REVIEWS

Monica Sharma:
Radical Transformational Leadership:
Strategic Action for Change Agents
North Atlantic Books, 2017

Reviewed by **Crisol González García**,

Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, USA

In her compassionate work *Radical Transformational Leadership,* Monica Sharma offers fresh insight into the subject of transformational leadership. The author encourages recognition and respect of human dignity and challenges the structures we see as indestructible or indispensable. She adds the word 'radical' to transformational leadership, alluding to its etymological meaning, 'root.' With that, Monica Sharma urges transformational leaders to source their work in universal core values, to which every human has a longing.

Sharma enriches her arguments with practical examples from her experience as a United Nations consultant. She assessed the design and implementation process of many programs that helped to manage the HIV/AIDS epidemic, female genital mutilation, and access to medical services to poor communities.

Although the author offers a radical perspective on the role of a leader, she does not use the word radical as an invitation to take an extremist position or actions. Instead, she explains that the word radical means 'relating to affecting the fundamental nature of something' (p. 2). By adding this word, she encourages two things: first, to lead from the core, the 'root' of our being, an innate sense sourced in universal values of dignity, equity, and compassion. Secondly, through the four parts of the book, she encourages building leaders capable of analyzing complex conflicts and implementing innovative approaches.

The author also guides the reader into new perspectives of leadership work. For example, she highlights the feminine characteristics of transformational leadership, such as by extending an invitation to lead from

a courageous heart instead of being a leader who is centered around logical, rational decision-making processes, which usually relate to masculinity.

Sharma goes further and builds the 'unifying architect' concept, which signifies that leaders have to embody the values that we want to see in the world. Also, the author talks about how leaders should be 'mindful pro-activists.' She says: 'BEING a leader, stewarding change while actively supporting others to lead, is a new pattern emerging worldwide'. With this, Sharma challenges one of the oldest leadership paradigms, the idea that only a few people can become leaders. Instead, she argues every person executes a leadership position, and that it is a leader's responsibility to help develop and nurture leadership skills and respect them as such. Sharma also rejects the belief that leadership can only be trusted to 'professionals and experts in a specific field.' The author advocates for demystifying 'complex' topics such as finances, economy, complex strategy, and process planning. Sharma warns that by failing to do this, we 'close down opportunities for citizens to participate meaningfully' (p.103).

The author highlights the importance of education in the leader's development process. However, according to the author, education must become accessible to the masses, and people should not be motivated to acquire knowledge to get power. Instead, it should be a process of 'learning and applying that knowledge intelligently for the progress of humanity' (p.241).

The author's approaches to transformational planning are based on fractal design. Fractal 'is a pattern that repeats itself' (p. 210) that can be down- or up-scaled into a different context. In the book, Sharma also presents an example of fractal planning; she calls it a 'conscious full-spectrum response (CFSR)' (p. 210). Plans based on the CFSR model are a fractal 'of the whole paradigm shift' (p. 210). The essential components of these are:

> (1) sourcing inner capacities and universal values for action—acting from our oneness; (2) shifting systems and cultural norms, creating new patterns, BEING a principled game changer; and (3) solving problems (p. 211).

Sharma offers examples of projects that, based on this model, were successful in dealing with complex situations. She provides an example of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; in addition to limited treatment and diagnosis, patients also had to deal with the stigma around the disease. Therefore, social stigma and

taboo around the illness were essential to address through the CFSR planning process. It ended up being a strategy that promoted preventive resources and better medical treatment; the plan eventually led to a transformation in the social prejudices and stigma around HIV/AIDS patients.

The CFSR model approach is a new way to analyze the roots of a problem or social situation. Like a fractal, it takes into consideration wider dimensions of the conflict. It is a new approach because common leadership strategies in problem solving usually focus on finding technical solutions to the problem, rather than on the transformation that needs to happen in social structures to stop replicating the problem in broader contexts.

Sharma's book not only encourages self-awareness and change, it also calls readers to action. Action that has a strategy, 'unifying architects, mindful proactivist and radical transformers' (p. 203). However, a limitation of the book is that the given examples narrate processes that were implemented with the support of a power structure with a lot of influence like the UN programs and associates. It could have been helpful to include examples of contexts where government or power systems go against democracy, freedom of speech, and perpetrate violations against human rights and the environment. Also, it could be interesting to know the author's opinions and perspective of a transformational leader's role in contexts that experience violent conflict.

Still, most importantly, this book is highly recommended for scientific researchers, medical professionals, business administrators, social movement leaders, teachers at any level, financial advisors and dialogue facilitators. This book is indispensable reading for every person who cares and wants to get involved in creating a more equitable and just world. This book inspires and encourages changes toward a revolutionary style of leadership and action planning.

Tatiana Bazzichelli (ed.):
Whistleblowing for Change: Exposing Systems of Power and Injustice
Transcript Verlag, 2021

Reviewed by **Brian Martin,** *University of Wollongong, Australia*

Edward Snowden, the National Security Agency contractor who leaked a vast number of documents revealing covert surveillance by the agency, is perhaps the world's most famous whistleblower. He knew exactly what he was doing. He set out to expose and challenge massive abuses of power. He knew he could not do it on his own, and carefully went about recruiting journalists as allies. He revealed his identity a few days after the initial media stories, knowing that he would be tracked down and that being known would better help achieve his aims. He was willing to make an enormous sacrifice, spending his life in prison, but luckily so far has been able to spend it in exile, in Russia.

Snowden is not a typical whistleblower, and not just because his disclosures were so voluminous and sensational. Much more commonly, whistleblowers are ordinary employees who see something wrong at work and report it to their boss or someone else in authority, fully expecting that the problem will be investigated and, if necessary, fixed. A great many do not think of themselves as whistleblowers, at least not at first: they say they were just doing their jobs. So, they are deeply shocked when they become subject to adverse actions: ostracism, petty harassment, punitive transfers, excess work duties or removal from work, disciplinary measures, referral to psychiatrists, demotion, dismissal and blacklisting. Only later may they understand what happened to them and refer to these actions as reprisals.

Many whistleblowers are conscientious employees who are conventional in that they think the system works. That's why they report problems expecting them to be fixed. A more cynical employee would understand what is going on and either tolerate corruption or join in. Whistleblowers, in thinking the system works, are shocked in two ways. The reprisals are deeply distressing. In addition, whistleblowers are pushed to recognise that the world is not the way they thought it was. They learn that the world is

not just: the person who tries to do the right thing is the one singled out for attack.

In this context, Snowden and others like him are at one end of a particular spectrum of whistleblowers and their supporters. The spectrum here is about motivations. Is the goal to fix a local problem in an otherwise satisfactory situation and, associated with this, to ensure that whistleblowers are not penalised for their efforts? This goal underpins a great deal of the writing about whistleblowing, which deals with it at procedural or legal angles, for example by arguing for and about laws to protect whistleblowers from reprisals. Or is the goal to be part of a broader process of social change?

For some commentators, whistleblowers are one of the only hopes in a degenerating political culture. The major political parties are beholden to rich and powerful interest groups, so voting has little prospect of promoting fundamental change. Meanwhile, regulatory bodies have been captured by these same interests, so systemic corruption seems unstoppable. In this context, 'truth-telling' by whistleblowers and others is one of the few avenues to hold the powerful to account.

Tatiana Bazzichelli is a researcher and activist. She helped set up the Disruption Network Lab, based in Berlin, which has staged many events. The first element is 'disruption,' meaning here destabilising the usual way that people see the world by questioning normal assumptions. The second element is 'network': the intention is to build connections across a range of fields, for example art and protest, that would otherwise be unlikely. The third element relates to 'lab': activities are meant to be experimental, to try things out and see what happens, and learn from the process.

As part of the lab's activities, Bazzichelli has put together the book *Whistleblowing for Change.* She says the goal of the anthology 'is to encourage the exploration of critical models of thinking and understanding, and to analyse the wider effects of whistleblowing as an act of dissent on politics, society, and the arts' (18). The book is the most important publication available that presents whistleblowing as a form of activism. Artistic practice, something usually given little attention in writings about whistleblowing, is an important feature of the volume.

Most of the book's chapters are written by whistleblowers, activists or allies; other chapters are interviews by Bazzichelli with whistleblowers and others. The focus is on what might be called high-profile whistleblowing, especially in national security, and features contributions by or about

individuals well-known in whistleblowing circles, including Reality Winner, John Kiriakou, Daniel Hale and Julian Assange. Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning are not directly represented but their leaks provide a recurring reference point, sometimes close up as with Bazzichelli's interviews with Laura Poitras, the filmmaker to whom Snowden made his disclosures.

There are a number of chapters about the relationship between art and whistleblowing. Bazzichelli introduces the concept of 'art as evidence,' in which artistic works are used to convey aspects of whistleblowing in ways different from, or beyond, the usual media forms. She writes:

> Artistic works of evidence and about evidence become therefore not only a challenge to expose facts and wrongdoings that are hidden and not accessible to the general public, but also an opportunity to collectively question the concept of evidence itself, and to reflect on which speculative forms of artistic research and practice might arise from its analysis. (81)

Filmmaker Laura Poitras talks about art as evidence in this way:

> The goal in my art is to make work that is truthful to the facts, but that also has emotional meaning. If you don't feel something, then I have failed. The primary material feeds into how to work with it, and how it can be expressed. (96)

Trevor Paglen, an artist who writes about 'Turnkey tyranny, surveillance and the terror state,' tells Bazzichelli how he conceives art as evidence:

> I don't think about it so much as revealing the invisible; I consider making artwork as being similar to making words. […] building vocabularies that we use to see the world around us and to articulate the things that constitute our societies and our environments. It's not that there's something hidden and we're doing this work to reveal it, it's that we're trying to bring forth the possibility of seeing the world in a different way, or a more precise way. (106)

Whistleblowers come from all walks of life: education, police, military, churches, medicine, private companies, airlines, NGOs, and many others. In *Whistleblowing for Change,* the greatest emphasis is on three areas: government surveillance, military abuses and financial corruption. Some of

the highest-profile whistleblowers are in these areas: think of Daniel Ellsberg and Edward Snowden.

This is a rich and readable collection. It is rich with a diversity of issues and information, told by individuals close to the action. It is readable, for the most part, because most of the chapters are in the form of personal stories rather than esoteric analyses. Yet there is plenty of social analysis implicit or explicit in the stories.

John Kiriakou worked for the CIA and tried to raise the alarm about torture being carried out by the agency. He was charged with revealing classified information and went to prison. Of all those involved in the US torture programme, none went to prison except Kiriakou, the one who tried to expose and stop it.

Joana Moll uses artworks to foster awareness of surveillance. Her preparations can involve considerable investigation. For one work, she collected every electronic record created in just one Amazon purchase and then printed them all out. One component of her work *The hidden life of an Amazon user* is a pile of paper two metres high. Her aim is 'to transcend the story and activate experience by allowing for the arrangement of different pieces of evidence across multidimensional layers' (p. 173).

Two of the whistleblowers say what triggered them to speak out. For Kiriakou, it was hearing George W. Bush say, 'We do not torture.' Kiriakou knew it was a lie. He agreed to be interviewed by a journalist and tell the truth. For Brandon Bryant, it was hearing Barack Obama say that drones were awesome. He decided he could no longer remain silent.

Leaking—anonymous whistleblowing—is usually a far safer way to make disclosures. It reduces the risk of reprisals, puts the attention on the disclosure rather than the whistleblower, and enables the person to remain in the job and continue leaking. Think of 'Deep throat,' the FBI insider who briefed US journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein about Watergate. Most leakers are never exposed. Hence, we seldom get to read the personal stories of successful ones. Instead, though, we can learn from the stories of those who receive leaks, most commonly journalists.

The Paradise Papers are a vast collection of information from the Panamanian firm Mossack Fonseca, revealing tax evasion from around the world, including by many prominent figures. These documents were leaked to the German broadsheet *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Rather than immediately publishing the story, two journalists, Frederik Obermaier and Bastian

Obermayer, decided to involve hundreds of other journalists in researching the papers, a secret and lengthy process that culminated in international news from dozens of outlets, with massive impact. Bazzichelli interviews Obermaier and Obermayer about 'How the rich and the powerful hide their money,' and how they decided to use the leaked documents to have the greatest possible international impact rather than for the greatest personal advantage. Obermaier recommends that whistleblowers first approach journalists anonymously, at least initially.

Daryl Davis is an African American musician and activist. He spends time talking with White supremacists and is so successful in convincing them to change that he has a collection of Ku Klux Klan robes given to him by former members of the White racist organisation. Davis thinks of himself, as the title of his chapter indicates, as 'Another type of whistleblower: exposing the public to overt and covert societal truths.' The first part of his chapter recounts many cases of US police violence against Black people, indicating that the murder of George Floyd by policeman Derek Chauvin was only different in being so well known.

Os Keyes is a whistleblower who reflects on the shortcomings of the usual conception of whistleblowing. Keyes laments the excessive attention on the whistleblower as noble truth-teller, noting that bringing about change requires collective effort. Just speaking out is not enough: there have to be others who listen and are prepared to act.

Anna Myers worked for the British whistleblower support organisation Public Concern at Work (now called Protect) and listened to a great many whistleblower stories. Her chapter is the only one addressing the full diversity of whistleblowing, from all walks of life but with remarkably similar trajectories. This helps to put in context the much higher profile cases, the ones that get into the news and generate support campaigns.

Whistleblowing is risky. This is not news to anyone familiar with the area. Anyone who speaks out in a way felt to be threatening to others can become the target of adverse actions seeking to deter, silence, discredit or destroy them. This is true for low-profile cases, such as teenage employees who question payment shortcomings, as well as high-profile ones like Snowden and Manning. Many of the chapters reveal the lengths to which authorities will go in attacking whistleblowers. Daniel Hale went to prison for exposing killings of civilians in the US drone program. His statement to the court prior to his sentencing concludes with an ironic and revealing

regret: his crime, in the eyes of the prosecutors, was using words, not killing innocent people.

Organisational definitions of whistleblowing typically refer to reporting problems at work to figures in authority. Most contributors to *Whistleblowing for Change* have a much broader conception, and some of them might even exclude organisational whistleblowing:

'Whistleblowing is presented [in *Whistleblowing for Change*] as an act of "disruption", which is able to provoke the unexpected with closed systems.' — Tatiana Bazzichelli (11)

'If we see the act of whistleblowing as a cultural perspective able to provoke change, with the strength to radically construct a different point of view, it is possible to find such a mindset in the activities of many artists, activists, journalists, researchers and people in general.' — Tatiana Bazzichelli (79)

'By contrast [with open source investigation], the act of whistleblowing commonly conveys large quantities of detailed and internally coherent information—documents, communiqués, account statements—into the public domain by the singular and decisive action of an individual (invariably, of course, at great personal risk).' — Robert Trafford (112)

'For the risks I take and the truths I tell by blowing the whistle and exposing the fraud, disguises, and hidden truths behind White supremacy, I am not protected by the law, nor am I compensated.' — Daryl Davis (242)

'I am using whistleblowing in its broadest sense to refer to the practice of exposing injustices, rather than drawing on definitions which situate it squarely as an act performed by workers in corporate or government contexts.' — Charlotte Webb (259)

'But one particular cluster of archetypes and people stands out [among activist techniques]. I'm thinking specifically of the "whistleblower"; the critical thinker and practitioner of critique; the iconoclast (literally: smasher of false idols). Each of these archetypes is distinct, but what

brings them *together* is the idea of a person who tells "dangerous truths", and through doing so, catalyses and generates change in how we see the world—individually and collectively—and how we behave towards it.' — Os Keyes (285)

'We may define whistleblowing as the act of exposing alleged wrongdoing.'—Barrett Brown (345)

Whistleblowing for change is a collective process. As most clearly articulated by contributor Os Keyes, most attention is usually placed on the figure of the whistleblower, seen as a lone heroic individual, while others who are crucial to getting the message out and having an impact remain in the background. Both whistleblowers and audiences are misled by this picture. It is vital to involve others. In many cases, journalists are key players.

Whistleblowing for Change is an impressive contribution to thinking and acting. Through the range of chapters—only some of them mentioned here—readers can gain a sense of a diversity of initiatives involving a range of fields, from art to community-based investigations. It can help in seeing how whistleblowers can be connected to activists, or to be activists. A warning from Barrett Brown is appropriate: 'The easiest part of being a whistleblower is blowing the whistle. The most difficult part of being a whistleblower is ensuring that the results are worthwhile.' (345)

Theresa Züger, in the afterword, characterises *Whistleblowing for Change* as an example of art as evidence. She concludes by saying the book:

Exemplifies the resistance that exists despite all the wrongdoings it describes. Every chapter represents a successful act of uncovering and deepening our understanding of the specific type of resistance that is truth-telling and whistleblowing. It displays a belief in politics and citizens as political subjects that can make a huge difference, even though the struggle never ends. (373)

Whistleblowing for Change is available as a free download at: https://www.disruptionlab.org/book.

Andrew Rigby:
Sowing Seeds for the Future, Exploring the Power of Constructive Nonviolent Action
Irene Publishing, 2022

Reviewed by **Bob Overy,** *Independent Researcher*

Andrew Rigby takes us on a lively roller-coaster ride across continents and decades, giving us glimpses of the different types of constructive unarmed and nonviolent action he has encountered.

As a British academic sociologist with strong activist sympathies, only Andrew could have written this book, because it is based on his unique personal experience: as a researcher, author, traveller and teacher. The tone is light and even personal in places. It is not an autobiography, nor a memoir, but contains elements of both. What he has done is to look across his whole career and draw from it threads which loosely tie his experiences together. The surprise is to find how many of these different strands do stand comparison and help to define a neglected area.

His aim is to tease out what may be thought to be lesser forms of nonviolent action (he calls them 'constructive action' or 'constructive resistance') that have tended to be neglected by theorists of nonviolent action. Sometimes relatively disregarded methods can in fact buttress the actions of the bravest activists and help sustain a struggle over months and even years, giving an important place to the less brave and to everyday actions.

Seeking to define his terms, he says that 'the socio-political context within which action takes place is a crucial determinant of whether an action might be considered a form of resistance or not'. He then proceeds to build his narrative in the context of six different settings: Intentional Living and the Power of Exemplary Action; Gandhian Reconstruction and Resistance; Civil Resistance for Political Change; Resistance in Wartime; Resistance to Organised Crime; and Action in the Sphere of Production. Such a wide range of subject areas enables him to look concisely at what constitutes resistance, and what in many contexts will not warrant that label.

He takes us, for example, from the Israeli occupation of Palestine, to the Gandhian struggles in India, and to Kosova's fight for secession from

Serbia. Then, on a different tack, he moves from the UK utopian tradition of intentional communities and cooperative enterprises, to other attempts to build directly the infrastructure of a good society, including examples of cooperatives from Spain and the USA. Andrew also includes a fascinating examination of Danilo Dolci's work undermining criminality in Sicily and that of Dolci's successors.

Throughout he asks himself, does this example justify inclusion in the panoply of civilian actions short of violence which can challenge and disturb unjust authority? Throughout he is at pains to dignify constructive action as a form of direct action; one which can make its own significant contribution to radical change alongside more obstructive and aggressive forms of nonviolent action.

What I found particularly moving is Andrew's discussion of *sumud*, a Palestinian word translated as 'steadfastness'. The pressures of a never-ending Occupation—unfailingly oppressive, deeply resented, unsuccessfully challenged—breed a shared hopelessness that nevertheless defies defeat and sustains resistance. Andrew links this constructive resistance with the thoughts of Vaclav Havel, the Czech leader, on a life spent living under a totalitarian system. Those who comply with the oppressive status quo without finding ways of expressing their true feelings, are 'living within the lie', says Havel; whereas those who somehow step outside and rediscover their suppressed identity and dignity are attempting to 'live within the truth'.

Andrew comments:

The practice of *sumud* in different walks of life has enabled Palestinians […] to affirm and reproduce a culture and way of life integral to the maintenance of an oppositional identity.

I confess that for me this is perhaps the greatest strength of constructive modes of action and resistance. They can constitute low-risk ways of holding on to valued identities and convictions […] that can be integrated into everyday life and sustained over time.

Another powerful theme concerns constructive action in wartime. A short overview of civilian resistance in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s covers evacuation of Basque refugees during the Spanish civil war and the Kindertransport of Jewish children to the UK and America, together with evacuation work in Vichy France. The discussion then looks at similar

extraordinary humanitarian work in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Poland under conditions of occupation. It then addresses the more recent work of Peace Brigades International, with unarmed third-party civilians in war zones 'accompanying' local activists who may be vulnerable, and the creation and mixed history of peace zones in the Philippines and Colombia.

What is also notable is how Andrew comes at several case studies from different angles. His India case study moves from Gandhian practice and theory, to the post-independence work of Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, on to the Narmada dam *satyagraha*, together with Andrew's personal experience alongside Jaganathan and Krishnamal, particularly in Tamil Nadu with the prawn farm *satyagraha*, then up to date with the villagers' movement, Ekta Parishad.

Similarly, the Dolci fight against the Mafia in the 1950s and 1960s is followed through with the murder of the anti-Mafia legal prosecutors thirty years later, then the Addiopizzo movement's resistance to protection rackets since 2000. His review of workers' collectives begins with workers cooperatives during the Spanish civil war, looks at the Mondragon company in Spain and its influence worldwide, in particular in the United Sates, and continues with the Lucas Aerospace conversion plan and the Scott Bader company's pioneering role in the UK and beyond, together with worker buyouts in Italy.

In his concluding section, Andrew identifies some of the key features that have emerged from his book. Here is one of them: 'Constructive modes of resistance constitute crucial avenues for broadening the participatory base of any movement for change'.

He explains that in the US civil rights movement, it was the community organising of those involved in voter education and registration, that brought people into the movement. Some felt wary of public action such as participating in marches and rallies. Going to literacy classes was a relatively low-risk form of involvement, but it laid the ground work upon which the community mobilisation initiatives of Martin Luther King and his associates depended.

It is the important and often essential role of these low-risk forms of engagement which Andrew's strongly-felt analysis brings forward for our attention.

Tareq Baconia:
Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance
Stanford University Press 2018

Reviewed by **Matthew Hewett**, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

Hamas Contained is a historiographical retelling of the Palestinian liberation group Hamas. The book begins by explaining how and why Hamas became an organization dedicated to Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. In the early 20th century, native Palestinian land was expropriated by Zionists, with the process authorized and protected by foreign powers such as Great Britain and the United States (p.9). The taking of Palestinian land, which was made formally official in 1948, created the state of Israel. This event is called 'Al-Nakba', or the catastrophe, by Palestinians. As time progressed, multiple wars and military conflicts were fought over Palestinian-Israeli borders, resulting in Israel occupying even more of Palestine (p.16). In 1987, the First Intifada broke out in Palestine, and with it arose the resistance group Hamas. Hamas, with its core values from Islam, was different from the dominant secular political organization at the time, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) which is a conglomeration of Palestinian groups such as Fatah (founded by Yasser Arafat). Hamas was founded by Muslim brotherhood member Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and traces its lineage of struggle back to Izz ad-Din al-Qassam. al-Qassam was an early proponent of Islamic jihad against the Zionist occupation, with his campaign and death in 1935 being factors in the 1936 'Great Revolt' (p.8). Hamas' military wing is still named after al-Qassam. In its dedication to resisting the occupation by any means necessary, Hamas has succeeded in spirit while the PLO has turned into a party placating to foreign demands (p.228). Israel has used this split to play the two groups against each other, while isolating Hamas to the Gaza strip and the PLO to the West Bank. Hamas is labeled a terrorist organization, although their primary concern of late has been keeping the resistance alive through political struggle and preventing Gaza from becoming a humanitarian crisis (p.232).

When western eyes look at Hamas and the Palestinian resistance, it is typically from an orientalist framework. This leads to Eurocentric theories

that view Arabs as backward people and Islam as a violent religion in conflict with democracy and peace (Said 1978). These orientalist theories conclude that Hamas and Palestinians hate Israel because of a core defect in their culture, while ignoring the truth that 'it's the occupation stupid' (Pape 2010). Israel is occupying Palestinian land and Hamas was voted into power by the Palestinian people in democratic free elections that were lauded by the world for their fairness and openness (p.92). These results show that Palestinians are aware of the wrongs being done to them by the occupation and want a group in power that will defend aggressively their rights as a people (p.96).

In practice, it seems that any decision by Palestinians is made toothless by a powerful militaristic Israeli force that continues its occupation of disputed territory while routinely engaging in deadly military operations on Palestinian soil (the book details sixteen lethal operations in total). This leaves Hamas effectively pacified, as the three main paths to social change of conventional politics, violence and nonviolence (Martin 2006) have been blocked by an Israeli regime that has shown no long-term solution for Palestine. Violence was the first and main tactic used against the occupiers by Hamas, a strategy that Hamas hailed as successful in driving Israel out of the Gaza strip (p.72). Violence has had serious repercussions for Hamas though, as suicide bombings and daily rocket fire have resulted in Hamas being labeled a terrorist organization by foreign powers such as the US and Israel. This designation gives said powers the credence to refuse to negotiate seriously with Hamas as a political group and carte blanche to use lethal measures to eradicate the group (p.99). Talks of nonviolent resistance by Hamas to meet liberation goals have been met with the same lethal Israeli force (p.230). Hamas is governing Gaza the best it can under extraneous circumstances, but collapse seems imminent unless the Israeli blockade around it is lifted.

Reflecting on *Hamas Contained*, I highly recommend it to anyone trying to learn more about the Israeli-Palestine conflict. It is filled with useful, well-written information to the benefit of experts and newcomers alike. Coming in with little knowledge myself, I was amazed at the complexity and various intricacies that surrounded the situation. Baconi does an incredible job of taking the reader from the conflict's beginnings in the early 20th century up to the present day (2017). He does this with clarity and immense details of events, filling the pages with historical facts, figures and firsthand source interviews with Hamas leaders. Tareq Baconi is open and up-front about being Palestinian and his family coming from Gaza, and I see no clear bias

in his reporting of the facts of the situation. There were a few questions left unanswered in the book, such as what if Hamas did try more non-violent resistant approaches in resolving the occupation, what would that look like and how would that fit into the dynamics of the situation? Baroni does call Hamas's targeting of civilians morally bankrupt (p.227), so how does Hamas gain strategically from a moral high ground? No information is given in the book about the international, Palestinian-led BDS campaign to force Israel to withdraw from Palestine by boycotting Israeli businesses. This could be because Hamas is not involved with the process, although I am interested in what the author and Hamas think about BDS and other global responses to show solidarity towards Palestine and its people.

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Jeremy Brecher:
Common Preservation:
In a time of mutual destruction

PM Press 2021

Reviewed **by Dalilah Shemia-Goeke**,[1] *University of Wollongong, Australia*

While I was putting together some tools for my research to assess the effectiveness of resistance strategies challenging corporations, I came across *Common Preservation*: *In a time of mutual destruction*. It is a complete toolbox covering everything from identifying and analysing to solving societal problems. Not just any problems, but addressing the most pressing issue of our times: climate destruction. The person who compiled these conceptual tools into an actionable heuristic device is Jeremy Brecher, the author of *Strike!* a widely read book that narrates the history of mass strikes in the USA during the early 20th century. Brecher was only 27 when he wrote this debut work in 1972, which has been translated into several languages, and many interesting and inspiring publications have followed ever since.

Although sometimes Brecher is referred to as a labour historian, he has also written about the history of other movements, particularly the climate movement and globalisation from below. With activism and writing, he is committed to contributing to social change, particularly social-ecological transformation. Brecher has put considerable effort into bringing the labour movement and the climate movement closer together, uniting forces to overcome the destructive consequences of the fossil-fuelled economy. In his latest book, in which he shares his mentioned 'toolbox', he brings all this together; his past experiences, insights and reflections from half a century of dedicated engagement in activism and theory in a variety of different areas.

In *Common Preservation,* Brecher tells how he discovered key concepts that helped him make sense of the mess we are in and how to strategise our

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[1] Dalilah Shemia-Goeke focuses in her research on how nonviolent action can be used to curtail corporate power. She has been a labour organiser, peace worker and facilitator of workshops on effective grassroots strategies.

way out. As such, it is an intellectual autobiography, as Brecher is taking stock of everything he has learned during his life about how people can act together more effectively. Yet at its core, this book is about how people can collectively develop abilities to act together in a way that prevents the self-destructive consequences of current human behaviours. It provides tools for analysis, collective coordination, and action to achieve shared goals, such as the protection of the climate. As the title suggests, the overall framing of the book is to explain how people sometimes shift from self-preservation as the 'first law of life', which can lead to situations in which each person fights against everyone else, to 'common preservation', which he defines as actions that allow people 'to cooperate to realize their collective ends' (p. 1).

The book is divided into three parts. In part one, Brecher tells how he came across the various key concepts, why they felt meaningful to him, and which puzzles they helped him solve. Part two discusses the various tools for analysis, shows how they can be used, and what function they fulfil in the broader quest of shifting to common preservation. These analytical and strategic 'instruments' cover the entire process, from problem identification, strategizing, effective collective coordination, to countering domination and disorder, and how to prevent the new forms of cooperation leading to oppressive or chaotic results. In part three they are applied to the collective task of protecting the climate. After outlining the historical development of the climate movement, he suggests a way forward and concludes with an outlook for the future of collective action for shared goals.

It is fascinating how the author manages to bring together and combine thinkers and concepts that at first glance seem to be incompatible or from unrelated areas of scholarship. His central underlying foundation is Jean Piaget's theory of human development, according to which people learn and grow because they want to overcome the unpleasantness of imbalance and return to a balanced state. This process is called equilibration. While likening the development of social movements to the development from childhood to adulthood can be problematic, due to the implicit infantilisation of movements, drawing some cautious parallels may be helpful to understand some of the drivers of transformation of the organisational forms and strategic approaches of movements. Ultimately, the risk of linearity inherent in developmental models is balanced by the systemic thinking of the author.

Then, Brecher borrows from a diverse bouquet of scholars to complement this basic model, as he explores 'the methodology of history,

the dialectics of Karl Marx, the pragmatism of John Dewey […] paradigms of cybernetics and systems theory' (10). Brecher even draws on mathematics to use the concept of heuristic tools, which are conceptual models that help solve a problem. He introduces the notion of heuristic devices to explain the purpose of the thirteen tools he presents and applies; they facilitate understanding and solving the problem of how to shift from self-preservation to common preservation. His conceptualisation of power is of particular importance and relevance to anyone interested in comprehending how collective action can be effective. In his framework, Brecher:

> Drew on historical sociologist Michael Mann's ideas about power as rooted in social networks. From Gandhi and his great interpreter Gene Sharp I learned to view power as rooted in dependence, and see the apparently powerless as potentially powerful because of the mutual dependence that exists within a social system (16).

Brecher elegantly mediates in the often-dichotomous debate between Weberian power-over thinkers and those who agree with Gene Sharp, as he shows how both can be true at the same time. Although this book is a brilliant orchestration of a multitude of highly intellectual components, it is written in a very accessible, non-academic language, with many examples from a variety of social movements, including his own personal experiences as a participant, which makes the discussion very tangible and easily comprehensible.

In the third and last part of the book, the author applies the tools he has assembled with new combinations of existing concepts to the climate movement. He starts by showing how many elements of the current world order, such as nation states and private property rights, contribute to the destruction of the foundations of human life on this planet, and how the movement that tries to protect these is an expression of common preservation. He briefly narrates the history of the attempts to halt climate change from the 20th century to today, by showing the limits of lobbying and making clear that it is necessary to also employ methods of nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience to withdraw support and consent from the elements of the world order that lead to mutual destruction.

To illustrate how it could be done, Brecher then gives the example of the climate justice organisation 350.org. Its name refers to the target threshold of 350 parts of carbon dioxide per million molecules in the atmosphere, which

is scientifically considered a relatively 'safe' level of CO2, while currently we are at almost 420 parts per million. The organisation was co-founded by Bill McKibben, inspired by a reading class about the civil rights movement. 350.org has supported the disruption of fossil fuel projects—such as the Keystone XL pipeline—global days of civil disobedient actions, for example Break Free from Fossil Fuels, as well as the global fossil fuel divestment campaign 'Fossil Free'.

Brecher sees in these attempts a miniature foreshadowing of a much larger and encompassing movement he envisions. He proposes a global nonviolent insurgency defying the authorities that allow the destruction of life on earth. He goes on to delineate a very detailed transition plan, from where we are to an entirely fossil-free society, which reads like a radical utopia of community- and council based direct democracy, social justice and liberation. Like many others before him, he sees in the pressing issue of climate emergency a unique opportunity for general socio-ecological transformation and explains how and why overcoming all other forms of oppression and domination are necessary to overcome the destruction of climate and biodiversity.

While this may have the potential to inspire, it can also overwhelm. If all this is necessary to halt the worst consequences of the climate crisis, then the outlook seems grim. What Brecher proposes is nothing short of a general revolution, which neither feels realistic, in terms of getting all these required constituencies on board, nor is it guaranteed that the disordered state of overthrowing governments all over the world will automatically result in a more egalitarian society. There are many uncertainties and potential missteps in his program. Notwithstanding, he offers such a great variety of suggestions of what could be done at all levels of society and action that his plan provides ample opportunities for everyone to find a place and a role.

This book is highly recommended for activists seeking inspiration for innovative ways to think about strategy, as well as for scholars who look for impulses on how research and academic work can be put in service of movements, while still staying committed to truth-seeking that is rooted in reason and evidence. And it is for both activists and scholars alike who yearn for non-dogmatic ways to learn about social change.