

5 Beyond the Strike

The potential for a social movement uprising, particularly long term, often lies in its ability to build solidarity across sectors; across the differences that usually keep various groups in society segmented and focused only on their own most immediate interests. The success of the 2012 strike movement in mobilizing Anglophone as well as Francophone students, for example, has been highlighted as one of the key factors that contributed to both the size and duration of the strike. The movement was further strengthened by its ability to tap into supportive relationships between student groups and professors, as well as members of the community sector, facilitating the call for a social strike by the end of the spring.

While the sense of solidarity framed by a shared class analysis worked across some differences, many activists involved in the Québec Spring also demanded an explicitly anti-colonial, intersectional analysis and organizing approach that took into account gender, race, sexuality, and im/migration status. These calls forced activists to work through tensions between traditional visions of student and working class struggles tied to Québec nationalism, and the desire to build an inclusive movement representative of contemporary Québec society. The authors in this section

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reflect on their experiences of attempting to build such a movement, and of participating in the student strike as people who are members of community groups involved in ongoing, daily struggles for basic needs.

Fanny Jolicoeur describes how she and her colleagues in women's centres found a sense of mutual inspiration and support with the students and the movement. As Fanny points out, the link between the student movement and women's centres were not just driven by the gendered impacts of the tuition hikes (which were highlighted by feminists during the strike), but was also about defending a conception of the welfare state that both student activists and women's centre members saw being eroded.

In their chapter, Rosalind Hampton, Mona Luxion, and Molly Swain reflect on the importance of creating activist spaces that are inclusive of our whole selves as variously marginalized people. They emphasize the ways that direct action can be liberating in its suspension of usual hierarchies of knowledge, benefiting from input and contributions from variously located people with an array of life experiences. The context for this discussion is illustrated by Ilyan Ferrer, Farha Najah Hussain, Edward Ou Jin Lee and Lena Palacios in the following chapter. They underscore the racist, classist, and sexist nature of the proposed tuition hikes and the struggles of struggles of women and racialized, im/migrant, criminalized and queer/trans communities to raise awareness of the ways in which neoliberalism has and continues to impact already marginalized communities hardest, drawing on their experiences of education struggles as well as involvement in the parallel, ongoing and the impact of the federal

refugee law, Bill C-31, which was passed during the height of the student movement and protests against Bill 78 / Law 12.

Finally, Joël Pedneault takes readers through two days of some of the most memorable shows of strength and solidarity of the strike: April 20th and 21st 2012, when the Liberal government sponsored a job fair, the Salon du Plan Nord, to showcase its plans for natural resource exploitation and development in northern Québec. Joël describes the complex network of connections between anti-colonial struggles, anti-capitalism, nationalism, and the student strike that shaped the protests against the Salon du Plan Nord, and that continue to spark internal debate within the student movement and within the left in Québec.