

Nonmovements and Movements: Two Methods Used to Encroach on the Status Quo

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A social nonmovement refers to the “collective actions of noncollective actors; they embody shared practices of large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change, even though these practices are rarely guided by an ideology or recognizable leaderships and organizations” (Bayat 2013: 15). A nonmovement is “behind the scenes” and likely utilizes a strategy of resistance called quiet encroachment.

According to Asef Bayat, a professor at the University of Illinois who is an expert on global and transnational studies, quiet encroachment refers to the “silent, protracted, but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people on the propertied, powerful, or the public, in order to survive and improve their lives” (Bayat 2013: 46).

As more scholars and politicians become aware of nonmovements and give them attention, it is important to explore how and why nonmovements occur. Even if organized social movements are still the norm, nonmovements are gaining popularity because of their advantages. Perhaps they are more effective because an invisible movement may have more lasting impact than one that leans on violence and recognition; perhaps nonmovements are changing the world one step at a time and are beginning to permeate lives across the globe.

While the increasing usage and popularity of nonmovements has sparked interest in academia, one only has to glance at the front page of the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* to see images or headlines relating to both nonmovements and social movements. These publications highlight the Middle East and their widespread social issues regarding identity,

pluralism, and democracy. These tense matters have become more frequently documented in the last decade, especially in the last month. Some examples include ISIS (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) and their loud encroachment via violence or movements of women of the Middle East using quiet encroachment to pursue their feminist goals and challenge the status quo.

Despite these formal definitions, one may still wonder what nonmovements are in the real-world context. How is quiet encroachment used? How do these methods of social advancement differ from social movements and “loud encroachment?” Are nonmovements and the process of quiet encroachment a more effective method in creating a lasting social change? An exploration of nonmovements and quiet encroachment should also contrast these methods of advancement with other displays of resistance: social movements and loud encroachment. Loud encroachment is the purposeful disruption and challenge of the status quo using measures visible to the public eye and to the state. Just as quiet encroachment is utilized in nonmovements, loud encroachment is utilized in social movements.

The differences between social movements through loud encroachment and nonmovements through quiet encroachment are significant to identify, especially if nonmovements are becoming more prevalent and may be more effective at addressing social issues. Even though people around the globe may understand more formalized social movements, it is becoming increasingly important to be aware of other forms of resistance, such as nonmovements and quiet encroachment. If one grasps this developing form of opposition, then he or she can apply the framework to modern situations in order to better comprehend complex situations and responses. If one does not follow a certain chain of events, he or she may ask why a group of people acted a certain way. Instead of remaining confused or drawing an

incorrect conclusion, one could look toward the idea of nonmovements and be better equipped to comprehend reality.

In support of nonmovements and quiet encroachment, I will be drawing upon both feminism in the Middle East amongst Iranian women and the youth in the Middle East. I will also be discussing the collective quiet resistance amongst Sarajevans against the state and the state's demands of identification into three categories (Bosnian – Croat – Serbian) in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. To illustrate social movements and loud encroachment, I will discuss the riots in Tottenham and how they are a great example of an organized social movement using loud tactics. Furthermore, I will be drawing upon present-day examples of ISIS and its collective and public displays of violence that are purposefully loud.

Nonmovements and Quiet Encroachment

Feminism in the Middle East remains at the forefront of examples that demonstrate a nonmovement using quiet encroachment. Muslim women, in many countries have spoken out against abusive practices and built a movement to better their lives. However, Muslim-dominant countries, such as Iran, are mostly authoritarian or patriarchal, which spells doom for women, their rights, and their goals. Iranian women's unique and collective strategies to oppose the state exemplify quiet encroachment. The authoritarian Islamic regime in Iran not only imposed forced veiling, surveillance, and gender segregation; they also took away many laws that favored females (Bayat 2013: 87). Women wanted to continue their resistance but did want the threat of retaliation that might follow a public display of disapproval. Thus, rather than face the hostility of the state, the Iranian women displayed resistance through mundane activities that take place in everyday life, such as working or playing sports. Even though this may seem disorganized and

only have a small percentage chance of resulting in any real change, this collective action by noncollective actors made women public players in society.

Because of this collective quiet encroachment, the Iranian women were able to make a shift in gender dynamics and empowered themselves in other areas of the community, such as in education and divorce (Bayat 2013: 87). Evidently, the nonmovement seemed to be successful from a results perspective. In addition, the use of quiet encroachment had another advantage: a lower level of threat to those opposing the state and the status quo. The collective power of presence in the public through daily practices allowed the women of the Middle East to seem ordinary yet “make the movement virtually irrepressible” and allowed women “to gain ground incrementally without seeming to constitute a threat” (Bayat 2013: 102). The Iranian feminist nonmovement is an excellent example of the use of the quiet encroachment strategy.

Another group in the Middle East that adopts the nonmovement strategy are youth. Most commonly, the term “youth” can be understood to mean an age range, most likely between childhood and adulthood. “The youth” and “youthful movements” refers to the collective challenge to defend and extend the youth habitus (ways of being and carrying oneself) that all deal with “being young” as related to age (Bayat 2013:109).

Youth nonmovements are about “how” they are. While the quiet encroachment of the feminists involved everyday actions in the public eye (whether it was out shopping or at a local bus stop), the quiet encroachment of the youth is less about action and more about behavior. The nucleus of the youth nonmovement is much more about collective “being” and less about collective “doing” (like the feminists) because it is more difficult for the youth to get into the public eye due to their age. Because of this, the youth’s focus turns toward collective presence.

This is displayed through their clothing and ways of speaking, and even through their ways of walking. As Asef Bayat points out, “the power of the Muslim youth in the Middle East lies precisely in the ability of their atomized agents to challenge the political and moral authorities by the persistence of their merely alternative presence,” (Bayat 2013: 111). The youth choose to display this alternative presence in everyday life. The youth’s presence is formed through passive networks that take advantage of the youth’s direct and indirect recognition of each other and each other’s behaviors, such as through one’s clothing style or one’s word choice.

One advantage of the youth’s use of nonmovements and quiet encroachment is the ability to maneuver around formal barricades to change. The youth form nonmovements “where political repression or other factors, such as lack of skill or bureaucratic red tape increase the cost of organized activism,” (Bayat 2013: 111). Rather than protesting in the public eye, the youth rely on quiet tactics and silent recognition, which are less visible to the naked eye, but just as effective at forming a collective presence that resists the status quo. In fact, youthful nonmovements and quiet encroachment can act as a “harbinger of social change and democratic transformation under those doctrinal regimes whose legitimizing ideologies are too narrow to accommodate youthful claims of the Muslim youth,” (Bayat 2013: 111). Youth nonmovements may actually be the catalysts of social change and develop into more quiet encroachment and resistance from those with more public presence. For instance, the Iranian revolution in 1979 began with youthful resistance and spread to more ordinary people; only when this happens can a breakthrough occur (Bayat 2013: 111-112).

The Balkans are another area of nonmovements and quiet encroachment. The country of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which is located just off the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea in

southeastern Europe, is the home to much identity conflict in the wake of the war that took place during the 1990s. In the years after the war, the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina was conducting its regularly scheduled decennial census in 2002. However, such a simple task as counting citizens had a different goal. The state was using the census “as an extraordinary measure aimed at normalizing Bosnia-Herzegovina from an illegible, chaotic population to a peaceful, European tri-nation-state,” (Markowitz 2010: 77). Ten years earlier, which was before the war, the country was filled with citizens who claimed many different and sometimes conflicting identities. However, after the war, the state was using the census to manipulate its citizens into three easily recognizable categories: Bosniac, Croat, or Serbian (B-C-S).

Only six years after the end of the war, the state decreased the census categories from twenty-five to only three. As one may guess, the state’s forced claiming of a different identity did not go completely according to plan. First, some of the citizens did not respond within the three categories so the census-takers had to figure out how to place the citizens within one of the three categories. For example, if a citizen responded that he or she identified as a Czech, then the census-taker had to find a connection to one of the other three categories (Markowitz 2010: 86). In multiple other instances, Yugoslavs resisted the tri-partite division of the census and either refused to articulate an ethnicity or claimed that they were Bosnians (Markowitz 2010: 87). Even though the citizens understood that their lives would be more difficult living outside of the three main identities (harder to find jobs, student loans, and scholarships), they continued to collectively resist the state’s demands (Markowitz 2010: 87).

Despite this pressure to conform to the state’s wishes, the post-war citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina quietly encroached on the common question asked by the census-takers:

“what are you *really*?” They silently acted in collective defense of their identities and questioned why hybridity is not an option. Why is dual citizenship allowed but not dual nationality (Markowitz 2010: 89)? Even though their true identities have been removed from the options on the census and they have faced more difficult lives, many citizens continue their form of quiet encroachment and live in modern Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of the Ostali, or “Others,” a category comprised of Jews, Gypsies, Hungarians, Albanians, Slovenians, or Macedonians (Markowitz 2010: 90). Because of the citizens’ quiet talk and resistance against the B-C-S triad, these other identities have not disappeared. Additionally, the groups maintain a public presence and keep alive their identity without a formal collective threat from the government.

Another form of quiet encroachment from Bosnia-Herzegovina that challenges the status quo is visible during the war in the early 1990s. Before the war, the citizens of the capital city, Sarajevo, would come out into the city’s streets and calmly stroll through the alleys and down the sidewalks every evening. The people considered this act a part of being a citizen of Sarajevo. Pedestrians would converge on the city and not only interact with each other, but also interact with the city. This citywide walk was called a Šetanje and was routinely practiced no matter the circumstances or the weather (Markowitz 2010: 32). During the war in Sarajevo, fear permeated the urban city as modes of transportation were destroyed. The citizens that did not flee were only left with walking as a way to move around. What was once a daily routine in the Šetanje became a political act of defiance (Markowitz 2010: 33). The Sarajevans walked everywhere because they wanted to overpower fear and quietly encroach on those trying to subdue their will. Through their collective actions, the disorganized people of Sarajevo resisted the status quo and asserted their “commitment to an urban way of life based on difference and creativity,” (Markowitz 2010:

33). Again, through a nonmovement's quiet encroachment, citizens were able to resist authority and advance their lives while hiding in the invisible cracks of society.

Social Movements and Loud Encroachment

While a nonmovement strives to remain out of sight with the use of quiet encroachment, social movements are much different. Because social movements are very noticeable and sometimes have an apparent leader who drives the effort, social movements are usually more organized than nonmovements. This organization and desire to be in the public eye pushes the group in support of the movement to utilize loud encroachment, which is the purposeful disruption and challenge of the status quo using measures visible to the public eye and to the state. Unlike nonmovements, the use of loud encroachment encourages the authorities to view their unrest publicly and to address the issues from a more “top down” approach.

The events of Tottenham, England in August of 2011 provide one example of a social movement and the use of loud encroachment . During the span of six days, the youth in Tottenham used riots to form a movement against the state and against authority because the youth felt as if they were being treated unfairly. They were reacting to high university costs and their perceived injustice of the prison system. In order to express their thoughts and strive for justice, the youth decided to form a social movement against the state. Since authority kept pushing down on this “underclass” and offered no solutions, the youth felt like riots were the only vehicle that would empower themselves (Lammy 2011). Cellular technology enabled those with Blackberrys to contact one another and organize the riots unnoticed. Access to Blackberry “messenger” paired with social media provided the youth with a closed network to organize the riots (Baker 45: 2012). With this capability, masses of young adults flocked to the streets to

publicly display their strife. Even British gangs dropped their hatred towards one another and banded together to exhibit their dislike with the government (The Guardian 2012). When the state reacted and sent police officers to quell the gatherings, the youth became violent and turned their anger toward the police because the officers were representatives of the state. Moreover, the youth felt as if loud encroachment and publicly motivated behavior were the only way to grab the state's attention and challenge the status quo. Even though the Tottenham riots did not have an obvious leader, the flat power structure and lack of hierarchy helped the youth unite, quickly grab the state's attention, and challenge the existing state of affairs.

The Middle East is also home to public movements and loud encroachment. Around the world today, a religiously-backed group known as the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS), is on the front pages of media publications because this group believes in using very public terror tactics and methods to express their ideology (Alshoufi 2015).

In response to both the U.S. invasion of Iraq and an identity crisis, the Islamic State (ISIS) has evolved into an organized and hierarchical group that relies on loud encroachment to advance its goals (Alshoufi 2015). While an organized social movement and loud encroachment can be nonviolent, both the Tottenham riots and ISIS turn towards violent modes of behavior against their enemies. The Tottenham youth riots were very violent and “loud;” however, the tactics used by ISIS go much further. Such tactics as beheadings are filmed and shared with the world as a public display of power used to instill fear in others (Alshoufi 2015).

Since the roots of ISIS can be traced back to the Sunni terrorist organization al Qaeda, ISIS and its actions can even be classified as terrorism (Ferran & Momtaz 2015). ISIS’s current use of terrorism and fear has been extremely effective. Politicians in both the United Kingdom

and Germany did not grant permission for ground troops to be sent to ISIS-controlled territory (Alshoufi 2015). While it is difficult to claim that *all* terrorism is a social movement bound together, ISIS is a social movement for two reasons.

First, the Islamic State is highly organized and uses its hierachal structure to carry out collective and planned efforts to advance its goals. Second, the Islamic State explicitly utilizes loud encroachment. Rather than hide in the cracks of society like a nonmovement, ISIS plans extreme acts of violence and terror in order to purposefully disseminate them and gain others' attention. ISIS has engaged in loud encroachment through its acts of locking four men in a car and exploded it with a rocket-propelled grenade, and by killing seven men by chaining them together with explosive necklaces. ISIS records these atrocious acts through pictures and videos and releases them to their enemies and the general public. (Buse & Kuntz 2015).

These violent executions are extremely horrific but serve as the purpose behind ISIS's actions. According to Simon Tisdall's article written this year published on the Guardian about ISIS:

Its willingness to execute them in the most horrifyingly public manner possible has added to its notoriety, and to the fear and respect with which it is held in the areas it occupies in Syria and Iraq. Its use of videos and other media to magnify the drama adds to the horror - and to its negotiating strength. (Tisdall 2015)

ISIS uses this violence and public form of encroachment to gain the attention of authorities and increase its strength when negotiating with others. Evidently, loud encroachment seems to be the opposite of the slower developing and passive resistance style of nonmovements.

A Discussion on Advantages and Disadvantages

As displayed by these examples, social movements take on the risk of visibility and possible retaliation. Those participating in social movements do not benefit from camouflaging themselves between the branches of society. However, in exchange for the possible threats, social movements employing loud encroachment benefit from other advantages. For example, with loud encroachment comes the authority's quick recognition around the world as globalization increasingly connects communities. Additionally, a much smaller group can accomplish loud encroachment's proactive strategy. Both the youths in Tottenham and the Islamic State are groups that did not comprise a large number of people in order for them to be effective. On the other hand, a nonmovement more frequently requires the large-scale participation of citizens and, therefore, is not as effective at creating social change if there is only a small group of society involved.

However, while social movements have their advantages, nonmovements and their extensive participation can also be valuable. For example, those on the margins of society demanding social change in Lebanon have encroached on urban services, such as utilities. The encroachers either tap their neighbors for these services or refuse to pay the state for their own utility costs. The wide-ranging quiet encroachment of the ordinary reduces the threat of conflict to any one group or individual that is defying authority. It is more difficult for authority to persist with the status quo when around forty percent of residents in al-Saloum, a community in Beirut, Lebanon, are quietly encroaching (Bayat 2015). Can a government discipline nearly forty percent of a community?

Despite what seems to be nonmovements' increasing usefulness around the world, is it necessary for a nonmovement to transform into a more formal movement in order to create

lasting change? Asef Bayat argues that nonmovements and, “the urban grassroots are unlikely to become a more effective player in a larger sense unless they become mobilized on a collective basis, and their struggles are linked to broader social movements and civil society organizations,” (Bayat 2015). Majd Alshoufi, a Syrian currently resisting ISIS that I spoke with, agrees with Bayat on this point and suggests that nonmovements are a precursor to more formalized social movements. Nonmovements provide the legitimacy and backing necessary to create an organized and more contentious movement. Without a more formalized organization, nonmovements and quiet encroachment can linger for years and tend to settle. Thus, a clear advantage of social movements is their organization and more formal approach to challenging the status quo, reaching their goals, and causing social change that endures.

Conclusion

Nonmovements, through their use of quiet encroachment, and social movements, through their use of loud encroachment, both have advantages. It is important to understand that the two types of movements address social change in different manners and in different circumstances. In studying the conditions influencing movements around the world, it is useful to understand *why* a certain section of society may choose one movement over another. For instance, the Middle Eastern feminist nonmovement used covert resistance due to threats faced by women in a largely patriarchal society. On the other hand, the youth in London used riot to form a social movement because there was no other alternative avenue available for them to express social unrest and gain the public attention of authority.

In gleaning these insights and applying them to the modern day situation within Syria and Iraq, it becomes easier to understand why groups choose quiet encroachment. In addition to loud

encroachment, ISIS uses quiet encroachment to control the everyday life of others. Through restrictions such as prohibiting daily smoking, ISIS is able to exercise control over people's way of life and the way they behave (Alshoufi 2015). Additionally, those living under ISIS rule employ quiet encroachment due to threat of persecution and the large number of restrictions in place. For example, females resist by showing a little hair or wearing clothes that are a bit too tight, showing that those under ISIS control who cannot speak up sometimes let their daily routines speak for them (Alshoufi 2015). Without understanding these types of resistance, one may simply see Syrian women changing their clothing style or fashion. Without learning about these types of resistance, one may not grasp why ISIS chooses to utilize different tactics. However, an understanding of these resistance frameworks helps one comprehend a complex conflict which he or she may not have understood otherwise.

Nonmovements have been around for quite some time and Majd suggests that they have been prevalent in Syria for decades. When people do not have access to organized social movements and loud encroachment, they turn to nonmovements because authoritarian regimes have trouble subduing an entire society (Alshoufi 2015; Bayat 2013: 313). These two kinds of movements are used in different conditions and therefore it is essential to study both types of movements in order to see the full spectrum of a group's resistance. Since nonmovements can be a sign of legitimate backing for a more organized social movement, analyzing nonmovements allows for a better understanding of the more contentious actions of sustained social movements. In a world where oppression and resistance to authority is prevalent, the understanding of this topic will remain crucial for years to come.

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Acknowledgements

I must acknowledge Lorraine in The Writing Center at the University of Notre Dame for her efforts in helping me improve the language and structure of this paper.

I must thank Majd Alshoufi for sharing his experiences and his first-hand knowledge of the Middle East with me.