'Living Inside the Movement': The Right2Know Campaign, South Africa

Shauna Mottiar[1] and Tom Lodge[2]

final draft, March 2019.

Abstract

The Right2Know (R2K) campaign was initiated to protect access to information and more broadly, freedom of expression in South Africa. The campaign is structured at national and provincial levels and is a 'democratic activist driven' organisation mobilising activists, supporters and allied organisations. This paper examines R2K in the wider context of the way social movements have developed in South Africa and elsewhere over the last two decades. It considers 'hybridisation' as one of the processes with potential to check cyclical processes in which social movements decline after initial phases of mobilisation. This paper focuses on R2K's experience as a comparatively successful 'hybrid' campaigning body, addresses questions about its organisational character and internal life and its social constitution. It also identifies its achievements and the processes of collective action which have brought about its successes. It further examines the campaign's vulnerabilities and sets its experience within a broader analytical context.

Introduction

The Right2Know (R2K) campaign is a South African advocacy movement initiated in 2010 in response to the Protection of State Information Bill (dubbed the 'Secrecy Bill'). R2K aims to reduce secrecy in the passing of legislation, increase public access to official information and generally protect freedom of expression. The campaign is structured at national and provincial levels and is represented as a 'democratic activist driven' undertaking mobilising its own activists, looser groups supporters and affiliate or allied organisations. Its tactics include mass demonstrations, calling for investigations into corporate corruption, protecting whistle-blowers and initiatives designed to increase state accountability.

This paper considers R2K in the wider context of the way social movements have developed in South Africa and elsewhere over the last two decades (Ballard et al, 2006; Runciman, 2015). In a study focussed on AIDS activism led by the Treatment Action Campaign it was argued that a particular kind of organisational deployment helped check cyclical processes in which social movements decline after initial phases of mobilisation. In South Africa 'hybrid' bodies that assume forms associated with social movements but also of professionalised organisations such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) appear to be especially resilient (Mottiar and Lodge, 2017). Indeed as Steven Robins has noted 'many of the most successful forms of political mobilisation after apartheid have come in the form of …NGO/social movement partnerships' (Robins, 2008, 21). Hybrid movements that combine 'more

---

[1] Shauna Mottiar is based in Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa and currently serves as the Director of the Centre for Civil Society, Mottiar@ukzn.ac.za
[2] Tom Lodge is Professor in the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland, Tom.Lodge@ul.ie

or less formalized kinds of association… within and without the third sector' are hardly confined to Africa, as one recent Polish-based study indicates. Their degree of informality may enable wider alliances as well as prompting more radical demands or claims, moving from moderate reformism to more profound kinds of societal critique as they encounter and attract popular constituencies (Jezierska and Polanska, 2018: 688).

Commentaries on wider African experiences of African protest have suggested that such partnerships have a sociological dimension. Lisa Mueller (2018) has argued that African social movements are commonly led by 'middle class' activist 'generals' who draw a following from poor 'foot-soldiers'. Political grievances identified by the 'generals' explain the timing of the protests but material needs determine their force, and with different motivations inspiring the various groups of 'foot-soldiers', varied groups combine.

Mueller's depiction attributes an exploitative and hierarchical character to such movements but other analysts of the African 2011 protests have observed how they were decisively constituted by 'a new class – the social precariat, young, unemployed… [but] often well educated' as well as bringing together a range of groups. In such heterodox formations and in settings marked by general failures of 'big ideologies' to supply alternate worlds, these movements tend to be pluralist and tolerant (Della Porta, 2015: 4-16). Moreover, they may mobilise through the 'connective action' fostered by information technology, which results in a 'back and forth' form of decision-making, 'quite different from one-way communication from an organisation to its supporters' (Koopman, 2015: 340). However movements are constituted by people with different experiences of political access (Dvyvendale and Jaspen, 2015: 17). Activists may have used institutional channels but many rank and file social movements participants live in local settings in which politicians and officials are inaccessible (Della Porta: 2015: 6). Such differences of experience can prompt tactical divisions, over the use of litigation for example.

In this paper, after describing the national context in which R2K has functioned, we will explore its experience as a comparatively successful 'hybrid' campaigning body. We will address questions about its organisational character and internal life. We will consider its social constitution. We will identify its main achievements and explore the processes of collective action which have brought about its successes. Then we will focus on the campaign's vulnerabilities before, in conclusion, setting its experience within a broader analytical context. Here we will be assessing R2K's significance in the context of South African social movement studies and how findings about its character and experience can inform more general perceptions about the state of South African social movements today. Finally, more broadly, we will consider how insights from the experience of this South African movement organisation may contribute to more general debates about contemporary social movements or contemporary social movement theory. In particular, we will consider the extent to which R2K's experience offers insights about the strengths and vulnerabilities that characterise hybrid protest campaigns that connect formal association with broader less organised circuits of mobilisation.

A Context of Securitisation and Protest

R2K emerged in a national setting characterised by rising levels of popular assertion. The most recent trends are evident from a database compiled from press reports by researchers at the University of Johannesburg Centre for Social Change. These show that community protests reported in the media rose sharply between 2005 and 2012, from 106 reports in 2005 to 471 in 2012 and have continued since then at between 300 and 400. In 2016 there were 377 reports and in 2017, 375.   Media reporting is confined though the Centre's research suggests that the trends and patterns emerging from media reports are in line with the more comprehensive police data, available only until 2013 (Alexander et al, 2018). Focused on inadequate service delivery and dissatisfaction with local governance Peter Alexander argues that protest 'reflects disappointment with the fruits of democracy' and continued into the Jacob Zuma presidency 'with people believing that Jacob Zuma (was) more likely to address their demands' (than his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki) (Alexander, 2010: 37). These high levels of protest have continued despite the decline of an earlier generation of 'new social movements' which had been conspicuous in the early 2000s, highlighting government's failures in meeting basic needs and addressing socioeconomic rights (Ballard et al, 2006: 2). According to Carin Runciman (2015: 974) the demobilisation of earlier social movements such as the Anti Privatisation Forum was linked, in part, to difficulties connecting with new community based struggles and a growing political distance between core and periphery members. But not all of the social movements of the early 2000's have demobilised. The Treatment Action Campaign, for example, remains a strong force for democratising healthcare in South Africa. Today, though, six years after its formation, R2K has replaced the Treatment Action Campaign as the most publically visible agency of social movement activism, as with the TAC, combining a capacity for orchestrated extra-legal street action with expertly-crafted litigation and other kinds of institutional participation.

R2K was established in response to the Protection of State Information Bill. The Bill aimed to regulate the classification, protection and dissemination of state information and was tabled to replace the Protection of State Information Act of 1982 – operational during the apartheid era. The Bill, which has to date not been signed by the President, is subject to significant controversy as it undermines the right to access information and weakens the rights of journalists and whistle-blowers. R2K is synonymous with opposition to the Bill having mobilised some 400 civil society organisations / alliances and gathering 30,000 signatures calling for its review. In October 2010 it held a 'week of action' against the Bill which culminated in a mass protest on parliament where an official memorandum was handed over.

The Bill is being debated in a context where 'South Africa's democratic government…has strengthened the coercive capacities of the state' (Duncan, 2016a: 1). Jane Duncan has argued that the strengthening of the state's repressive apparatus is indicated in the increase of violent responses by police to ordinary citizens and protestors (Duncan, 2014). The 2012 Marikana massacre where police opened fire on striking platinum miners is evidence of this. Duncan's (2016b) research further suggests that municipalities institute unreasonable restrictions on the right to protest. Repression is also indicated in increased political

surveillance and intelligence-led policing. Duncan (2016a) argues that this is evident in the 2003 expansion of the National Intelligence Agency's mandate to include political and economic intelligence and in the power of the South African Police Service Crime Intelligence Division. As is evident from these trends rising securitisation in democratic South Africa has occurred alongside continually high levels of social protest. This paper seeks to understand the R2K Campaign in the light of this context of buoyant social protest as well as intensifying securitisation in South Africa.

Methodological Note

The paper is based on self-selected focus groups held in 2018 in three provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape. In Gauteng the group was constituted by three members of the provincial working group. In KwaZulu-Natal, five people joined the discussion, all members of the provincial working group, a mixture of paid R2K activists and organisers from local communities.   In Cape Town, the group included the R2K's national coordinator. So, the focus group participants were made up of R2K members who sit on provincial and national working groups and participants who hold national leadership positions. R2K members who are both salaried and volunteer members participated in the focus groups. In addition four key leaders supplied insights derived from their own experience and first-hand knowledge in a series of individually conducted interviews, responding to a common set of questions.   In terms of demographics the majority of focus group participants were black South African and the male female ratio 60:40. Key interviewees included representatives of the national and provincial working groups who held expertise in law, secrecy legislation and communication rights. We also attended Provincial Summits and the 2018 National Summit and observations from these structures form part of the findings. R2K has produced a large number of pamphlets, information brochures and manuals which also provided information for this paper together with official campaign documents such as provincial and national reports and resolutions.   In the citations of the focus group discussions and the interviews, the page numbers refer to the transcripts held by the researchers. A limitation of this research is that participants did not include stakeholders outside of R2K.

Organisational Character and Internal Life: 'Walking the Talk'

To what extent is R2K a centrally directed movement or is it more akin to the horizontally structured non-hierarchical 'networks of outrage and hope' that Manuel Castells has characterised collective action enabled by internet communication (Castells, 2012), capable of generating surges in popular occupation of public space but receding as suddenly as they appear?

Certainly, this is a centrally directed campaigning movement with a strong sense of purpose. As spelled out repetitively in its publicity, the R2K campaign has three strategic objectives (R2K, 2016). The first is to 'Stop Secrecy' aiming to ensure security legislation and the conduct of security agencies including the policing of protest (currently at high levels in

South Africa) are both aligned to the Constitution. The second objective, information access, is a focus on making public and private sector information accessible to South Africans. The third objective, communication rights advocates that citizens enjoy a diverse range of public, private and non-profit media and affordable access to internet and telecommunications. These are its 'core' concerns, described as such by activists when we interviewed them. However, the way it interprets these concerns has changed, given its 'ever expanding' network and following, 'shifting to working with and through poor communities to access information for an active and informed citizenry' (Dale McKinley cited in Mnguni, 2015: 71).

As will be evident in later sections of this paper, sometimes the campaign seeks to mobilise people directly around issues in which access to information is the central preoccupation. However, increasingly, R2K operates reactively, supporting and in so doing attempting to shape protests that address issues in which secrecy and related matters are important, but which intersect with other grievances that might be the prime motivation in protest, in localised struggles about public housing provision, for example.   Several of the people we interviewed understood this mode of operation as the organisation's chief source of vitality, that while R2K could provide resources and bring people together 'we don't drive the agenda, communities do' (GP Focus Group, 1).   To ensure that the core activist group can react helpfully to local issues as well as helping it to project its purpose and share its mission, R2K is organised in a way that is intended to facilitate two way communication flows and to inhibit top-down decision making.

This is how R2K organisers understand the way the campaign functions. They seek to 'root the struggle for the right to know in the struggles of communities demanding political, social, economic and environmental justice' (R2K, 2016: 3). Across provinces R2K members describe their campaign as 'activist-led' (GP Focus Group, 1; WC Focus Group, 1). This is evident in the way R2K 'supports communities' and invites them 'into a common space' (GP Focus Group, 1). The Provincial Working Group (PWG) 'space' is the perfect example of this, they told us. Here:

'local struggles form the working group of the programme but identify with R2K pillars. They are represented on the PWG where we sit and have conversations where they put their struggles on the agenda,' (GP Focus Group, 2).

Given the presence within the organisation of these community-based actors, the campaign's organisers feel they are connected and networked into a broader movement in which there is a 'sense of activism and space for continuity'. As members put it: 'we could be part of any struggle – if we wake up with Fees Must Fall, we could be part of that, if we wake up with the Transnet strike – we could be part of that' (KZN Focus Group, 2). Members add that R2K attempts to break the 'NGO / social movement dichotomy' where 'the professional group (NGO) needs the grass roots group (social movement base) for legitimacy and the grass roots group needs the professional group for resources' (WC Focus Group, 4). Evidence of this is the way 'staff line managers are actually activists' (GP Focus Group, 2).

Professedly, the campaign is structured to 'Walk the Talk', to within itself facilitate 'democratic decision making, accountability and participation' (R2K, 2016: 7-11). Its highest

decision making structure is the National Summit which has powers to amend the campaign constitution and adopt policies and resolutions. The Summit also elects the National Working Group (NWG) which serves for the period of one year. R2K is constituted in three provinces: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape (which is also where the national body sits). Briefly, for a year or so, a provincial organisation was set up in the Eastern Cape. Annual Provincial Summits are called by PWGs and are open for attendance by all supporters of the campaign. The Provincial Summit elects delegates who make up the National Summit and identifies areas of priority for the province (including national issues) which are then tabled at the National Summit, deliberated on and may become national level resolutions.

R2K employs a minimum number of staff in the capacities of 'administrator', 'organiser', and 'coordinator' at national and provincial levels. Remaining members of the campaign serve on a voluntary basis and are drawn from various civil society organisations including Community Based Organisations (CBOs), NGOs and community partners, alliances and struggles across South Africa. The campaign also includes support from academics, journalists and individuals who have expertise or specific interests – these members typically sit on the National Focus Groups which are constituted thematically and serve to consider current themes related to the campaign e.g. media freedom and to lobby for their incorporation as campaign directives. Focus Group members are not elected and generally see participation from technical experts and academics as well as community based activists or local alliances should they have an interest in the focus group theme.

Because the campaign is therefore not membership-based it collects no income from membership fees. Instead, R2K relies upon a number of donors. In order of the size of their respective contributions to an annual revenue that in 2017 totalled just over R6,000,000 (US$ 600,000) the main donors are: Bread for the World a German Christian charity, the Norwegian labour movement's Peoples Aid, the Open Society Foundation, the Raith Foundation, the Claude Leon Foundation, and the Heinrich Boll Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the German Green Party (R2K, Annual Financial Statement, year ending 31 December 2017, 14). These are a mix of organisations, South African and foreign, none of them official government aid agencies, and all broadly concerned with what the South African Raith Foundation calls 'systemic injustice'.

These donors are 'supportive', up to a point. They are willing to finance core expenses, that is the budget that supports full time organisers, and they are fairly flexible. They are favourably disposed to R2K methods and often ready to make allowances for 'activist control' of the campaign (WC Focus Group, 4). Even so, donor priorities don't always match the issues that emerge from R2K's local affiliates. For example, in 2018 'the environment [was] about land but the funder want[ed] to do something on patriarchy but communities [were] asking for land workshops while the funder [was] trying to shift the issue' (WC Focus Group, 4). Even so, R2K organisers insist that unlike 'donor driven' NGOs the campaign generally succeeds in persuading donors to fund its agenda: 'We ask questions like – are we turning into a doormat? We do sometimes turn down funding because it censors us. We are debating an offer right now – do we take the money and still find a way to prioritise our own agenda...' (GP Focus Group, 1). So members are clear that R2K relies on 'actions being

directed from below not from funders – if we had to march against an organisation that funds us – we would. We pride ourselves in responding to needs on the ground rather than being accountable to funders' (GP Focus Group, 2). These are brave words. To date, funders remain loyal to R2K. After all, the campaign was initiated during the Zuma administration which was closely associated with the 'rise of the securocrats' (Duncan, 2014) as well as Zuma's own brand of 'authoritarian rural patriarchy' and in this setting 'donors were throwing money at us'. However the Ramaphosa administration does not share this image because the new president enjoys the reputation of a 'sophisticated moderniser' (WC Focus Group, 5).

The R2K campaign envisions itself as a 'free, independent, vibrant, democratic and supporter driven coalition' (R2K, 2016:3). This is evident in members' accounts of an organisation 'with a formal, structured democracy at the core' (WC Focus Group, 5) where membership is elected democratically in an 'open and transparent' manner and 'anyone is free to stand' (GP Focus Group, 1). Leaders are also 'held accountable' and 'recalled' in line with R2K policies (WC Focus Group, 1). But, crucially, at another level R2K is also a 'loose participatory democracy' in which a 'fluid group of activists' help shape provincial Plans of Action that are then tabled at national summits from where campaign resolutions are formulated (WC Focus Group, 1). This fluidity is certainly evident in PWG membership across provinces. The Gauteng and Western Cape PWGs each have in the region of 40 to 45 members who are not elected. This serves to accommodate the diversity of participation from formal organisations, institutions as well as community struggles. In this sense monthly PWG sessions are 'open' and 'take place on different levels' even though not everyone may attend every month nor would certain members attend if their particular interest is not current or topical (GP Focus Group, 3). Of course this 'openness' also results in a 'terrible meeting' because often members 'who do all the talking' are not typically members who carry out the campaign's key work (WC Focus Group, 3). In this sense a 'smaller more active mix' (WC Focus Group, 3) such as in the case of the KwaZulu-Natal PWG (15 elected members) may be more optimal.

In short, R2K as an organisation is quite formal and structured. It is legally registered as an NGO with the normal requirements of having an office, staff and programmes 'so we operate as an NGO'. But 'we are well aware of the limitations of wearing that cap' (GP Focus Group, 2). Because of the way it constitutes it's leadership, depending as it does so heavily on activists from local settings and who are at the same time working in other organisations, it is compelled to function in an open fashion, with its 'back and forth' decision making animated 'from below' by the kinds of popular assertions characterised in wider 'networks of outrage and hope'. Indeed its leaders describe R2K as an organisation that draws its energies from a wider movement. Accordingly, they claim, 'the NGO lives inside the movement, the working class (grass roots) movement controls the professional and financial resources associated with the NGO' (WC Focus Group, 4). On the other hand, formal structures, professional staff and externally sourced funding ensure survival as well as maintenance of its sense of strategic purpose.

Membership: 'Living in the Struggle'

Who are R2K's leaders and its followers; what is the sociology of the movement?   Does it correspond in its formation and deployment to the hierarchy that Mueller has suggested is typical of contemporary African social movement protest?

As noted, R2K does not actively recruit a mass-membership base. Indeed as an organised body it is a small organisation. It's three provincial working committees have respectively 45 members (Gauteng), 40 (KwaZulu-Natal) and 15 (Western Cape). It does not have a local branch structure. In each province Focus Groups and Task Teams are constituted around particular themes or campaigning issues, and these draw people in from outside as well as inside the provincial committees, but their memberships are not fixed. The groups and teams are open to anybody who makes the commitment to attend, and the working committee's meetings are 'open to all supporters who participate in Focus Groups' (WC Focus Group, 1). Hence, R2K's 'core of full time activists' is small, around one hundred or so people belonging to the committees who are supplemented by the looser group of supporters (KZN Focus Group, 3).   There is also an affiliation procedure for partner organisations and a 'data base' of these is under compilation but is as yet unavailable. The organisation employs three full time staff in each province and other committee members receive travel and expenses payments. So it is likely that at most a few hundred people make active commitment to R2K a central concern in their daily life.

What sort of people? Gauteng's case is probably more broadly representative: 'we have academics, journalists, grass roots organisers and members interested in a subject with a particular expertise or politics' (GP Focus Group, 1). Working Committee memberships are predominantly populated by people described as 'working class activists' (WP Focus Group, 6), people 'who bring their local struggles and build their activist profiles within R2K' (Galant, 4), 'community people' (Galant, 1). Elections in KwaZulu-Natal and the more selective procedures used in the other two provinces both ensure this.   The same mix is discernible on the nine person National Working Committee, 'Lawyers, academics and community people' (Galant, 1). This group may be strongly influenced by a small set of activists who have played a leadership role in successive social movement organisations, and who at least in two cases, have political backgrounds that include periods of engagement with the political left. 'We inherited people from the 2000s movement who [had] the knowledge and tactics' (Hunter, 1).

The core membership is predominantly female, though as will become clear later in this paper, at leadership level men are more assertive. Most R2K committee members are black South Africans, including paid organisers. The Focus Groups may bring together 'experts and street people alike' (Hunter, 2) but these sub-structures tend to be 'populated by people who are not very active in their provinces' and technical experts tend to shape their proceedings: 'working class comrades keep quiet and get overwhelmed' and this is 'a source of tension' both in the Focus Groups as well as in the Working Committees' (WC Focus Group, 6). As one of our informants conceded, 'It's difficult for me to be told things by someone who is not living in the struggle' (WC Focus Group, 3).

Paid staff are often experienced grass roots activists, rather than people with technocratic qualifications. This is very apparent in the ways in which they think about their employment. Western Cape members noted contradictions emerging between 'activism' and 'the job'. The debate for them is 'if you're getting paid is it activism?' (WC Focus Group, 4). For some members the 'voluntary' aspect of activism is critical – they argued that R2K work is 'the job' which pays the bills 'because I look at my children and think these kids must eat' and the real 'political, activist work' happens on the weekend because 'I owe R2K eight hours a day' (WC Focus Group, 4). In this sense the concern is that one may be embarking on 'activism' but employing a particular stance that may for example promote the dominant ideas and ideology because 'that's where the money is' (WC Focus Group, 4). For other members however the contradiction is not so stark – being able to 'do activism' as a paid job is an opportunity to be 'grabbed' even though 'I won't ever stop being an activist for a job' (WC Focus Group, 1).

For many R2K participants a consciousness of communal identity reinforces their convictions. For Gauteng members activism is '(experiencing) a feeling of injustice and wanting to do something about it – being part of a collective and fighting a just cause, changing the status quo of how humanity exists – finding a better way' (GP Focus Group, 4). Gauteng members also made the argument that 'activism' for them is informed not just by western conceptions of the term but are rooted in understandings of what moves a person's spirit and a person's soul. Further to this a sense of overcoming the long entrenched oppressions in Africa that have resulted in social malaise (GP Focus Group, 4).

The organisation may be small but it makes claims that suggest it can reach and shape the activism of a much larger constituency; it is possible that informal support from people who are consciously influenced and mobilised by R2K's messages and concerns might be very extensive. The demonstrations against the secrecy legislation mobilised around 10,000 people with many thousands more offering less assertive support and today the organisation can boast a 'huge Twitter base and social media following' and it also uses a lengthy email register (Galant, 3). Its quarterly tabloid is distributed at taxi ranks, shopping malls and local communities door-to-door and supporters can also access an online weekly newsletter (Galant, 2).

But really, R2K's influence is exercised not so much through direct enlistment but rather through constructing alliances: 'we build solidarities rather than create R2K structures' (KZN Focus Group, 5).   Essentially, R2K activists provide support for a range of 'local struggles' which share concerns that intersect with their own organisation's core preoccupations R2K activists help by providing 'educational and campaigning material', assisting with publicity, and, probably most crucially, introducing local activists 'to people within the R2K network that could provide relevant support', including lawyers and journalists. In return, they expect local partners to distribute their own campaigning materials, and in their own campaigning abide by R2K's Code of Conduct (Right2Know, January 2016, 7).   Through this inter-sectional process, given the range of partners with whom R2K engages with, if such

reciprocity is honoured, than R2K's core concerns may well reach a very large and diverse social following.

The organisations that are cited as partners in R2K's quarterly newspaper suggest quite an impressive social reach, including a significant number of local residents' associations, often in locations in which people are threatened with eviction, a range of environmental bodies, both of the NGO/ pressure group kind as well as activist local associations based in working class communities such as the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, a range of student associations, especially around Cape Town, and various groups representing socially particularly marginalised people, the Khayelitsha-based South African Waste Pickers Association, for example.   Urban associations predominate, but R2K also reaches rural communities outside the three heavily urbanised provinces in which it has an organisational presence. For example, its partners include the Limpopo-based Lephalele Unemployment Forum and the Amadibe Crisis Committee, a body opposing mining concessions in 'ancestral lands' along the Wild Coast. If R2K's social reach is successful in popularising its particular strategic ideas than it would indeed be at the helm of a formidable social movement motivated around rights-based concerns.

Achievements and Political Impact: 'Mayithetwe Inyani'

What have been R2K's main achievements and political impact? In particular has the campaign succeeded in entrenching a rights-based political culture amongst its following and through the large associative network to which it is connected?

R2K's initial success in orchestrating protest against the government's proposed information legislation may well have been a decisive consideration in halting the Bill's passage through parliament as well as influencing members of the adhoc committee entrusted with its redrafting to make major alterations, restricting its application and including a public interest override. Even so in its amended form the Bill retained a very loose definition of national security as well as severe penalties   (Duncan, 2018: 115). The law was enacted in 2012 but then sent back to parliament for minor changes by President Zuma in 2013; since then the adhoc parliamentary committee has not reconvened, probably because it demonstrated a degree of independence from the executive. As we were told, 'the Secrecy Bill is essentially dead' (Hunter, 1). It certainly seems quite likely that the scale of the protests supplied to lawmakers 'evidence of public pushback' which persuaded parliamentarians to 'think about their public images (Hunter, 1). Raymond Louw, of the South African National Editors' Forum, a body that claims to have led the original opposition to the Bill, conceded that R2K's role in coordinating 'wide ranging support among civil society organisations' made a qualitative difference (Mnguni, 2014, 86).

Between mid-August and October 27th R2K leaders managed to stitch together a coalition of 400 or so organizations that between them organised a procession of around 10,000 people outside Parliament. Press photographs confirm the scale of the event and its socially heterodox character: a cross section of age, gender and communities carrying placards

ranging from printed posters produced by Cape Town's two main newspapers and more obviously home-made productions bearing the legend 'Mayithetwe Inyani' (Let's know what's right). Participants have been described as 'comprising a range of grass roots organisations…it wasn't just the chattering classes or the professional NGOs…but a much broader coalition which gave it far greater political strength' (Calland, 2013: 6). Mobilisation may have been facilitated by the month-long wave of service delivery protests that affected major townships around Cape Town through September, and an earlier march outside parliament by political party Democratic Alliance supporters may have encouraged white middle class participation in the R2K demonstration. On the day of the Cape Town march the campaigners seemed to elicit a sympathetic response from certain African National Congress (ANC) MP's, one who allowed himself to be quoted, saying 'you cannot sacrifice human rights on the altar of state security' ('Right2Know campaign shows impact', *Mail and Guardian*, 29 October 2010). Veteran ANC leaders also associated themselves with the protest, including Kader Asmal and a former intelligence minister, Ronnie Kasrils.   ANC MPs were ultimately to fall in line and obey whip injunctions to support the Bill, though as noted above the very extensive changes to the version that they eventually voted for may well have reflected their perception of civic pressure.   Two ANC MPs abstained from voting, both critics of the Bill, one of them Ben Turok, a widely respected 'struggle hero' (Hlongwane, 2012). This was the first time ever that any ANC MPs had defied parliamentary whips' injunctions (Klaaren, 2015: 270).   Zuma's reasons for stalling on enacting the law remain a mystery, though Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU's) condemnations both in 2011 and in 2013 may have been important, despite the fact that the trade union confederation was not conspicuous in the initial public protests. The Western Cape Communist Party actually supported the legislation, and characterized its critics as 'foreign sponsored NGO's'. A similar line was taken by the ANC's ally, the South African National Civic Organization, this it said, was 'a liberal debate employed by those who aim to denigrate the task of the state' (SANCO, 2010).   Meanwhile, Jeremy Cronin, writing in the Communist Party's *Umsebenzi*, expressed his anxiety about 'left leaning NGO's and social movements' whom had, he suggested 'been swept up into what is, fundamentally, a conservative anti-majoritarian liberal agenda' (Cronin, 2010: 13). However a public opinion survey conducted in May 2012, drawing upon a sample of 3,565 respondents, showed a 44 share of the sample as critical of the legislation while 13 per cent favoured, with the rest either neutral (29%) or with no opinion (14%) (R2K Campaign Briefing, 10 July 2012).

Since its early triumph in 2010 and related to its 'core work' R2K has produced an impressive number of manuals and information pamphlets including a quarterly newspaper and newsletter. Among these are the Activist Guide to Protest. This manual details the Regulation of Gatherings Act governing protest in South Africa. It also outlines the role and powers of the police during protest and protest arrests and court procedures. The manual further deals with strategies activists can use to protect their rights to protest (R2K, 2015). Other manuals include the Activist Guide to the Regulation of Interception of Communications Information Act (RICA) detailing the state's access to communication and powers of surveillance (R2K, no date) and the Activist Handbook on South Africa's Intelligence Structures, detailing the State Security Agency and its powers as well as South Africans right to privacy (R2K, no date).

R2K has also led in securing South Africans' right to information through the filing of Promotion of Access to Information (PAIA) requests such as the recent request requiring the major South African telecommunication operators to release surveillance statistics (Gilbert, 2017). In 2014, R2K together with Corruption Watch, Section 27, GreenPeace, Open Democracy Advice Centre and Amubhungane commissioned a 'Whistle Blowers' report to consider the challenges faced by whistle blowers and possible programmes for their support (R2K, 2014). R2K has further been instrumental in highlighting the high cost of data and airtime in South Africa. It made presentations (together with protest action) in this regard before the parliamentary committee on telecommunications and spearheads the #DataMustFall campaign which in 2016 logged in the region of 120 million social media interactions in the period of a week (Gilbert, 2016). In these endeavours, R2K operates in much the same fashion as a range of other South African human-rights pressure groups, using litigation, research and lobbying, though reinforcing the public impact of its advocacy with demonstrations and social media messaging by its followers.

Less tangible but discernible is R2K's influence and support of 'grass root' struggles and community-based organisations. This is evidenced firstly in the impressive breadth of its partners, supporters and alliances many of who sit on provincial PWGs. The testimony of active members of PWGs does rather suggest that R2K's concerns gain traction in the struggles and the community based organisations that the campaign aligns itself with. KwaZulu-Natal members (KZN Focus Group) for example note that their introduction to R2K was though the orientation workshops held in their communities which helped them link issues of access to information with their daily struggles. They were then able to take their struggles forward:

'I came to R2K through the orientation. It was 2014 in KwaMashu Section C and R2K came to the library where I used to go, there were about 25 of us there that day. They linked the campaign for accountability and transparency to our local issues which we could relate with e.g. our garbage was never collected so we began to ask questions around the municipal budget.' (KZN Focus Group, 5)

'I came to R2K through the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council where they were doing a presentation and what they said related to our water access issues in Ishowe. R2K exposed me to a lot of things e.g. PAIA.' (KZN Focus Group, 6)

Similarly, from a member of the Western Cape:

'Mandela Park Backyarders is my CBO (and in my community) our challenge is housing. There are more people than houses so people live in their families' back yards. We needed to take this struggle forward – so much land (privately owned) but no houses. The R2K organiser came to talk to us about access to information and things like who owns the land. The organiser also talked about the municipality's budget – so we can be clear about the housing budget, we needed this information and

because of R2K we could challenge the municipality using PAIA for information.' (WS Focus Group, 2)

Activists' recollections about particular protest actions reinforce claims that R2K has been fairly successful in promoting and broadening popular awareness of information-related rights. This is evident in its engagement in various local efforts to resist eviction orders. For example, in Gauteng (GP Focus Group, 3) R2K supplied effective support to the Marievale community. Here people were evicted from an abandoned property they had been squatting in. The eviction took place during the rainy season and R2K worked with Lawyers for Human Rights who succeeded in winning the evictee's case. R2K also worked with local media to draw attention to the Marievale situation. Another affected community was Ivory Park where people had occupied vacant land and been evicted by the municipality. In this case R2K worked with the Wits Law Clinic and focused on the municipality's lack of an eviction order. Again, R2K worked to highlight the plight of informal dwellers and their mis-treatment through media channels. For Gauteng members, R2K seeks to assist local struggles by drawing in expertise from such agencies as Lawyers for Human Rights, providing communities with information such as the process and legality of eviction orders but also highlighting lost or 'hidden' struggles in the mainstream press: 'We support street vendors, people fighting evictions etc. we put them in the public discourse and support them and address their issues' (GP Focus Group, 1).

In KwaZulu-Natal R2K has been active in contesting housing-related battles. In Umlazi for example communities simply took possession of houses that had not been allocated to them even though they believed they were entitled to these allocations. They approached R2K who assisted in the process of accessing information pertaining to municipal housing allocations and linked them with the Legal Resource Centre to represent their case. KwaZulu-Natal members argue that R2K responses in this community nurtured a sense of awakening and self-activism by the affected Umlazi community: 'The community took ownership of their struggle and became activists through this process' (KZN Focus Group, 2). Following this, the community requested that R2K run further workshops for them on aspects of rights to information and the right to protest and to advocate: 'And communities then hear about our workshops and request them so they become active citizens not just citizens – so there is a hunger and thirst to be an activist not just for survival' (KZN Focus Group, 5). Further 'In KwaZulu-Natal we have been so active that we have allowed communities to take ownership of R2K' and R2K 'creates a space for activism -a space free of manipulation by political agendas to allow people to challenge government or the private sector' (KZN Focus Group, 5). The mobilising strategy of 'push and pull' (KZN Focus Group, 2) where R2K approaches communities and local struggles respond with their needs suggests that the campaign maintains close contact with its grass roots base and is also responsive to needs from below. The Umlazi narrative supplies especially compelling evidence of a local success in R2K's efforts to promote 'active citizenship' around rights-based concerns.

Members explained their role in local struggles as 'linking R2K to communities and linking communities to R2K work' (WC Focus Group, 1). This is facilitated in the way communities sit

on PWGs and inform provincial Plans of Action which are then tabled at national level to be considered as national resolutions. Membership on the PWGs follows an 'open door policy' designed to 'make the circle bigger' (WC Focus Group, 1). In this sense there are 'two imaginations' of R2K's relationship with grass roots organisations and community struggles; 'The first is to make R2K relevant to struggles in the community by e.g. helping them understand their protest rights. The second is getting communities to understand issues that don't affect them right now e.g. internet shutdowns which may not be an organic struggle emerging from say Khayelitsha' (WC Focus Group, 2).

This testimony tends to support the contention that campaign successes can be linked to its organisational form. Here the cultural capital that is at the disposal of professional, often well-educated if not 'middle class' activists is combined with the energy, sociability and experience of community-based activism.

Collective Action and Mobilisation: 'Pro-Activism'

Through what kinds of processes does R2K undertake collective action and mobilisation? Is the movement reactive or is it driven to an extent by a sense of strategic purpose?

Interview and focus group testimony suggest a fairly deliberative process of decision-making over whether to engage with particular issues and struggles. Among the resolutions taken at the 2018 National Summit was a commitment to supporting local struggles and to 'enabling activism' (R2K, 2018). This entailed a debate as to whether this would best be undertaken through 'going deep' or 'going broad' (R2K National Summit). Discussions centred on how vital constituencies and organisations are identified, whether their mandates have to fit those of R2K and how resources and capacity should be allocated. The conclusion was that each province be tasked with identifying at least two new grassroots organisations to work with and to 'build solidarity with' (R2K, 2018: 8). In addition, R2K launches its own campaigns with the intention of eliciting localised engagement and support. For example during the 2016 municipal elections it published and popularised as guide to local government transparency and succeeded in persuading 'local organisations' to 'challenge' ward councillor candidates to sign an accountability and transparency pledge. Dishearteningly, signatories included no ANC candidates, only representatives of the smaller parties ('Who signed the pledges?', *Your Right2Know*, August, 2016: 1).

KwaZulu-Natal members argued that they see their work within R2K as 'pro-activism' rather than 'activism'. This is because pro-activism entails being aware of the context and responding before 'things go haywire'. So an activist's work is not focused on 'reacting' but rather ensuring there is no need to react as the situation would have been averted through activism: 'When a Bill ready to be passed – where were you when that Bill was being processed? It's our duty to look at what is coming out (policy and legislation) so for example – keep an eye on council agendas. After all how many (ordinary) people actually attend ward committee meetings?' (KZN Focus Group, 5).

When partners are identified much of the subsequent 'activism' might in local settings take the form of educational work. In 'responding' to grass root needs, a major task is often 'capacitating' communities (GP Focus Group, 3). For KwaZulu-Natal members, this 'capacitating' activity is undertaken through organising and leading workshops: 'We conduct orientation workshops in communities and other organisations. But we are careful to avoid pronouncing and prescribing in communities. We prefer to respond and work with them in line with what they bring to us e.g. service delivery or gender issues but we don't act as if R2K knows everything we help them with what they identify as problems' (KZN Focus Group, 5).

Aside from workshops carried out in communities either identified by the PWG or in response to community / organisation requests, members in KwaZulu-Natal are especially proud of the 'Political Schools' they run usually beginning at 6pm and running through the night until 6am. The Schools aim to allow activists to 'grapple with the big theories' because 'a dynamic struggle needs ideological discussions and the ability to articulate these ideas' (KZN Focus Group, 5). Sessions would include theories on democracy, capitalism, socialism etc. In Gauteng (GP Focus Group, 4) R2K holds monthly 'Political Discussion Forums' which are open for all to attend and focus on topical issues relating to R2K core work around access to information. Recent forums debated the proposed South African nuclear deal and implications for access to information and cost implications. The forums are 'facilitated' by R2K affiliates or members of Focus Groups who hold specialist knowledge on topics under discussion.

The educational work is essential in helping R2K's organisers to distinguish between what R2K activists term disparagingly 'transactional' activism and what they maintain is their own preferred mode of 'transformative' activism. The former is a focus on going through the motions 'to get things done - as long you get the numbers, fill busses with people who don't understand the issue but march anyway...' (GP Focus Group, 4). The latter however is 'challenging at the policy level and influencing at ground level' where 'every knowledge, resource and network is applied to contest structural and systemic causes of social malaise such as corporate power or state lack of transparency' (GP Focus Group. 4). After all, it would be relatively simple to exploit a situation in which struggle groups often approach the campaign, because 'R2K has profile, access, etc.'. But opportunistic inter-sectionalism is not enough, 'you can find connections easily enough, but can you argue them?' (Gallant, 2).

For the last four years, the annual summaries of actions undertaken by R2K in its annual report and in the issues of its newspaper indicate the range of protest activity which the organisation has itself organised. While not embodying a complete data base of all R2K activities these summaries are helpful in indicating the range of its tactical repertoire and possibly its preferred choices of action spaces.

Table: R2K Activities

Action	2015	2016	2017	2018	2016-2018
Pickets	16	5	13	4	35
Demonstrations	9	1	4	0	14
Litigation	2	5	2	3	12

Lobbying	1	4	3	6	14
Totals	28	15	22	13	78

Compiled by authors from *2016 Summit Narrative Report*, and *Your Right2Know*, January 2017, January 2018, and December 2018

Picket sites included parliament and relevant government offices as well as the South African Broadcasting Commission (SABC) and mobile phone companies perceived as complicit in surveillance and improper information usage. Of the fourteen lobbying initiatives, these included seven in parliament, normally to portfolio committees. The litigation category is constituted mainly by court cases as well as complaints to regulators and PAIA requests. These activities do not represent the whole picture of R2K action. In these four years, as is evident from their testimony, R2K activists have been heavily engaged in various kinds of reinforcement of local struggles, supplying advice and training as well as signalling their solidarity by their presence and participation in protests. The Marievale effort to resist evictions and the Amadiba Crisis Committee's opposition to mining on community land receive specific mentions in these summaries. Much of the litigation and lobbying required research-based preparation, and during the four years, R2K published and circulated a succession of handbooks and reports.

The key successes that our interviewees recalled and which are mentioned as such in R2K publicity tended to be court cases or changes that were the effect of parliamentary lobbying. Arguably, the latter may have been supported and made more effective by R2K's ability to mobilise public support, through demonstrations, petitions and even picketing. In determining court victories, though, such actions are superfluous, though from time to time, R2K activists will gather outside a court building, normally in support of activists who are accused of public order offences, as in Rustenberg on 17 January 2017. What the table suggests is that mobilisation-oriented activity is not a constant accompaniment to R2K's operations, and for much of the time, its day to day business is not so different from a conventionally structured NGO. On the other hand, the way it is networked does enable it to rally assertive public support when it needs to and this capacity can be decisive, as in the follow-up to the 2010 demonstration outside parliament. On 17 September 2011, a second 'massive march to parliament' on 17 September, shortly before the revised Secrecy Bill was scheduled for adoption, was followed on September 19th by the ANC caucus's withdrawal of the Bill, supposedly for further public consultation (Right2Know, 2012 Report, 3-5 March, Johannesburg, 2013, 13).

The Campaign's Vulnerabilities: 'A Sprawling Decentralised Octopus'

And what are the R2K's vulnerabilities? For example, what happens when a protest originally conceptualised in the language of constitutionally defined rights is enacted in communal settings in which the civic freedoms and rational laws cannot be taken for granted, in which people must every day negotiate their way between the languages of universal rights and local culture (Robins, 2008: 6). Are there tensions between a discourse of rights that may initially be premised on notions about civil liberties and the concerns about communitarian or collective rights that are the legacy of a historic struggle for

national liberation, as Osaghae has suggested (2008: 194). And has the campaign been successful in resisting 'NGOisation' or the process whereby movements 'professionalise' and 'depoliticise social action' losing contact with their grass roots base while reinforcing the hegemonic status quo (Choudry and Kapoor, 2013).

Within the movement certainly there are tensions over how absolute rights' claims should be and these disagreements may well be a reflection of the movements' extension into social settings in which liberal notions of civil entitlements may be at odds with local codes of conduct or communal entitlements. This tension – conflict would be an exaggerated term – was rather obviously evident in the campaign's responses to the censored isiXhosa film, *Inxebe*, which depicted a love affair between two men during an initiation school.   The film was initially prohibited and then re-classified as pornographic by the Film and Publications Board, a decision that R2K's media committee opposed through mounting a 'silent protest' during the Board's hearings. Within R2K, certain activists questioned the committee's opposition: one suggested that the film reproduced 'false stereotypes about the Xhosa initiation and does a lot to please the white anthropological gaze'. Another R2K activist initially supported the film's banning; she said she 'was angry saying our cultural secrets [were] exposed'. She changed her mind, though, after watching *Inxebe*, then she concluded 'that young men who are yet to undergo initiation should watch this movie' ('*Inxebe* opens up debate on free speech', *Your Right to Know*, April 2018, 1). Apparently the issue remained contentious in several community quarters of the campaign (WC Focus Group, 2).

The question of which rights R2K should be championing can also reflect differences which in South Africa inevitably have a cultural or inter-communal dimension. Land reform has become a contentious issue in the broader arena of South African politics. National leadership takes the view that calls for more rapid redistribution of land should not form part of R2K's 'core work' and that there are other organisations who specialise in land issues such as *Abahlali baseMjondolo*. Western Cape activists, though, believe that land should be included in R2K's core business: 'How can it be that the campaign doesn't support the issue of land when communities are speaking about it so critically now? The campaign is part of the community so how can it ignore this issue at this time?' (WC Focus Group, 1). The NWG position does not however stop the Western Cape PWG from making a formal submission on the land issue (in response to the current call for public input for the amendment of Section 25 of the South African Constitution) which it intends to do. The possibility of this provincial position then becoming a national position is also possible as R2K 'is not in opposition to radical land redistribution' (WC Focus Group, 5). But matters may not be so straight-forward. As a participant explained:

'I am attracted to R2K to make constitutional rights alive for people to grasp. For others it is the activism and being part of the community. For some it's the deepening democracy but I sometimes wonder about this – do we all share the same idea of the notion? We have a low level civil war between the constitutionalists and the revolutionaries – self-styled – in the organisation. The land issue set the cat among the pigeons…. The constitutionalists were saying do we have a position on the land?

Land activists were saying we should take a stand – we stand for social justice sure but we are the right to know campaign not a land activist group' (Galant, 2).

Of course, as it was conceded, 'land is a rights based issue', but 'different people have different views of whose land'. Even within the organisation, commitment to rights claims may be instrumental rather than principled: 'we also have comrades who either haven't read the Constitution maybe because they have that sell-out document narrative'. The argument that South African 1994-1996 constitution settlement was a treacherous compromise with 'white capital' is popular with proponents of land expropriation and evidently has some support among R2K's activists.

If constitutional rights-based advocacy is sometimes under challenge when R2K connects with its working class community bases, it is also the case that contact with the lived experience of poor people can reinforce rights' commitments. This was evident in the activists' testimony about patriarchy. Patriarchy is a key preoccupation for the campaign, not least because it attributes secretive 'securitised' authoritarianism to patriarchal politics. The organisation works hard to ensure that the campaign itself is a safe space for women. For example, at the 2018 National Summit, one of the resolutions tabled was a drive to 'Combat Patriarchy' by formalising provincial focus groups with a convenor in each province to embark on engaging to understand patriarchy and promoting feminism (R2K, 2018). The Western Cape has recently held three initiatives to further the Combatting Patriarchy resolution: an African Feminist Dialogue, a Corner Café and a Reading Circle (WC Focus Group, 3). The initiatives serve to educate, allow spaces for communication and engagement and strengthen women's voices (R2K, 2018). Women predominate in the provincial committees in the Western Cape and in KwaZulu-Natal, though not in Gauteng where we were told most of the working group members were selected by communities, it was not for R2K to dictate their genders.

Our focus group testimony suggests there are pockets in the campaign where dedication to combatting patriarchy is stronger than in others: 'The heavy guns at R2K don't talk about this thing – I've never heard them talk or write about combatting patriarchy– they don't believe in this thing' (KZN Focus Group, 4). KwaZulu-Natal members felt that combatting patriarchy should not be limited to a focus inward (inside R2K) but also outwards: 'If you look at KwaZulu-Natal we work with more rural communities where patriarchy is strong so that's why we are stronger on combatting patriarchy than other provinces. R2K work should be rooted in local struggles e.g. service delivery which affects women most, so how can we talk about local struggles without talking about women?' (KZN Focus Group, 4). Furthermore, feminist efforts under the initiatives require more thought and planning in order to produce genuine results: 'Last year we pushed national to have a workshop in KwaZulu-Natal, but Western Cape brought all the ladies who don't even understand what patriarchy is – what's the point of bringing them in at such a high level?' (KZN Focus Group, 4). In KwaZulu-Natal, then, commitment to addressing patriarchy is reinforced by pressures from the communities into which activists network themselves.

These reported experiences of the ways in which different rights claims are negotiated within and around the campaign rather confirm that so far at least, R2K has resisted any

process of 'NGOisation' in which it might lose social traction and become an 'apolitical' professional body.   To be sure there are also occasions in its internal life when 'we don't see democracy we just see decisions that are taken without consultation' (WC Focus Group, 3). It is true that certain activists feel that 'we are moving into decision-making is becoming centralised – activists have input but the end result is shaped into a particular way, mainly because of the funders and because we are evolving' (KZN Focus Group, 2). In fact, though, according to Western Cape activists, KwaZulu-Natal's provincial committee does pretty much 'whatever it wants' and then 'we… raise concerns later in a comradely way' (WC Focus Group, 2). But in any case, trends towards apolitical professional bureaucratisation are checked by countervailing upward dynamics of strategic decision-making. An example of this is nicely captured in the episode in which the Gauteng provincial leadership decided that the organisation should oppose the new South African identity card system in response to Soweto organisation Voices of Poor Residents. This was quite 'seamlessly' taken up as a national position in 2017 (GP Focus Group, 2). This is likely because although the original campaign focused on opposing the cost related to the new card, it also highlighted issues relating to biometric data and citizens' rights to safeguard their data which are very much in line with R2K's 'core work'.   The risk in this reactive procedure is that the organization can lose both its purposive focus on 'core work' and its identity. In the striking phraseology used by a member of the Western Cape Committee, the campaign is a 'sprawling decentralised octopus of an organisation' (WC Focus Group, 5).

Evidence of this is apparent in the 2017 'Hands off Our Grants' campaign spear-headed by Black Sash which was supported by R2K. While Black Sash focused on socioeconomic concerns and access to the social grant, R2K played a significant role in educating and informing people about the grant system and its weaknesses which resulted in their exploitation by commercial interests. Members argued that although this was an important contribution it did not promote R2K's core aim of educating people about the value of private data and the necessity of privacy and controlling information (implicit in the mis-management of the social grant system). As one of the focus group members explained, 'We made that point in a couple of statements, but I don't think we made the point on the ground – there we were just saying 'hands off our grants, stop stealing from us' (WC Focus Group, 7). Likewise in the university students' 'Fees Must Fall' campaign, R2K played a significant role in promoting the right to protest, in this case allying itself with a student leadership openly contemptuous of constitutional rights.   As a member of our focus groups noted: 'Our weakness is that we are drawn to the topical issue of the day - we can justify the relevance, but then have we advanced the right to know in our engagement?' (WC Focus Group, 7). Responding to community struggles and enabling grass roots activism in this sense may have its drawbacks: 'Some of us are concerned that R2K is about to release a statement on sexual harassment and the next day on land then the next day on housing, water etc. we will become known as the people who are jumping on whatever's in fashion! We don't get known as the people fighting for access to information' (WC Focus Group, 5).

Conclusion

R2K is a small organisation that is widely networked across South Africa's different terrains of protest politics. Through its networks and its connections with local communities and with broader protest movements it has sought to popularise and entrench a set of constitutionally-based rights' claims. Its ability to reach a wider public has from time to time been demonstrable in massive displays of participation in its campaigning. The degree to which its contact with communities has been transformative as opposed to transactional has been uneven, but its own anecdotal experiences suggest that it may be supporting and enriching a process in which local communities are making fresh claims in rights domains. It's aspirations to function as an NGO within a movement help to check its own bureaucratisation though it has to negotiate its path between the language of constitutional rights and the sometimes competing notions of obligation and entitlement that arise from its local historically oppressed constituencies.

As a hybrid protest campaign that connects formal association with broader less organised circuits of mobilisation, R2K has in a South African setting been remarkably durable and resilient, consequences of its ability to draw upon a cadre of highly experienced social movement activists. An effect also of a strong strategic sense of purpose reinforced by appropriate technical expertise, and a result of organisational configuration that combines adroit control with democratic openness. Decision-making is 'back and forth' but is restrained to an extent by leadership's ideas about mission together with leaders' control over resources. Availability of externally derived funding as well as its ability to participate effectively in existing institutional channels differentiate it from the poor peoples' movements that it seeks to embed itself within.

All these features make the R2K campaign stand out from broader African continental experience. This may be an effect of context.   South Africa is a setting in which social inequalities are extraordinarily high and in which the contemporary state has strong and arguably increasingly authoritarian reflexes. But, unusually, courts and even opportunities for public participatory policy making can check executive power. In such settings there is room for organisations that can build bridges between the experience of poor communities in which formal rights remain inaccessible with the more privileged arenas of lobbying and litigation. They can sustain protest while empowering it.   South Africa's experience suggests that hybrid bodies that combine formal structure with wider associations may work best in states that are similarly ambiguous.

References

Alexander, P. 2010. Rebellion of the poor: South Africa's service delivery protests – a preliminary analysis. *Review of African Political Economy*, 37 (123), 25-40.

Alexander, P. Runciman C, Ngwane, T. Moloto, B, Mokgele K, and Van Staden, N. 2018. Frequency and Turmoil: South Africa's Community Protests 2005-2017. *South African Crime Quarterly*, 63. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/sacq/article/view/170036, Accessed 24 January 2019.

Anon. Big brother exposed Activist Handbook – Stories of South Africa's intelligence structures monitoring and harassing activist movements. R2K, undated.

Ballard, R. Habib, A and Valodia, I. (eds). 2006. *Voices of protest: Social movements in post-apartheid South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press: Pietermaritzburg.

Calland, R. 2013. *The Zuma Years: South Africa's changing face of power.* Cape Town: Zebra Press.

Castells, M. 2012. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

Choudry, A and Kapoor, D. 2013. *NGOisation: Complicity, contradictions and prospects*. Zed Books.

Cronin, J. 2010. Liberals: Are they really defending our constitution? *Umsebenzi*, November 2010, 15-15.

Della Porta, D. 2015. *Social Movements in Times of Austerity: Bringing Capitalism Back In*. Polity Press; Cambridge.

Duncan, J. 2014. *The rise of the securocrats: The case of South Africa*. Jacana Press: Pretoria.

Duncan, J. 2016a. Is South Africa reverting to an oppressive state? Inaugural Professorial Lecture, Council Chambers, University of Johannesburg, 13 July 2016.

Duncan, J. 2016b. *Protest nation: The right to protest in South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press: Pietermaritzburg.

Duncan, J. 2018. Criminalising academia: the Protection of State Information Bill and academic freedom. *Communicacio: South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, 44: 1, 107-129.

Dvyvendale, JW and Jaspen, JM. 2015. *Breaking down the state: Protestors engaged*. Amsterdam University Press.

Gilbert, P. 2016. More voices join #DataMustFall parliament debate. *ITWeb: https://www.itweb.co.za/content/KwbrpOqgyoa7DLZn* Accessed 4 June 2017.

Gilbert, P. 2017. Telcos will respond to R2K surveillance stats request. *ITWeb:* https://www.itweb.co.za/content/Wdgp45Ma35vX9l8E Accessed 4 June 2018 Accessed 4 June 2017.

Hlongwane, S, 'ANC vs Turok, Borman: damned if you do, damned if you don't', Daily Maverick, 4 May 2012 http://www.dailymaverick.c.z./article/2012-05-04-anc-vs-turok-borman-damned-if- Accessed 15 February 2019.

Jezierska. K and Polanska DV. 2018. Social Movements seen as radical political actors: the case of the Polish Tenants Movement, *Voluntas*, 29, 683-696.

Klaaren, J. 2015. The South African 'Secrecy Act': Democracy put to the test. *Verfassung und Recht in Ubersee VRU,* 48, 264-283.

Koopman, S. (2015). Social Movements. In Agnew J, Mamadouh, V. Secor, A and Sharp J (eds.). *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Geography*. Blackwell: Oxford. 340-347.

Mguni, IT. 2014. *An overview of the major role players regarding the Protection of State Information Bill: the case of the Right2Know campaign, the South African National Editors Forum and the African National Congress.* MA Dissertation, Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand.

Mottiar, S and Lodge, T. 2017. The Treatment Action Campaign and the South African State, 2009-2016. *Social Dynamics*, 43(1), 103-117.

Mueller, L. 2018. *Political Protest in Contemporary Africa*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

Osaghae, E. Social Movements and rights claims: the case of Action Groups in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. *Voluntas*, 19, 189-210.

Report on whistleblowing. R2K, Amubhungane, Corruption Watch, Greenpeace, Section 27 and ODAC, 2014, Blue Print for Free Speech: http://www.r2k.org.za/whistleblowing-research-report_fd/ Accessed 4 June 2018.

Right2Know 8th National Summit, 9-11 March 2018. R2K, 2018.

Robins, S. 2008. *From revolution to rights in South Africa: Social Movements, NGO's and Popular Politics after Apartheid*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press: Pietermaritzburg.

Runciman, C. 2015. The Decline of the Anti-Privatisation Forum in the midst of South Africa's 'Rebellion of the Poor'. *Current Sociology*, 1-19.

Runciman, C. Alexander, P. Rampedi, M. Moloto, B. Maruping, B. Khumalo, E. Sibanda, S. 2016. Counting police recorded protests: based on South African Police Service data. South African Research Chair in Social Change Report #2. Social Change Research Unit, University of Johannesburg.

SANCO (South African National Civic Organisation), Submission to Parliament Ad Hoc Committee on the Protection of Information Bill.

Stop the Surveillance! Activist Guide to RICA and state surveillance in SA. R2K, undated.

We have the Right2Know: An activist introduction to the Right2Know Campaign. R2K, January 2016.

Your right to protest: Activist Guide. R2K, 2015.