the tradition of excluding Ghanaians from decisions being made about their resources and minerals (Ayine, 2001). For instance, the Constitution’s 21st chapter spells out the “comprehensive provisions for dealing with the subject of lands and natural resources” (Ayine, 2001, p. 86). Article 257 clause 6 states:

Every mineral in its natural state in, under or upon any land in Ghana, rivers, streams, water courses throughout Ghana…is the property of the Republic of Ghana and shall be vested in the President on behalf of, and in trust for the people of Ghana (quoted in Ayine, 2001, p. 86).

Here it is clearly the Presidency that has the final word on the disposition of natural resources such as minerals. This authority is discursively mediated by the notion of holding the resources “in trust for the people of Ghana” – a vague phrase that seems to imply the Presidency would not betray the trust of those whose resources have been placed in the President’s care. Despite its vague nature, the importance of this additional phrase is clear when this article is compared to the antecedent law that informed it. Key sections of the Minerals and Mining Law of 1986 (PNDC Law 153) are transplanted into the Constitution, with “the wording [of the above article being] the same as section 1 of Law 153 except the addition of the word “trust’”’ (Ayine, 2001, p. 100). This shift in wording is reflective of the shift in governance mentalities, (as the PNDC law was enacted under the revolutionary military regime) and in this sense is indicative of the emerging governmentality whereby including this proviso legitimates this conduct since it alone will somehow hold the Presidency accountable for the manner in which lands containing minerals are allocated and used. Yet, as the example of the Songor above showed, it has become clear to a number of communities directly
affected by Presidential concessions of natural resource exploitation that “the President and by implication the executive branch of government is … in breach of trust imposed on them by the Constitution” (Ayine, 2001, p. 98).

Ayine (2001) builds his case for this breach of trust by further referring to the Constitution, and by embedding this “trust” in the rights granted Ghanaian citizens in the 1992 Constitution. For Ayine, the key here is that the communities affected by mining and/or other natural resource extraction have had their fundamental rights violated with the complicity of the state. Ayine goes on to document the ways in which rights – such as the right to life (Article 13), the right to protection from deprivation of property (Article 20), and the right to protection of personal liberty (Article 15) – have been violated, not only by mining companies but also through state complicity, including state security agencies who act against Ghanaian citizens at a company’s command (Ayine, 2001, pp. 89-94). These cases of abuse of human rights have also been recently documented by CHRAJ, including environmental, health and physical abuses, as well as “incidents of police and military excesses [that] occur in mining communities” (CHRAJ, 2008, p. 21) – documentation that supports the description of the Yamfo incident in chapter 5. The use of police and military force documented in both these reports also underscores the concern expressed by Mbembe of the “privatization of violence” that neoliberal forms of democracy encourage. Returning to Ayine, he concludes his “breach of trust” argument by linking state complicity in all these abuses to the failure of government to protect the rights of mining affected communities:

State complicity in corporate abuse of human rights constitutes a breach of trust … Due to the fiduciary character of trusteeship, [the President] is obliged by law to act in the best interest of the beneficiary…[and] is therefore in breach of trust imposed on [him] by the Constitution where the acts or omissions of state agencies aid and abet the violation of the human rights of the beneficiaries under the trust (i.e., local communities) (2001, p. 98).
While this case is well articulated, what it doesn’t challenge is the right of the President to arbitrarily award concessions to companies and therefore strip the people living in these areas of their land, their natural resources and their livelihoods. In this sense, what the people of Ada are challenging is something much greater than just whether the President is holding the resource in trust or not; they are questioning his or her right to decide.

Out of our collaborative discussion, our PR group concluded that when Ghana’s Constitution places the disposition of natural resources in the hands of one person, it invites arbitrary abuse of power and facilitates potentially corrupt and unaccountable concession-granting arrangements with foreign and local capital. For the people of Ada, this arbitrary abuse of power begins with the Constitution’s definition of a mineral:

[B]ecause nationally the salt is considered as a mineral. And the people [of Ada] are saying no, mineral, a mineral is below ground and is not renewable. Mineral is a limited resource it, it diminishes as you mine. Therefore salt is renewable, it is regenerating itself, and so they are saying it is not a mineral (Kofi, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

Al-Hassan responds by linking the 1992 Constitution to a neoliberal agenda:

You see, that’s the problem with the neoliberal agenda, because the Constitution of Ghana … says that minerals found in the country … belongs to the state and the President holds it in trust for the people. So the Constitution itself, now it’s a question that Ada is fighting against the Constitution (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)).

He then goes on to link this notion of outright ownership of mineral wealth by the political elite not just to a neoliberal agenda but also to a colonial legacy – an important link in the discussion below of the latest challenges faced by the movement. Linking the issues in Ada to the experiences in mining affected communities, Adam traces the history of alienation of natural resources:

[In] the colonial time there was brutal force, because of the colonial institutions when they came people were selling, gathering gold from the streams and selling it to them and then they moved in and used the same
chiefs, places where they have no chieftaincy they created them, to control and hold everything and then privatize it. First they use the state and then the state comes and takes it as state concession (PAR group meeting, Feb 23, 2008).

In this sense, Adam is describing how the current Ghanaian Constitution fits into a historical constellation of discursive techniques designed to alienate natural resources from resident communities – much like the discursive shifts described above where trust is inserted in laws to denote a new democratic era. This particular approach has been used to justify not only the alienation of resources by the state, but also the further selling off of these resources to private capital – especially foreign private capital. Based on this, the Ghanaian state needs to be seen as a facilitating agent for capital exploitation, not as a mediating force balancing the needs of local Ghanaians against the need for jobs and economic growth. In this way, Al-Hassan has provided the scaffolding that hints at the notion of transnational governmentality discussed above. It also opens up the potential to critique the regime of truth that supposes that Ghana’s Constitution is a document intended to protect average Ghanaians in the face of the desires of capital, thus making room for subjugated knowledges of alternative equitable resource use processes that place people before capital, such as the traditional management process in Songor.

In this sense, as explored above, the traditional collective management of the Songor Lagoon salt flats gave equitable access to these flats and did not privilege the local Ada people over other Ghanaians. This is in sharp contrast to the example of capitalistic exploitation that greatly reduced its equitable access. Thus, as Al-Hassan points out, in “fighting against the constitution … the struggle … is beyond Ada v the State, this is the citizens of Ghana v the State” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Building on Ferguson’s topography of power, this point can be extrapolated to mean the citizens of Ghana v transnational governmentality, as the Constitution clearly privileges foreign and elite capital over the average Ghanaian. Similarly, the struggle in Ada has a direct correlation with other resource defence movements in the country, as their struggles are
beyond being local in character: by creating enclaves of capitalist exploitation the
Government of Ghana and allied transnational institutions have dramatically
affected the livelihoods of people not just from that locality, but from across the
nation. This is one of the key reasons our PR group is committed to working with
the Songor movement in the near future.

For instance, when talking of the mining sector, the local *galamsey*
operators – individuals practicing a traditional form of gold mining that goes back
to pre-colonial times, and predominantly operating illegally because of the
monopoly large mining companies have on resource-rich land (Hilson and Potter,
2003) – are composed of people from every part of the country: “50% of
[galamsey operators] are from … Northern Ghana, Volta Region, Ashanti” (Al-
Hassan, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). Hilson and Potter (2003) also
add that these galamsey operators have migrated to mining locations precisely
because of the economic hardships that came with structural adjustment.
Likewise, many of the farmers most directly affected by concessions given to
mining companies are not just indigenous to the area, but are in fact migrants
from across the country. For example, “the people [farming] in the thick of the
forests, they are all from Volta, Brong-Ahafo, Northern Region, Ashanti, Upper
East and Upper West” (Al-Hassan, PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). With
recent decisions by the President to grant mining concessions in these forested
areas (Tienhaara, 2006), the implications this could have on the livelihoods of
Ghanaians from across the nation could be disastrous (Owusu-Koranteng, 2008).

The argument to be drawn from these points is that there are two
contrasting systems in place for resource use in Ghana. The first of these, based
on traditional management systems with access for migrants and locals to natural
resources, favours Ghanaians from across the country. The second of these
systems grants monopolistic access to resources to a company, usually a
transnational company, and restricts resource wealth to only those exploiting it
and the few elite government officials benefiting from state complicity in the
company’s activities. The dramatic contrast between these two systems is further
underscored by the fact that:
despite the rises in production, Ghana’s mining sector continues to contribute comparatively little to national GDP, which suggests that a significant share of extracted product is being exported overseas (Hilson, 2004, p. 54).

In this sense, the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution, with its clear defence of the second modality of resource use, reinforces a form of democratic elitism that favours foreign and elite capital over average Ghanaians. It also further shows that this form of democracy is embedded in a topography of power that resolves whatever tension may have been present in the Constitution between the human rights of Ghanaians and the arbitrary power of the state as facilitator of transnational governmentality in favour of the latter.

It is largely based on this argument that our PR group identified locally based resource movements, such as the Songor movement and the anti-mining movement, as the best sources of mobilized contestation against neoliberal transnational governmentality – as discussed at length in chapter 4 above. The rootedness in people’s lives inherent in our group’s understanding of unbranded organic movements leads to movements with a strong sense that what they are fighting is local, national and transnational in character. In this sense, they are contesting the reality that neoliberalism constructs. As such, Al-Hassan notes, the Songor movement “is a test case for a resource coalition in this country to contest the neoliberal agenda” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

Second, these movements are also grounded in an alternative relationship with the land and with resource use that is based on what Walter Mignolo (2000) calls local knowledges and histories – such as the Songor’s – that question the logic of neoliberal and capitalist politics of exploitation. This is in large part why these local knowledges have been subjugated by national and transnational governmentality. These local subjugated knowledges contest the overall shape of transnational neoliberal governmentality’s truth regime, not through an essentialized other identity, but rather through the reinterpretation of the construction of reality of neoliberalism and hyper-globalization as – to draw on Mignolo (2000) again – a global design. The deeply informed and historically
documented process of equitable and sustainable natural resource use in the Songor aptly contests the materialization, commodification and the attempted deracination of the resource from its environment and from those who have maintained it. And, as the example of the fetish priests mentioned above suggests, these local subjugated knowledges also provide important avenues of mobilization – as the way of knowing and being that has maintained this resource is disregarded by capitalism’s sole interest in exploitation. In this sense, it is locally based resource movements that not only have the will but also the subjugated knowledges to contest neoliberalism’s truth regime. This ability to contest neoliberalism in multiple registers is the main reason our PR group sees this Songor movement, and those like it, as crucial to building what Nkrumah called a “progressive African society.”

This then leads to the final reason why our PR group views the Songor movement as an important movement to work with in the near future, namely the current challenge it faces and how this challenge is to be overcome. Kofi describes the current challenge thus:

[T]he problem we are facing now, before I left Ada, on Thursday there was a big meeting at the Paramountcy, it has to do with this cannibalization of the lagoon by some of the new chiefs who see that “I am a chief and there is no collective resource that I am controlling so let me, once I know that I have part of the resource of the lagoon as one let me bring in some crude technology”. You go and buy a pumping machine to, then you create pans and then you pump water into the resource and then with the Harmattan the water goes off quickly so within a short time you have mounds of salt you are winning so you become richer as a chief, you have more power to control things. So this is the trouble the Paramountcy has to grapple with, and so the paramountcy summoned a meeting of all the village chiefs and all the people working in the Songor to a meeting to see how what has been

33 Period of weather in Ghana where the winds shift bringing the dry warm winds of the Sahara down to the coast.
developing over the past four years or so [can be dealt with] … It is what the bigger companies are doing … So what the companies are doing some of the chiefs have started. And so it is bringing conflict, so local people who can walk into the lagoon to win salt are finding it difficult because the surrounding lands that produce salt are now all being enclosed. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

It is precisely this conflict that the calls in to the radio station, discussed above, were about. Al-Hassan points out that this challenge could make mobilizing much more difficult because it is local capital rather than government or external capital attempts at expropriation of the Songor (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). This leads him to suggest that chieftaincy is actually the problem. He notes, “people have this kind of recognition of leadership rule by chiefs and clans” whereby they respect the chief and his or her decisions, yet according to the history of Ada “from the beginning there was nothing like chieftaincy, and chieftaincy is a recent creation” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). As Kofi notes:

Adas originally were being ruled by fetish priests. The advent of chieftaincy was as a result of these wars that they had to fight and they saw other people being led by war lords and other people, so it was the wars that brought in chieftaincy. And so the modern practice has eroded the authority of the fetish priest and has imposed some new roles and powers on the emerging chiefs. (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

He further notes that this modern practice was largely institutionalized through colonial interventions (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). In this sense, the current issue facing the Ada Songor movement means not only contesting Ghana’s 1992 Constitution, but also going back to the colonial process of institutionalizing chieftaincy as a means, to quote Al-Hassan, “to control and hold everything and then privatize it” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

Challenging this larger historical legacy is daunting, and it is because of this that the Ada Songor movement has expressed interest in building a collaborative PAR
process with our PR group. The initial discussions of this process are contained in the next section.

Before turning to these discussions, however, it is important to set the scene of our PR group’s own thinking through of our role in this collaboration. As an echo of our larger discussion on leadership, and our own culpability in being associated with the neoliberal system, our group debated how we should engage with the Songor movement. This self-reflective practice is a critical part of our own learning, as well as our efforts to ensure our ensuing work with the movement is truly based on participatory grounds, and not on new efforts to co-opt a movement’s direction to fit our own agenda. Kofi began our discussion by noting, “you know when we are talking of movements becoming strong when they have collective access [to a resource], they also need to be mobilized, and the means of this mobilization is as important as the reason for the creation of the movement” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). It is in this need to mobilize, as well as to provoke larger connections, that Kofi suggests activist-educators such as our group, as well as community radio activists such as those involved with Radio Ada, can play a part in a movement like the Songor. I added to this point:

There is a key role in moments like this [current challenged faced by the Songor] for there to be some people who help to create learning moments and possible directions, and then connect the struggle to larger issues … [for instance] if Radio Ada wasn’t there, and there wasn’t some people to connect all those calling in to the chieftaincy issue to show the depth in which it is happening, would there have been the social pressure needed to get the paramount chief to call this meeting? (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008)

Yet, Al-Hassan also warns about putting ourselves or other activist-educators in “the center of the history of the movement” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). He argues that it is not that movement intellectuals and leaders “don’t have a role, but … that they are being made the center as if they are doing the thing. They have a role in terms of giving a movement substance and direction but also
to help wider membership see things they might not be able to see” (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008). This word of warning deeply informed the resulting stance we articulated as a group towards our work with the Ada Songor Defence movement, wanting to provide connections between the Ada movement and other resource defence movements, and perhaps introducing some information the movement membership was not aware of. Finally, our group saw our coming role as an opportunity to constitute a space in which to have wider dialogue and learning, where we would be in the background helping to establish this space and facilitating its forward momentum (PR group meeting, February 23rd, 2008).

First discussions and more

On March 20th, 2008, members of our PR group, including Kofi, Al-Hassan and myself, met with members of the Songor Defence Movement. Present from the movement were Mr. Albert Adinortey Apetorgbor, Mr. Thomas Larwer Agbloe, Mr. C.T Abateh, Mr. Moses Damenquah and Mr. Teteh Ghana. During these discussions we collectively covered a number of topics related to the Songor movement and our future collaboration.

First Mr. Apetorgbor and Mr. Agbloe gave us a detailed historical narrative of the struggle in the Songor, going back to the original settlement in the area by the Adas, and the wars waged to maintain ownership of the lagoon. The account then zeroed in on the ceding of part of the Lagoon in the 1970s to VSL as well as to another company called Star Chemicals Ltd. The two men then described the evolution of the movement in the face of the struggle against VSL as well as against the PNDC. Throughout these discussions, the others present would throw in corrections or other perspectives of the events, leading to a rich set of interpretations – captured in part in the re-storied version presented above. Finally, the discussions turned to the current challenge facing the movement, as well as the broader Ada community. In this, the participants described the recent
meetings with the Paramount chief, as well as with other clan elders, which were largely inconclusive. “There is a need for more action,” Apetorgbor concluded.

This provoked a fruitful discussion where Al-Hassan and Kofi introduced some ideas that could form the basis of new strategies for ensuring the Lagoon and salt flats remained communal assets. For instance, Al-Hassan suggested using a new law on water body use could prevent the destruction of the Lagoon’s natural water ecosystem because the Lagoon is also used for fishing. This would involve registering the Lagoon – something that may be possible to do. A general consensus erupted that this was something that should be explored. We also discussed the importance of sharing the lessons of the past struggle during the PNDC era with the younger generation engaged in contesting the Songor enclosure, as well as making room for the ongoing learning through struggle of this younger generation.

Finally, at the end of the discussion, we collectively decided on the immediate and long-term actions our collaboration would take. First, together we would aim to collect as much information on the Songor and on potential policies and laws that affect it, as well as interpretations of its conflict. This was with the dual aim of looking at the potential for contesting the Constitution, as well as dealing with the more practical issues of the current enclosure challenge. In line with this, Al-Hassan committed to helping members of the movement unpack the regulations around registering a water body as a fishing ecosystem. He also committed to helping the Songor movement link up more effectively with other resource defence movements such as the anti-mining movement and the anti-privatization of water movement. Both of these processes are well underway.

Second, we decided we would begin longer term discussions together towards building a PAR study owned by the movement, but with us as contributors. These discussions have already had an effect, with Radio Ada beginning preliminary research and perspective gathering on the Songor that will form the baseline of the PAR in the near future. Further planning meetings for the PAR are set for December, 2009. Part of these meetings will be dedicated to going through the information gathered over the past year regarding the Songor and its history, as
well as developing a participatory revue of this information towards action, inspired by Susan Turner’s (2008) mapping process where the ruling, or power relations as deployed through regulations and governmental and trans-governmental bodies are laid out for all to see. Much of the collective analysis we have developed here will be incorporated into this mapping process. This then will be the starting point for a new set of insights in terms of learning and action in this particular Ghanaian social movement.

**Contributions of study to theoretical debate**

As mentioned at the outset of this conclusion, the third aim of this chapter is to connect the results of the study with the theoretical debates concerning African democracy, social movement dynamics, social movement learning, and participatory research practice.

**Democracy debates in Africa**

Taking a page from the critical democracy work of Mamdani, Mbembe, Mafeje and Ferguson, not to mention Ninsin and Abrahamsen in Ghana’s case, our study adds a reflective account of the re-emergence of democracy in Ghana and the evolution of the Ghanaian democratic terrain and its defining characteristics from the perspective of those deeply enmeshed in the struggle for its resurgence. Our study echoes all of these writers in being highly critical of the type of democracy that has emerged in Ghana – one dominated by Ghanaian elite consensus with a transnational neoliberal governmentality that contains the parameters in which democracy can be imagined. Yet, our study also tempers these critical voices in a number of important ways.

**Ghana’s democracy is grounded in a history of struggle that resists neoliberal co-optation**: in large part our study begins from the premise Ferguson (2006) so aptly lays out: African nation states have been dominated by external
powers since colonial times. In this sense, the recent wave of democratization is merely the latest chapter of this domination. As such, a growing realization by the activist-educators in our study is that the elite consensus and transnational dominance of Ghana’s new democracy are to be expected. What is different is the ongoing struggle of localized movements of Ghanaians who have been and are continuing to be the major force through which democracy in Ghana is being redefined in Ghanaian terms. In this sense, even as Mafeje and Mamdani speak of the foreign origins of this form of governance, it is the local struggles of Ghanaians, as illustrated in this study, that have shifted the definition away from these origins to a more Ghanaian definition of what democracy means and could mean. The story of Ghana’s current democratic era is not based on analogies from somewhere else – Mamdani’s concern – but is rather constituted by a history of struggle of Ghanaians. The human rights learning in struggle of the democracy movement is a perfect realization of this. While discourses such as human rights have been largely defined elsewhere, they have been reconstituted in the Ghanaian struggle to be useful in placing obstacles in the way of a violent regime, and then helping enable its containment in a democratic envelope where it eventually lost power.

**Democracy under constant local pressure could make it relevant to African contexts:** extending from the above, our study suggests Mbembe may be overstating his point that “democracy as a form of government and as a culture of public life does not have a future in Africa” (Höller & Mbembe, 2007, p. 8). So long as this form of governance is placed under enough ongoing pressure, it could very well have a future in Africa. Certainly, based on our study, there is a case to be made that the shift to democracy has been an important step towards making Ghanaians better able to put pressure on their government in various ways. This is not to take away from the sharpness of Mbembe’s comment – a comment certainly necessary in showing how democracy is actually contributing to making lives worse in many African nations – but it is to temper it with an example where constant localized struggle and vigilance can make democracy, and perhaps any
form of governance, more responsive to local needs in the face of transnational neoliberal governmentality. It should also be added here that the examples put forth in these pages do not represent a victory for the forces that would keep neoliberalism in check. It is more that the Ghanaian examples shown here illustrate that through constant ongoing struggle it is possible to redefine the democratic terrain to at least provide some room for localized needs – something Mbembe’s interpretation completely negates.

**Ghana has a rich contemporary legacy of activism and struggle:** building on the above, our study introduces an important alternative view of Ghanaian activism from that presented by Ninsin (2007). Where he says Ghanaians are largely not prone to activism, this study has shown the opposite. What is perhaps not being seen is where and how this activism is taking place. For instance, much of the resistance in communities against the effects of mining is discussed in the press as local uprisings against chiefs. This alternative way of viewing activism in Ghana is certainly in dialogue with Abrahamsen’s view, yet our study pushes way beyond her necessarily limited scope to provide many more detailed accounts of the ways Ghanaian movements are resisting local, national and international power at the same time. In this sense, our study greatly enhances and adds much needed nuance to her basic supposition that the democracy struggle in Ghana was not just for a new form of governance, but also for a new set of power relations with transnational governmentality, even as it also deepens her further supposition that this struggle is ongoing.

**This activism is predicated on ongoing struggle, not state capture:** key to this whole discussion is a general shift revealed in our study away from a state capture mentality in resistance movements to a posture of constant struggle and vigilance. This phenomenon has been largely ignored in the African democratic literature overly concerned with civil society formation – in the case of celebratory writing – and critiquing democracy on the whole – in the case of critical writing. And, it is precisely this different way of understanding the emergence of democracy in
Ghana that comes into view when social movements become the main focus of investigation rather than the more problematic and stabilizing civil society. This conclusion provides a useful bridge to the next section focusing on social movement literature.

**Social movement dynamics**

Here, the concluding comments of chapter 4 are recapitulated and expanded to focus more on the social movement literature:

**Euro-centric thinking challenged.** Critical interpretations of social movement dynamics have been dominated in recent times by either the Marxist or postmodern positions. As the overview of the results of this study suggests, this binary has been fundamentally challenged by our collective analysis. Key to this challenge is a growing awareness of the limitations of the Euro-American tradition of social movement theory when applied to post-colonial settings. Following from Mamdani’s (1995; 1996) critical review of the tendency of both sides of this tradition to appropriate African struggles to fit their respective analogies, our study maintains a stance throughout that shows how both sides of this critical binary are used discursively by the same movement at different moments, and depending on the situation it confronts. In this sense, our study adds another voice to a growing number of other studies that challenge these theoretical limitations.

**Power in, against and between movements.** Key to part of our study’s challenge of the false binary of Euro-American social movement theory is a revisioning of power and its relationship with movements. This has opened the way for a reading of power that is both informed by a Gramscian analysis of hegemony and the ways to resist and reconfigure it, and a Foucauldian analysis of power that both sees our own implications in its circulation, but also suggests it is possible and necessary to reconfigure its deployment on an ongoing basis through subjugated
knowledges. Although beyond the scope of this document, Olssen (1999) has provided a highly detailed thinking through of the benefits of merging the thinking of these two theorists. He notes, “the advantage of combining Foucault and Gramsci in a common frame of reference derives from the fact that each moderates the weaknesses of the other” (1999, p. 90). This is especially true in making Gramsci’s interpretation of hegemony more complex and ambiguous – something Foley (1999) seems to draw on – and making Foucault’s vision of struggle against domination include the potential for moments of convergence around contestations of regimes of truth from subjugated positions. Our study has in large part provided examples of these two theoretical inflections in action, where potential power struggles within the anti-mining movement might erode much of its recent success, even as new possibilities of convergence around socio-economic effects of gender violence suggest the potential for the women’s movement to join with a growing number of other movements in contesting the direct effects of neoliberalism on people’s lives. At the same time, the pluralistic nature of struggle in Ghana can also be seen to be an effective obstacle to a government clamp-down on activism as together movements contest a multiplicity of issues, even as individually many of them contest on the multiple local, national and transnational registers at the same time.

The role of leadership in movements. In many ways, this discussion of power also has direct implications on our study’s thinking around the role of leadership. As the Songor section above suggests, as well as the discussions documented in chapter 2 and chapter 4, our PR group articulated a complex understanding of the role of leadership in Ghanaian social movements. Where activist-educators and movement leaders are implicated through their own connection to the neoliberal education system, they are also seen to play important roles in helping reveal power structures and how they work to better strategize against them. Key however in the role, as Al-Hassan aptly put it, is that leaders do not become the “center of the movement.”
In connecting to the social movement literature, this approach to leadership continues to extend the link with both Foucault and Gramsci. Stephen Brookfield has provided a useful connection between both these theorists on the subject of the organic intellectual, Gramsci’s ideal movement leader. For Brookfield, Foucault provides a living example of someone conscious of the concerns about becoming the center of movement decision-making, and as such Brookfield warns against misinterpreting Foucault’s refusal to provide a model for emancipation as a simplistic abdication of action. Instead, by bringing Foucault into dialogue with Gramsci, Brookfield reveals a method of involvement where movement leaders are creating a “new mode of connection between theory and practice” that does not resort to grand narratives, but rather is grounded in local struggles, where leaders can help “reveal and undermine power where it is invisible and insidious” (2001, p. 11). In this sense, Brookfield sees Foucault’s reworking of Gramsci’s notion to imagine activist-educators as working alongside those who struggle rather than either assuming the mantle of visionary leader or “illuminat[ing] from a safe distance” (2001, p. 11). And, as Brookfield notes, it is only through self-reflection on the part of the organic intellectual that this balance can be achieved, where there is a constant questioning going on, much like our PR group’s own questioning of our potential role in working with the Songor movement. In other important ways, this more nuanced interpretation of leadership – where power within the movement is more democratized – is in direct communication with the dialogue-based heuristic model our PR group articulated. Key to this model, of course, is not just the fluid relationship between a movement’s leadership and the wider membership, but also the way in which this relationship is constituted in learning and communication practices. It is precisely through these practices that our PR group differentiated dialogue-based movements from movements with a strategic and didactic leadership, or a leadership that rules a movement through an appeal to greater knowledge. This point is connected to the social movement learning literature in the next section.
Learning in Social Movements

In our group analysis of social movement dynamics documented in chapter 4 above, learning is implicated not only in how we came to differentiate movements, but also in the potential implications of movement leadership education backgrounds, whereby a normalization of certain neoliberal ideals can set the grounds for co-optation of movements – a further inflection of the power discussion above. This is not our way of saying we support an anti-education, anti-leadership stance in social movement mobilization but rather that our group has come to recognize and articulate a deep need for movement self-reflection on learning processes. In putting this process into action ourselves, our own self-reflections in this study have yielded two important contributions to social movement learning (SML) literature.

**Bridging OSM/NSM tensions in SML literature through practical reflections on learning.** As an extension of this study’s contribution to social movement theory, discussed above, theories of learning in social movements wedded to particular OSM or NSM positions have largely been reconstituted in our current study. Much as our PR group went back to Freire and Habermas to find the language for our heuristic typologies, examination of the works of these two theorists often claimed as fundamental to either the OSM or NSM positions, revealed common threads from which to build a bridge. Added to this, our commitment to constituting any examination of the Ghanaian experience with reference to localized determinants further destabilized the rigidity of this binary. In pursuing this line of reflection our study is in dialogue with other recent work (c.f. Kapoor, 2007; 2009; Kwai Pun, 2007). However, it is also different from these other studies in that it focuses on a broad range of movements within a particular post-colonial setting. As such, it has the purview to examine the power-plays within a number of movements, an approach in dialogue with Foley’s (1999) approach. Yet, following the bridging of the OSM/NSM tension, our study does not align itself with Foley – and other Marxists such as Holst (2002) – in
privileging capital and materialism as the overarching lens of examination. Instead, language, stories and discourses are accorded just as much power in our analysis. For instance, the role of the fetish priests described in the Songor movement narrative above is to reconstitute what Ada tradition means not through greater access to capital, but rather through access to subjugated knowledge that places the truth regime established through colonial imposition into question. This is in line with the role spiritual ontologies can play in destabilizing the truth regimes of colonialism (Chatterjee, 1982; Kapoor, 2007). Through mobilization of this subjugated knowledge, there is a possibility that the Songor movement can contest and ultimately forestall the attempts at enclosure being made by local chiefs. This is an important moment of learning in the struggle for continued communal access to the Songor resource. Extending from this, while capital has a role to play in this analysis – the fetish priest’s knowledge is also not to be privileged above the material effects of its potential deployment – there are ultimately sets of cultural determinants such as re-storied histories that can supersede its power.

**Inflecting theories of SM learning with practical experiences of activist-educators.** This nuanced bridging of OSM/NSM tension through stories such as these leads back to the initial point raised by Hall and Turray’s (2006) study of the social movement learning literature, discussed in chapter 5. They noted how the vast majority of SML literature is theoretical in nature, or is focused on single movement case studies. In attempting to break away from both of these tendencies, our study contributes the reflective analysis of those embedded in a number of different movements in the Ghanaian context, and who draw on their 15 to 20 years of experience to analyze social movements and their learning. This strong grounding in experience provides a number of movement examples from which our PR group drew its re-storied overarching analysis. Out of this analysis, the importance of experiential learning and informal learning in movements derived from the ongoing struggle is clear, a point in line with Foley’s analysis as well as that of others (c.f. English, 2002). As chapter 4 notes, Foley’s key term of
learning in struggle formed a major backdrop to our group’s analysis. Yet, based on the analysis of our PR group, as well as the contributions of the wider network of activist-educators, this term was extended to not only focus on the long-term informal learning that arises in social movement struggles, but also on the intense learning that arises in specific moments of conflict (learning through struggle) as well as on the reflective visions of those engaged in social movement learning on the best ways in which people and movements can learn to struggle. These are important extensions of Foley’s initial lens, not only because they provide nuance to his original analysis, but also because they are grounded in the collaborative meaning-making of this study. In other words, they are not simply a theoretical reconfiguration of Foley’s term, but are rather an application and extension of his term on the basis of an extensive analysis of learning in a number of Ghanaian social movements. In this sense, our study differs from his own approach where his comments and analysis are either based on his observations and interactions with specific movements, or on literature reviews of movements in which he took no part. Similarly, our study does fall in line with the investigations that have focused on particular movement case studies, as they have tended to also use participatory approaches to meaning-making (Hall & Turray, 2006). The connection of our study to this literature is the focus of the next section.

**Building more and more participatory research spaces, one relationship-based step at a time**

In many ways, our study is in very good company in approaching this research using a participatory methodology. For instance, Hall and Turray (2006) note, “by far the most employed methodology for the studies involving social movement(s)/social movement learning is Participatory/Action Research” (p. 33). As the opening chapter of the dissertation explained at length, for our PR group building this research on Ghanaian social movement learning on participatory approaches is a natural extension of the relationships we have collectively developed over the years. However, even as our approach may echo other studies
of learning in social movements, there are a number of features of ours that are different.

**Collective meaning-making in multiple movements.** While Hall and Turray (2006) note that participatory research approaches are the norm in studies of social movement learning, they also note that these approaches are “often employed on a specific case (hence, employed within the framework of a case study)” (p.33). Here, our study aimed to analyze not one movement alone, but rather the movements in a whole democratic terrain. This posed a much greater challenge, especially as our group was committed to using participatory research approaches. What we ended up with, with a number of activist-educators interviewed and included in the participatory research blog for each movement, and with the majority of the major movements represented in our PR group, was largely the best response we could come up with in our design of the approach. Nonetheless, it needs to be said that this two step participatory research approach has been used by others in equally challenging positions. The study conducted by Fine et. al (2004), is a perfect illustration of this, where the confines of a women’s prison led some of the participatory research group to interview a wider group of inmates, and some of the group to only participate in the collective analysis. However, what is important to recognize in the case of our study was the way in which the relationships at the core of this research, and the level of commitment of those in the PR group to these relationships, meant that the interviews and inputs of the wider network of activist-educators were based on trust. In this sense, they reflect what Hall and Turray (2006) call “solidarity with the movement” that is a cornerstone of participatory research in social movement learning literature. As such, and as was our PR group’s intention, the results of our study are likely to be seen by the Ghanaian movement community as a contribution to self-reflection on current movement praxis – not as some sort of evaluation of movements from an objective standpoint. And it is based on these same relationships that our group hopes the analysis within these pages will be picked up, debated, re-storied, revised and renewed.
Bringing PR approaches into dialogue with non-traditional methodologies.

While it may be quite natural to combine narrative inquiry approaches to participatory research, given that so much of this research is based on people’s stories and interpretations, it is another thing to collectivize and re-story the analysis of the connections between these stories and larger discourses of power. So much of discourse analysis relies on the expert being able to unveil the invisible nature of power in discourse – something revealed in the discussion of leadership above. Yet, even though their may be a role for some to unpack elements of a discourse, and the way it uses language, it is perhaps more powerful to put that analysis into a collective meaning-making session where the implications of a particular discourse, as well as instances of its deployment, are unpacked together from multiple points of view and experiences. This was certainly the case with neoliberalism in our research. While some of us took apart the way it manifested in the creation of Ghana’s democracy, others were pointing out how it had implications even on our own group’s education, as well as on our potential role in a movement. This self-reflective approach to using discourse analysis is an important addition not only to discourse analysis literature – where it so often critiques the knowledge/power nexus of other expert discourses while failing to see its own duplication of this expert positioning – but also in participatory research literature where collectively acknowledging and beginning to understand how language is implicated in power reproduction is a fundamental part of much participatory work (c.f. Freire, 1970).

Building towards Participatory Action Research in a cross-cultural setting takes time. Even though most movement learning research that uses PAR focuses on only one movement or case study, developing the depth of relationships necessary for this research to be both truly participatory and movement-owned can take a long time. It has been suggested that a gradual approach to developing such a PAR is one way to avoid what Kapoor (2009) calls an “academic PAR,” or PAR research that fulfills an academic interest over a movement need. Extending
this insight to work with cross-cultural implications can only heighten the patience with which a PAR study needs to be constituted (Stocek & Mark, 2009). As our own self-reflective analysis has argued, the neoliberal education that implicates most activist-educators, including the members of our group, suggests that the patience required in a cross-cultural setting – such as the one implicated by my participation in the research – may be just as needed in our own movement settings. As such, our approach to this participatory research has aimed to develop a natural connection with a particular movement, after having engaged in a wider background study of the democratic terrain – represented in this current document. The work we are beginning with the Songor movement is very much based on this type of patient approach. In fact, in many ways, it is largely from Kwame Nkrumah that we draw inspiration in this approach as he reminded us that we “must not endeavour to reproduce our own education and culture” but must instead work with the Songor movement to better understand its reality and its ongoing way of learning to struggle.

**Last thoughts for now**

In closing this document I would like to re-introduce my voice as the main author of this piece in order to highlight the generosity and energy that has been a fundamental characteristic of all those involved in this study, whether within our PR group or within the wider activist-educator network. This generosity and energy is what has enlivened the previous pages, and has given depth, nuance and detail to the descriptions they contain of Ghana’s democracy, movements and movement learning. While it has certainly been my role to draw connections between this depth of analysis and experience and the academic writing to which it connects, this has been made easy because the issues, challenges and opportunities of Ghana’s contemporary era of activism have been so clearly

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34 This is a last reminder of the tension of writing this document as a Canadian insider/outsider in a Ghanaian movement culture within a research collective of Ghanaian activist-educators embedded in this culture.
described. Yet, key to this description, and part of the originality of this study, is that our analysis never tried to force consensus on these descriptions.

In the spirit of this commitment to openness, I want to end this dissertation with a proverb used by Coleman in our proceedings. “If the hunter has learned to shoot without missing,” he said, while describing the need for movements to remain vigilant in the face of capitalism and neoliberalism’s ability to transform, “then birds must learn to sleep without perching” (PR group meeting, February 24th, 2008). This proverb is in many ways a hallmark of our group’s commitment to the action that is opening up before us. As such, this dissertation needs to be seen not as a conclusion on a topic of study, but rather as the beginning chapter in the sleepless pursuit of collective learning that challenges neoliberalism and capital in all their nefarious forms.
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APPENDIX 1 – WORKING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Working Questions – Developed with Coleman Agyeyomah and Al-Hassan Adam

Can we talk about the formation of MFJ and

1. its connection to antecedent socialist movements of 1980s
2. its role in the formation of the Ghanaian democratic movement (early 1990s)
3. Its strategies during the 1990s
4. Learning that provoked/resulted from shifts in strategies
5. its connections with CJA
6. its connection with the proliferation of NGOs/resistance to NGO bill (1995)

In thinking about other movements in Ghana, they seem to be the WM, Dis M, Anti-mining, and NCAP. Is this right?

1. any others
2. how are any of them related to democracy movement?
3. how did each of them come about?
4. what strategies do they use, and where do they come from?
5. how has learning shifted these strategies?
6. are there differences between these movements (or selected ones) and the MFJ/CJA?

Are there any other forms of organization/negotiation/contestation with power that this study should take cognizance of?

Overall, do you see any trends in what we are calling learning in struggle? What have been the important paradigm shifts? What have been the oversights? How does this learning happen, how is it transmitted/taught/innovated upon/improved?

Can also take the approach of focusing in on particular movements (can ask this at outset).

1. how did the movement emerge?
2. how is it connected to other movements, other actors pushing for social change?
3. what have been its strategies over time?
4. where did inspiration for their strategies come from?
5. what has been the ongoing learning connected to shifts in strategies?
APPENDIX 2 – ETHICS APPROVAL