pedocs
Open Access Erziehungswissenschaften

DIPF

Choudry, Aziz

Activist learning and knowledge production

van Ackeren, Isabell [Hrsg.]; Bremer, Helmut [Hrsg.]; Kessl, Fabian [Hrsg.]; Koller, Hans Christoph [Hrsg.]; Pfaff, Nicolle [Hrsg.]; Rotter, Caroline [Hrsg.]; Klein, Dominique [Hrsg.]; Salaschek, Ulrich [Hrsg.]: Bewegungen. Beiträge zum 26. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft. Opladen; Berlin; Toronto : Verlag Barbara Budrich 2020, S. 641-652. - (Schriften der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (DGfE))

Quellenangabe/ Reference:
Choudry, Aziz: Activist learning and knowledge production - In: van Ackeren, Isabell [Hrsg.]; Bremer, Helmut [Hrsg.]; Kessl, Fabian [Hrsg.]; Koller, Hans Christoph [Hrsg.]; Pfaff, Nicolle [Hrsg.]; Rotter, Caroline [Hrsg.]; Klein, Dominique [Hrsg.]; Salaschek, Ulrich [Hrsg.]: Bewegungen. Beiträge zum 26. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft. Opladen; Berlin; Toronto : Verlag Barbara Budrich 2020, S. 641-652 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-192741 - DOI: 10.25656/01:19274

https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-192741
https://doi.org/10.25656/01:19274

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:

https://www.budrich.de

Nutzungsbedingungen

Dieses Dokument steht unter folgender Creative Commons-Lizenz: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de - Sie dürfen das Werk bzw. den Inhalt vervielfältigen, verbreiten und öffentlich zugänglich machen sowie Abwandlungen und Bearbeitungen des Werkes bzw. Inhaltes anfertigen, solange sie den Namen des Autors/Rechteinhabers in der von ihm festgelegten Weise nennen und die daraufhin neu entstandenen Werke bzw. Inhalte nur unter Verwendung von Lizenzbedingungen weitergeben, die mit denen dieses Lizenzvertrags identisch, vergleichbar oder kompatibel sind.
Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use

This document is published under following Creative Commons-License: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en - You may copy, distribute and transmit, adapt or exhibit the work or its contents in public and alter, transform, or change this work as long as you attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor. New resulting works or contents must be distributed pursuant to this license or an identical or comparable license.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Kontakt / Contact:

pedocs
DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation
Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung
E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de
Internet: www.pedocs.de

Mitglied der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

Bewegungen

Beiträge zum 26. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft

Isabell van Ackeren, Helmut Bremer, Fabian Kessl,
Hans Christoph Koller, Nicolle Pfaff, Caroline Rotter,
Dominique Klein, Ulrich Salaschek (Hrsg.)

Schriften der
Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft

DGfE Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Erziehungswissenschaft

Verlag Barbara Budrich

Isabell van Ackeren
Helmut Bremer
Fabian Kessl
Hans Christoph Koller
Nicolle Pfaff
Caroline Rotter
Dominique Klein
Ulrich Salaschek (Hrsg.)

Bewegungen

Beiträge zum 26. Kongress der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft

Verlag Barbara Budrich
Opladen • Berlin • Toronto 2020

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über
http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

© 2020 Dieses Werk ist bei der Verlag Barbara Budrich GmbH erschienen und steht unter der Creative Commons Lizenz Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0):
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/.
Diese Lizenz erlaubt die Verbreitung, Speicherung, Vervielfältigung und Bearbeitung bei Verwendung der gleichen CC-BY-SA 4.0-Lizenz und unter Angabe der UrheberInnen, Rechte, Änderungen und verwendeten Lizenz.
www.budrich.de

Dieses Buch steht im Open-Access-Bereich der Verlagsseite zum kostenlosen Download bereit (https://doi.org/10.3224/84742385).
Eine kostenpflichtige Druckversion (Print on Demand) kann über den Verlag bezogen werden. Die Seitenzahlen in der Druck- und Onlineversion sind identisch.

ISBN 978-3-8474-2385-0 (Paperback)
eISBN 978-3-8474-1553-4 (PDF)
DOI 10.3224/84742385

Druck: paper & tinta, Warschau
Printed in Europe auf säurefreiem und alterungsbeständigem Papier
Umschlaggestaltung: Bettina Lehfeldt, Kleinmachnow – www.lehfeldtgraphic.de
Redaktion und Satz: Fabian Auer, Wuppertal
Typographisches Lektorat: Anja Borkam, Jena – kontakt@lektorat-borkam.de

Inhalt

AZIZ CHOUDRY

Activist learning and knowledge production

1 Introduction

Social movements and social, political and environmental justice activism are important sites of learning and knowledge production (Kelley 2002, Holst 2002, Choudry/Kapoor 2010, Choudry 2015, Choudry/Vally 2018). This includes ideas, debates, insights and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic and political change and reflecting on their experiences, and what has preceded them. However, the forms, significance and value of this learning and knowledge production are often overlooked by education and social movement scholars, and activists themselves.

Focusing on some aspects of the intellectual work that occurs in struggles for social and political justice, this paper discusses some of the processes, possibilities and tensions of social movement learning and knowledge production for providing tools for organizing, critical analysis and education. While there are many forms, processes and contexts in which knowledge is produced in social movements, this paper discusses four areas. These are: (1) the relationship between learning, action, and knowledge production; (2) research in social movements and political activism; (3) the production and use of historical knowledge as a tool for organizing; and (4) popular cultural/artistic work that takes place within activism.

2 Learning, action and knowledge production in social movements

A growing body of radical adult education scholarship contests the separation of 'theory' and 'practice' when considering knowledge production and learning in social movements. Human activity and thought are mutually constitutive; they are shaped by each other. For example, Paula Allman (2010, p. 152) suggests that

> "our action in and on the material world is the mediation or link between our consciousness and objective reality. Our consciousness develops from our active engagement with other people, nature, and the objects or processes we produce. In other words, it develops from the sensuous experiencing of reality from within the social relations in which we exist."

Marxist dialectical understandings of how consciousness is formed thus highlight that this process takes place through and by our relationship with a material, social world. To talk and think critically about knowledge necessitates serious engagement with social and political power. Writing about knowledge and learning in political struggle, Budd Hall (1978), suggests that

> "knowledge is produced and renewed by continuous testing, by acting upon one's theories, by reflecting upon one's actions, and by beginning the cycle again. It is the combination of social transformation and education that has created the kind of knowledge which forges the personal and communal commitment for sustained engagement" (pp. 13-14).

This highlights the continual cycle of learning in action that can occur in the course of long-term campaigns, short-term mobilizations, and daily struggles. Richard Johnson (1979) highlighted 'really useful knowledge', that is produced when people reflect on their experience with each other in ways that generate further insight and understanding into the causes of their conditions, common problems and struggles and which also enable theories to be developed that are linked to strategies to bring about change. British feminist adult educator Jane Thompson (1983) argues that the purpose of knowledge has to be more than an individualistic solution to personal disadvantage. She writes: "Social change, liberation … will be achieved only by collective as distinct to individual responses to oppression" (p. 170).

In affirming the concept of activist knowledge production, theorizing, research, and other forms of intellectual work in social movements, Antonio Gramsci's (1971, p. 62) articulation of different groups of intellectuals is also helpful. Gramsci theorized two groups of intellectuals. First, there are "traditional" intellectuals, scholars and scientists who, although seemingly detached from class positions, are produced by specific historical class formations. Gramsci argued that they are produced within the ruling systems and that they play a part in and are connected to them in particular ways that constrain them from being able to think and profoundly change systems of power. They function according to their positions. Second, there are the "organic" intellectuals, the thinking and organizing persons in any class. According to Gramsci, such people articulate a "philosophy of praxis" that develops in the course of political struggle, the "concrete historicisation of philosophy and its identification with history." Often organizers and "permanent persuaders" emerging from the grassroots/working class are not seen as intellectuals capable of creating knowledge. Yet in Gramsci's understanding of intellectuals, these people have a greater potential to effect change because they are not tied to the system in the same way. Moreover, they may develop theories and ideas in relation to where they come from in powerful ways that push and challenge their thought further.

Staughton Lynd (in Lynd/Grubacic 2008, p. 40) suggests: "there are examples of homegrown, close-to-the-earth kind of theory that evolved directly from folks' experience in organizing . . .[but] I think there is another kind of theory that is needed, too." For example, "in the absence of a theory to explain what is going on economically the best-intentioned, most grassroots and democratic sort of movement is likely to flounder." Theoretical and analytical frameworks can provide powerful tools for analysis, strategy, and action, whether produced in institutional spaces like universities or outside of them. Informal, often incidental learning from experience (Foley 1999, Holst 2002, Choudry 2015), as well as intentional non-formal learning, political education, and learning that is related to action are important processes for

producing knowledge in movements. Reflecting on the way knowledge is produced in social movements, Sears (2014) suggests that specific, grounded knowledge needs to develop in tension with powerful generalizations in order to map effective strategies which draw on past and present struggles. Neither social movements, nor the knowledge that is produced within them should be romanticized or exempted from critical scrutiny. As Foley and others note, informal and non-formal learning and knowledge production in social movements is by no means automatically emancipatory and can indeed reproduce thinking that supports the status quo. But nor should the intellectual debts owed to ideas and visions collectively brought forth in movements for social justice be overlooked, as a number of scholars contend (Kelley 2002, Austin 2013, Sears 2014, Choudry 2015).

The importance of spaces for collective action, learning, and reflection are crucial, as is openness to valuing processes of informal and non-formal learning and knowledge produced from within people's everyday experience. British socialist historian E.P. Thompson (1963) warned of the 'enormous condescension of posterity' (p. 12), when writing about how patronizing and dismissive so many historians were when dealing with working class history, committed as he was to foregrounding the importance of working class people as political agents, thinkers and knowledge producers. Activist intellectual work requires practices and strategies grounded in critical (including self-critical) historical perspectives as well as emerging ideas which arise from engagement in current struggles (Choudry/Kapoor 2010, Choudry 2015, Choudry/Vally 2018). It requires that we take seriously the significance of the ideas, insights and visions produced by people collectively working for social, economic and political change and reflecting on their experiences, and what has preceded them. This is knowledge about systems of power and exploitation developed as people find themselves in confrontation with states and capital. This activist knowledge includes rich, often underexplored, archives and publications of earlier generations of movements (Vally et al. 2013, Ramamurthy 2013, Sears 2014), as well as the conscious production of understandings that challenge dominant or hegemonic 'common-sense' within, and about, various struggles.

The intellectual / educational aspects of organizing for change include intentional, explicit, programmatic educational activities within activist and social movement spaces, as well as multiple forms of incidental, informal learning that are not always obviously linked to learning, embedded as they are in a host of activities – the often mundane but vital tasks in the hard grind of organizing work. Eurig Scandrett's (2012) approach to theorizing learning and the educative aspects of social movements highlights the importance of attending to the dynamics between more structured processes and informal and/or incidental learning and knowledge production. He notes an emergent direction in some social movement scholarship that emphasizes the contribution of theoretical work to movements themselves, the importance of theorists to be accountable to movements, and the theory generated within movements. He argues that this emergent direction entails a dynamic engagement with the research and theorizing already being done by movement participants. He writes that for those working in adult education,

> "this approach resonates with conceptions of really useful knowledge (Johnson, 1979) and popular education in which scholarly knowledge is interrogated by movements of the oppressed for its value in interpreting and promoting their own material interests. Such material interests embedded within knowledge are exposed through dialogical methods such as popular education and lifelong education" (p. 43).

Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon (2005) call for recognition of existing movement-generated theory and of dynamic reciprocal engagement by theorists and movement activists in formulating, producing, refining, and applying research.

> "Movement participants produce theory as well, although much of it may not be recognizable to conventional social movement studies. This kind of theory both ranges and traverses through multiple levels of abstraction, from everyday organizing to broad analysis" (p. 195).

Historian Robin Kelley (2002) suggests that "[r]evolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge" (p. 8). He suggests that social movements generate new knowledge, questions, and theory, and emphasizes the need for concrete and critical engagement with the movements confronting the problems of oppressed peoples. He argues that "too often, our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they 'succeeded' in realizing their visions rather than on their merits or power of the visions themselves" (p. ix). Kelley emphasizes the importance of drawing conceptual resources for contemporary struggles from critical readings of histories of older movements. It is also important to appreciate the significance of knowledge that may be produced at the margins of social movements which may contest dominant ideas of the movement itself, such as challenges from anti-racist, Indigenous, feminist, working-class perspectives and politics (Featherstone 2012, Austin 2013, Choudry 2015). Some scholarship highlights tensions within networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, social movements, and grassroots groups which include struggles over whose knowledge is valued, representation, professionalization, political positions and expertise (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2007, Choudry/Kapoor 2013, Rodriguez 2010).

People struggle, learn, educate, and theorize wherever they find themselves. The forms this takes may change, but the importance of spaces and places for collective action, learning, reflection, and intergenerational sharing is crucial to building, sustaining, and broadening resistance to injustice and exploitation. A critical eye to history is vital, together with an openness to valuing processes of informal and non-formal learning, and knowledge created from the ground up. Indeed, this lens is necessary for those who want to link critical knowledge to action and for action to be informed by deeper historical understandings.

3 Activist research

Research is an intrinsic part of daily organizing and struggles for social, political, economic and environmental justice. Activist/movement research is produced in diverse ways. Some form of research is involved in many decisions that activists and organizers make and the foundations on which they act. For example, there is research involved in figuring out whether, where, and when to have a demonstration, picket, blockade, meeting, workshop, or other activities. There is research involved in deciding what is effective and what is not; whether to take part in a particular campaign; who to seek support from or offer solidarity to; and/or how to build a campaign or reach more people. Some people who are involved with activities which could be viewed as research or which involve aspects of research do not

identify as 'researchers' but as activists and organizers who do research among other activities required of them in the struggles and networks in which they are engaged and the politics to which they are committed. Within movements and different activist contexts, there are also more deliberate forms of research, which often evolves from questions and needs of people in struggle and solidarity networks.

Movement research is produced in diverse ways. In some contexts, this includes the establishment and maintenance of specialized research and education institutions by social struggles to support social movements. Some movement organizations and NGOs combine grassroots work with research, publication, and knowledge generation. The case for specialized research NGOs is often made, as Cynthia Bazán et al. (2008, p. 191) argue,

> "to become a counter-discourse with teeth . . . everyday knowledge [of social movement actors] needs to be synthesized, systematized and given coherence. It also has to be linked with analytical knowledge of the contexts within which everyday practices occur—contexts which, while they impinge on people's life, are in many cases analytically inaccessible to them."

While working through a specialized research organization may not be the research model appropriate to every situation, it is important for us to recognize the diversity of ways that research is organized and takes place within movements, and validate this as intellectual work that itself is theorizing, whether or not it is immediately recognizable to us as such in our locations.

Activist research, education and action are dialectically related. This perspective challenges the fragmentation of activities into compartmentalized categories like research, education and organizing (Choudry 2015). As some activist researchers themselves suggest, boundaries between research and organizing are sometimes blurred to the point of nonexistence. Such understandings challenge binary thinking that separates, fragments, and compartmentalizes activities into categories of "research" and "organizing," and actors into "researchers" and "organizers." Much of the theory produced by participants in social movements may not be recognizable to conventional social movement studies since it is produced by activists. As Bevington and Dixon (2005, p. 195) note, "[t]his kind of theory both ranges and traverses through multiple levels of abstraction, from everyday organizing to broad analysis." In theorizing "collective ethnography" conducted in organizing/political spaces in the context of organizing mainly immigrant taxi workers in New York, Biju Mathew (2010, p. 169) points to both the theorization that takes place in organizing spaces and also the process:

> "Organizers formalize the knowledge that is emergent through these multiple levels, repackage and force each short cycle of knowledge production back into circulation, and facilitate the evaluation of the knowledge produced through external agents/allies. Thus, organizers facilitate the expansion of knowledge, and each round of knowledge is quite immediately returned to other levels for engagement. . . . It forces a short cycle of theorizations—and ensures that each round of theorization is immediately engaged with the materiality of the domain of organizing."

The dialectical relations of "research" and "organizing" are a major strand of the reflections of activist researchers inside social movements. So too is the relationship between knowledge produced in struggles at the grassroots and the material conditions experienced and contested

by workers, peasants, and others often key to producing "research." Knowledge production/research and organizing/action are mutually constitutive and are seen in this way by the people producing it (Choudry 2015).

Reflections on doing activist research, as well as research for activism itself, often emerge from collective and collaborative relations, discussions, and exchanges with a wide range of actors. While some activist research targets policymakers and international institutions, the main goal in the cases discussed here has been to support and inform social change through popular organizing and mass movement building. Implicit within this work is an understanding of the importance of building counterpower against domination by the interests of capital and states.

The activist research processes described here are embedded in relations of trust with other activists and organizations that develop through constant effort to work together in formal and informal networks and collaborations. These networks are spaces for the ongoing sharing of information and analysis. They allow for the identification of research that is most relevant to particular struggles and communication of that research in ways that are meaningful and useful for movement-building. They are invaluable in the production, validation, vetting, or "getting the research right" in the applications, strategic considerations, and dissemination of the research. But research spaces can also be spaces of organizing. As noted by Aziz Choudry (2015) and Valerie Francisco (2016), the research process itself can be a form of organizing, building, and strengthening communities, movements, and alliances. This in turn needs an organized grassroots to foster and develop research for struggles. This is an ongoing process that informs action – it is not a process that necessarily ends when research is "written up" and a report published.

There are some useful accounts of the politics of knowledge in community environmental struggles that have collaborated with scientists. Such "people's science" or "civic science" mobilizes and makes accessible scientific knowledge that is co-produced by community members through the strategic use of scientific tools deployed along with the systematization of lay knowledge and experience, as in struggles against industrial pollution by villagers in Tamil Nadu, India (Narayan/Scandrett 2014) and by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance in South Africa (Scott/Barnett 2009).

Yet a common underlying assumption in much writing on activist research and research for social change remains--that is that professional researchers with specialist academic training must conduct or facilitate research. Research that is closely and organically connected with, conceptualized or framed by, or that emerges from organizing/movements/popular struggles, has received far less attention, if not been overlooked altogether (Choudry 2015).

Much of what is written on research and social change tends to emphasize particular methodologies and partnerships between researchers in academia and community groups. This means that it primarily treats professional dilemmas faced by professional researchers in doing this work rather than engaging with the experiences of researchers and activists who carry out research and the ways in which they understand their work. This is especially true of people who conduct research almost entirely independently of formal partnerships or collaboration with academic researchers. Some practitioners claim that a number of methodologies and approaches to qualitative research are inherently oriented towards social justice. For example, these include institutional ethnography/political activist ethnography, partici-

patory action research, community-based action research, the extended case method and reflexive global ethnography. Others have questioned implicit and explicit claims of this nature and highlight embedded power relations in research relationships, as well as the importance of relationships of trust and shared political commitments for activist research (Jordan 2003, D'Souza 2009, Choudry 2015).

4 Making history

Another significant area of social movement knowledge production concerns historical knowledge and how it is used in activist contexts. Activists are engaging with historical materials, debates and ideas from earlier periods of struggle. Some movement activists and educators look at this history with an eye to its relevance and use for contemporary organizing and radical politics. Such knowledge from below often includes contested versions of history that challenge dominant or authoritative accounts, and which is often overlooked by dominant treatments of historical social struggles.

Besides radical history, strands of critical social movement scholarship (e.g. Bevington/Dixon 2005, Choudry/Kapoor 2010, Choudry 2015), contending that significant and under-researched conceptual resources and theoretical contributions emerge from people's concrete engagement in social struggles that may challenge scholarly understandings of social change. In his obituary for Black British historian and educationalist Len Garrison (founder of the Black Cultural Archives and the Afro-Caribbean Education Resource Centre in Britain), Mike Phillips's (2003, p. 297) suggested that:

> "[t]he handbills, flyers, posters, programmes for a wide range of events, including political meetings, art exhibitions, concerts, plays, community meetings about education, welfare and politics . . . may be not only the only surviving record of transient organizations, but the only way of understanding whole movements and trends."

Some scholars, such as Anandi Ramamurthy (2013), Andrew Flinn (2018), Aziz Choudry and Salim Vally (2018 and 2020) have discussed the possibilities for community and movement control over the way such hidden histories can be recovered and used as a tool for political education and organizing. Histories are transmitted in many struggles through such informal collections and processes. They are also transmitted through stories, songs, and poems, particularly in contexts where oral transmission of knowledge, values, and visions is more significant than written versions (see below). Many archival initiatives are built on people trying to make sense of relevant ways to preserve their collective histories. Within that work, people learn to think creatively about the meaning and process of building archives, which are relevant to communities and struggles for preservation, dissemination, education, and mobilization purposes.

A significant current that runs through the intellectual work within many movements and which takes multiple forms, relates to efforts to recover useful histories, oral history, forgotten archives and history from below. Popular education resources also make accessible hidden histories of struggle, and tools for understanding the contingent - what might have led up to particular conditions at particular moments. Organizers grapple with how to engage with the democratic significance of activist knowledge through developing popular education

tools, documenting histories of struggles, and informal ways in which political education is passed across generations of activists. Some reflect on pedagogical issues and approaches which seek to draw upon important ideas and debates found within activist archives (organized or not), from oral histories, and from other critical / dialectical engagements with history. In some cases, organizers and activists try to develop context-specific, locally relevant ways to connect historical movement knowledge with contemporary organizing. How, echoing Andrew Flinn (2018), have people attempted to make history of their struggle part of the struggle itself? And, if not, how could they do so?

Time pressures and the need to prioritize different kinds of work mean that movements are rarely able to focus on how best to pass on knowledge about visions of social change, stories of their struggles, and their histories. Yet documenting vanishing histories, excavating and archiving them, is crucial for educative and knowledge production work in today's movements and activist groups. Writing on independent Black British community archives, Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens (2009, p. 8) note that documenting histories, especially marginalized and subordinated ones, can be subversive and political. They write that centres and archives dedicated to this work

> "are not seen as alternatives to struggles but as part of them, a resource for continuing and renewing the fight. Sometimes this has developed into a more definitively historical project but even in these cases the history represented by the archive and created by those who research in the archives is frequently connected to an agenda of education for social change – either as a resource to inform present and future actions, or as a corrective to the absences and misrepresentations of mainstream and dominant accounts."

5 Cultural knowledge production in social movements

Corina Dykstra and Michael Law (1994) assert that "the full life of a social movement – poetry, music, petitions, pickets, and so forth – brings culture and politics together in an inherently educative way" (p. 122). Robin Kelley (2002, p. 10) notes: "In the poetics of struggle and lived experience, in the utterances of ordinary folk, in the cultural products of social movements, in the reflections of activists, we discover the many different cognitive maps of the future, of the world not yet born." Richard Iton (2008, pp. 8-9) argues:

> "The suggestion that art and politics should be divorced . . . depend[s]on a notion of the aesthetic as a realm that by definition should not be implicated with the political. . . . Political communication is not divorced from the same kinds of considerations that determine our responses to artistic work: imagine Malcolm X, for instance, without his comic timing and his sense of humor. There are aesthetic grammars that determine the relative success of political interactions and the impact of political communication in the cultural realm: signs, styles and performances whose qualities transcend the political and artistic realms."

There are many traditions and examples of social movements which have generated and employed cultural forms of political engagement which serve to document people's experiences and struggles, and to educate, organize and mobilize. In doing so, they may contribute to the generation of new knowledge as well as reaching broader publics. Raymond Williams' (1989) 'dissident cultural apparatus" featured publications, bookstores, cultural centres,

workers' choirs, left-wing theatres, union education, sports, language classes and the work of left-wing cultural workers and anti-capitalist organizations. When formal political channels for sharing ideas, analysis, and experiences are not available, and even when they may seem to be, the arts and cultural approaches can provide powerful ways to approach political education work and articulate visions and ideas. For example, reflecting on South African worker education during the struggle against apartheid, Salim Vally, Mphutlane wa Bofelo, and John Treat (2013) concur when they write that informal education efforts included

> "a dizzying range of cultural and mass-media forms, including the writing and production of plays, poetry readings, songs and musical choirs, and dozens of community-based and trade union newsletters. These efforts aimed to provide everything from general literacy and technical work-related skills to running democratic and accountable union structures, organizing, political consciousness and social mobilization" (p. 470).

Large and small, movements and mobilizations across the world have been rich in places where politics, art, and education meet. These forms not only sustain movements but also connect across time and space with other moments, other struggles.

Music and the arts affirm people's sense of the world in ways that are emotional, intellectual, political and educational, offering hope and inspiring action (Choudry 2015, Austin 2018). They can be vehicles for ideas, as well as ways to bring people together and build a sense of solidarity and connection. They not only nourish hope and possibility, but affirm ideas and feelings as well as educate. Palestinian scholar and poet, Rafeef Ziadah (2012) writes that

> "poetry can go places that no leaflet or political slogan can go. It reaches and connects with people at a different level—speaking directly to their emotional being. It stirs anger, pain, hope, and love—the necessary feelings that inspire revolutionary action and help to maintain us as political beings for the long term. Poetry allows for a renarration of Palestine in ways that are not just different to a political speech, but act to fill in the blank spaces that political speech necessarily leaves behind" (p.110).

Montreal-based anarchist artist, musician, writer, and activist Norman Nawrocki (2012) writes, music

> "can help tell community stories uncensored, from a fresh perspective. It encourages people to explore and reinvent the oral tradition and introduce it into their daily routine. It helps broaden discussion and reclaim silenced voices. Moreover, it combats the ever-passive consumerism of our own culture, allowing people to take music back" (p. 106).

Within, and alongside movements, many artists perform, record and transmit (hi)stories of resistance around the world, sometimes at times or about events, periods, or perspectives on which "official histories" are conveniently or deliberately silent. Many movements have had poets, playwrights, performers and musicians in their ranks who have creatively told the stories of struggle, affirmed their experiences, and inspired people to stay strong (Sayeed/Haider 2010, Prasant/Kapoor 2010, Austin 2018). In sum, these art forms can be as much history and knowledge as are more official sources, and can help to document, theorize, and nourish social, political and environmental action.

6 Conclusion and future directions

Further documentation, research and analysis of concrete examples of knowledge production within activist milieus can help to challenge dominant scholarly understandings of historical and contemporary processes and relations arising from social movements and social change. Choudry and Kapoor (2010) suggest that the traditions, trajectories, hopes, visions and dilemmas of past and present struggles are rich resources for extending academic scholarship, as well as offering vital tools for contemporary activism. There are many processes and ways in which knowledge is produced in social movements in diverse contexts and times. By outlining the relationship between learning and knowledge production in social movements, activist research, the development and use of historical knowledge for the purposes of organizing, and the role of cultural forms of knowledge production and dissemination, this paper highlights the significance of knowledge production and its connection to informal and non-formal learning, education, research, and action within social, political, and environmental activist milieus.

References

Allman, Paula (2010): Critical education against global capitalism: Karl Marx and revolutionary critical education. Rotterdam: Sense.

Austin, David (2018): Dread poetry and freedom: Linton Kwesi Johnson and the unfinished revolution. London: Pluto Press.

Austin, David (2013): Fear of a black nation: Race, sex, and security in Sixties Montreal. Toronto: Between the Lines Press.

Bazán Cynthia/Cuellar, Nelson/Gómez, Ileana/Illsley, Cati/López, Adrian/Monterroso, Iliana/Pardo, Joaline/Rocha, Jose Luis/Torres, Pedro/ Bebbington, Anthony (2008): Producing knowledge, generating alternatives? Challenges to research-oriented NGOs in Central America and Mexico. In: Bebbington, Anthony/Hickey, Samuel/Mitlin, Diana (Eds.): Can NGOs make a difference? The challenge of development alternatives. London: Zed Books, pp. 175-195.

Bevington, Douglas/Dixon, Chris. (2005): Movement-relevant theory: Rethinking socialmovement scholarship and activism. In: Social Movement Studies, 4, 3, pp. 185-208.

Carpenter, Sara/Mojab, Shahrzad (Eds.) (2011): Educating from Marx: Race, gender, and learning. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Choudry, Aziz (2015): Learning activism: The intellectual life of contemporary social movements. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Choudry, Aziz/Vally, Salim (2020): The university and social justice: Struggles across the globe. London: Pluto Books.

Choudry, Aziz/Vally, Salim (2018): Reflections on knowledge, learning and social movements: History's schools. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Choudry, Aziz/Kapoor, Dip (Eds.) (2013): NGOization: Complicity, Contradictions and Prospects. London: Zed Books.

Choudry, Aziz/Kapoor, Dip (Eds.) (2010): Learning from the ground up: Global Perspectives on social movements and knowledge production. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

D'Souza, Radha (2009): The prison houses of knowledge: Activist scholarship and revolution in the era of "globalization". In: McGill Journal of Education, 44, 1, pp. 19-38.

Dykstra, Corina/Law, Michael (1994): Popular social movements as educative forces. In: Hyams, Melanie/Armstrong, Joseph/Anderson, Elaine (Eds.): Proceedings of the Annual Adult Education Research Conference (May 20-22, 1994). Knoxville: University of Tennessee, pp. 121-126.

Featherstone, David (2012): Solidarity: Hidden histories and geographies of internationalism. London: Zed Books.

Flinn, Andrew (2018): "Working with the past: Making history of the struggle part of the struggle." In: Choudry, Aziz/Vally, Salim (Eds.): Reflections On knowledge, learning and social movements: History's schools. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp. 21-41.

Flinn, Andrew/Stevens, Mary (2009): 'It is noh mistri, wi mekin histri': Telling our own story: Independent and community archives in the UK, challenging and subverting the mainstream. In: Bastian, Jeannette/Alexander, Ben (Eds.): Community archives: The shaping of memory. London: Facet Publishing, pp. 3-28.

Foley, Griff (1999): Learning in social action: A contribution to understanding informal education. London: Zed Books.

Francisco, Valerie (2016): Migrante, Abante: Building Filipino migrant worker leadership through participatory action research. In: Choudry, Aziz/Hlatshwayo, Mondli (Eds.): Just work? Migrant workers' struggles today. London: Pluto Press, pp. 211-229.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971): Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci. New York: International Publishers.

Hall, Budd (1978): Continuity in adult education and political struggle. In: Convergence: An international journal of adult education, 11, 1, pp. 8-15.

Holst, John (2002): Social movements, civil society and radical adult education. Westport, CT.: Bergin and Garvey.

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Ed.) (2007): The revolution will not be funded: Beyond the non-profit industrial complex. Boston: South End Press.

Iton, Richard (2008): In search of the Black Fantastic: Popular culture in the post-civil rights era. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Johnson, Richard (1979): Really useful knowledge: Radical education and working class culture, 1790–1848. In: Clarke, John/Critcher, Charles/Johnson, Richard (Eds.): Working Class Culture – Studies in History and Theory. London: Hutchinson, pp. 75-102.

Jordan, Steven (2003): Who stole my methodology: Coopting PAR. In: Globalisation, societies and education 1, 2, pp. 185-200.

Kelley, Robin D.G. (2002): Freedom dreams: The Black radical imagination. Boston: Beacon Press.

Lynd, Staughton/Grubacic, Andrej (2008): Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on anarchism, Marxism and radical history. Oakland, CA.: PM Press.

Mathew, Biju (2010): Conversations on the M60: Knowledge production through collective ethnographies. In: Choudry, Aziz/Kapoor, Dip (Eds.): Learning from the ground up: Global Perspectives on social movements and knowledge production. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.157-172.

Narayan, Shweta/Scandrett, Eurig (2014): Science in community environmental struggles: Lessons from community environmental monitors, Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu. In: Community development journal, 49, 4, pp. 557-572.

Nawrocki, Norman (2012): Listen to the music: Work the music, organize the community. In: Choudry, Aziz/Hanley, Jill/Shragge, Eric (Eds.): Organize! Building from the local for global justice. Oakland, CA.: PM Press, pp. 96-110.

Phillips, Mike (2003): Obituary: Lenford (Kwesi) Garrison. 1943-2003. History workshop, 56, 1, pp. 295-297.

Prasant, Kumar/Kapoor, Dip (2010): Learning and knowledge production in Dalit social movements in rural India. In: Choudry, Aziz/Kapoor, Dip (Eds.): Learning from the ground up: Global Perspectives on social movements and knowledge production. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 193-210.

Ramamurthy, Anandi (2013): Black Star: Britain's Asian Youth Movements. London: Pluto Press.

Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit (2010): On the question of expertise. A critical reflection on "civil society" processes. In: Choudry, Aziz/Kapoor, Dip. (Eds.): Learning from the ground up: Global perspectives on social movements and knowledge production. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 53-68.

Sayeed, Azra/Haider, Wali (2010): Anjuman-e-Mazareen Punjab: Ownership or death—The struggle continues. In: Choudry, Aziz/Kapoor, Dip (Eds.): Learning from the ground up: Global Perspectives on social movements and knowledge production. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 211-225.

Scandrett, Eurig. (2012): Social Learning in Environmental Justice Struggles – Political Ecology of Knowledge. In: Hall, Budd. L./Clover Darlene E./Crowther, J./Scandrett, E. (Eds.): Learning and Education for a Better World: The Role of Social Movements (pp.41–55). Rotterdam:Sense.

Scott, Dianne/Barnett, Clive (2009): Something in the air: Civic science and contentious environmental politics in post-apartheid South Africa. In: Geoforum, 40, 3, pp. 373-382.

Sears, Alan (2014): The next new left: A history of the future. Halifax: Fernwood.

Thompson, Edward Palmer (1963): The making of the English working class. London: Victor Gollancz.

Thompson, Jane (1983): Learning liberation: Women's response to men's education. London and Canberra: Croom Helm.

Vally, Salim/Wa Bofelo, Mphutlane/Treat, John (2013): Worker education in South Africa: Lessons and contradictions. In: McGill Journal of Education, 48, 3, pp. 469-490.

Williams, Raymond (1989): Resources of hope: Culture, democracy, socialism. London: Verso.

Ziadah, Rafeef (2012): Art for Palestine: "Renarrating" history and the present. In: Choudry, Aziz/Hanley, Jill/Shragge, Eric (Eds.): Organize! Building from the local for global justice. Oakland, CA.: PM Press, pp. 111-122.