Dear All,

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this article. It is meant as a stand-alone piece but it is also a 'test balloon' for a book project , which seeks to explain the historical rise of various forms of contentious politics – the revolution, the social movement, the independent struggle, and the genocide – by linking their origin to changes in the idea of sovereignty. As a case of 'how and why ideas matter' the article focuses on how the central actors got access to the ideas (what did they read and who did they know/talked to), how they framed their struggle, and how they acted collectively. I would appreciate to hear your thoughts on what type of material I might add to support argument.

As I said, the article is a test balloon, so please take your aim and shoot.

All the best,
Jens

Social Contract Theory and the Historical Origin of the Social Movement

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This article seeks to explain why the social movement had its historical origin in the 1760s. It argues that the rise of the social movement as a political phenomenon was closely linked to a new interpretation of the social contract, which culminated in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'The Social Contract'. Published in 1762, Rousseau's thinking on freedom and popular sovereignty did not only resonate with the Radicalism of John Wilkes and his followers' struggle to promote civil liberties to Englishmen of all classes, it also spurred a transformation of the repertoire of contention by infusing the mobilization in support of the campaign with political meaning, legitimacy, and justification. The article describes the changes in the status of popular contention that occurred within modern social contract theory from Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan (1651) to John Locke's Two Treaties of Government (1680-90) to Jean Jacques Rousseau's The Social Contract and discusses how new ideas of consent, participation, and veto informed the collective actions of the Wilkites as they formed the first mass movement to promote a specific political issue.

The Wilkites and the Social Movement

In the early months of 1768 when silk-weavers, sailors, coal-heavers, watermen, coopers, hatters, glass-grinders, sawyers, tailors, and other members of the lower classes began to mobilize publicly and repeatedly behind John Wilkes' campaign for equal civil liberties to Englishmen of all classes, no one knew exactly how to describe what was taking place. The British mob had mobilized in collective action against political authorities on countless occasions, but a sustained campaign over several months involving demonstrations, strikes, petitions, pamphleteering, public meetings, and other forms of contentious performances in a concerted effort to

promote a specific political issue, was something new, and labelling it, caused some confusion among contemporary politicians and political commentators. Pointing to the violent clashes between supporters of Wilkes and the King's soldiers at St. George Field on May 10, 1768, which left between 6 and 11 protesters dead, a member of parliament retreated into a well-known vocabulary accusing the Wilkites of insurrection and rebellion. The forty thousand protesters had after all shouted insults, made threats, and hurled stones at the soldiers before the fatal shooting.

While the Massacre of St. George Field thus resembled previous patterns of interaction between authorities and ordinary people, which were usually described as rebellion or insurrection, an anonymous letter published in *The North Briton*, a newspaper founded by Wilkes in 1762, denied the allegations. Refuting that Wilkes' supporters were 'guilty of such a horrid crime' the letter goes on to ask, 'is every little tumult of the people, every little riotous assembly, to be branded with the odious and dreadful epithet of rebellion? If it is, I will venture to affirm, that there have been, I do not say one, but twenty different rebellions in England within these four months'. The anonymous commentator then made an attempt to capture what people were actually doing. Call 'the rising of the people a mob, a tumult, a riot – anything but a rebellion: for, with all thy artifice and address, thou wilt never be able to persuade the public, that it is actually a rebellion' (North Briton no.57, July 16, 1768).

The vigorous denial of rebellion was more than wordplay to escape responsibility for the tragic events at St. George Field, for although the public support for Wilkes' campaign was massive and had the potential for rebellion, the Wilkites had been careful to avoid a violent and armed uprising with the intent to overthrow the King or dispose of the parliament. Quite to the contrary, backed by the mobilized crowd Wilkes was continuously challenging authority by appealing to existing laws and seeking influence through existing political institutions. Such a form of political struggle was new and innovative and its current name only entered our vocabulary 80 years later. Wilkes and his supporters were unknowingly laying the ground for a form of contentious politics that today is commonly referred to as the social movement (Tilly, 2004, p.5).

This article argues that the origin of the social movement in the 1760s was influenced by Rousseau's social contract thinking (Redlich and Hirst, 1903, p.64; Roddier, 1950, p.217-220; Bredvold, 1951, p.93; Tilly, 1996, p.41; Cash, 2006, p.166; Dew, 2009, p.249). Although Rousseau never explicitly discussed this type of contentious politics, three elements of his social contract thinking stand out as conducive to the invention of the social movement. First, he suggested that freedom stems from the people's active participation in the formulation and continuing renewal of the laws that constitute and regulate a political community. Second, the social contract should express the general will or common interest of the people, not the vested interests of particular individuals or groups. Third, mismanagement or lack of enforcement of the laws that carry out the general will, renders the contract void. If any one of these three elements is violated or goes unfulfilled, the populace

may legitimately ask for a renegotiation of the contract. Together, these ideas transformed the old notion of political rights, first instituted by the Magna Charta, into the modern doctrine of popular sovereignty whereby the whole body of people including "all ranks of men in the kingdom, from the first peers of the realm down to the meanest peasant" (North Briton no.48, 14 May 1768) were to take part in the political decision-making process. This paved the way for the rise of the social movement as a means for the people to collectively and publicly express their common interest through a repertoire of contention that both acknowledged the rule of law, and the rights of other parties to the social contract.

To be sure, Rousseau was far from the only political philosopher to make an impact on the political activities of the Wilkites (Dew 2009), nor was Rousseau's conceptualization of the general will easily understood; but if we trace the evolution of the most influential strand of political philosophy of the 17th and 18th century, social contract thinking, from Hobbes to Locke and then to Rousseau, it becomes clear why philosophical support for the social movement as a particular way for ordinary people to engage in politics only emerged after 1762. Prior to the publication of *The Social Contract*, there was no political theory to make sense of or legitimize this form of political participation. Neither Hobbes nor Locke provided any justification for ordinary people's collective mobilization in order to influence lawmaking. Hobbes' philosophy proscribed all forms of protest directed against the sovereign (Hobbes, 1998, p.119) and Locke reserved only a tiny space for popular resistance in response to persistent violation and abuse of the law by the Crown (Locke, 1978, p.192). In Rousseau's social contract thinking, the people's role in politics was no longer limited by the political rights extended by the King and parliament; instead, sovereignty itself resided with the people and they - that is the people - had to approve of the law because only the general will of the people, which is expressed through the law, can bind the will of the individual members of the society (Rousseau, 1973, pp.174-175).

Not only is there 'conclusive evidence that the adherents of Wilkes were so enthusiastic over the Contract Social because they could find in it theoretical support for this particular political battle' (Bredvold, 1951, p.93), there is also substantial empirical material to suggest the repertoire of contention that the Wilkites engaged in was made meaningful and politically legitimate through the lens of Rousseau's philosophy. Before examining this 'conclusive evidence', the next section discusses how grounding the explanation of the historical origin of the social movement in political philosophy adds to our understanding of both the causal dynamics that gave rise to this particular form of public politics, and the meaning of the phenomenon in political terms.

The Genealogy of the Social Movement
There is general consensus about situating the historical origin of the social movement in the 18th century (Tarrow, 1998, p.43; Tilly, 2004, p.3). No one has yet come forward to identify the exact date when this political phenomenon first occurred but Charles Tilly has suggested that somewhere 'between the 1760s and

the 1830s, a distinctive new form of popular politics came into being on both sides of the North Atlantic, [which] became a vehicle for a wide variety of claims, and brought the term "social movement" into widespread use' (Tilly, 2008, p.118-119). In tracing the genealogy of this new form of popular politics, Tilly pointed to a series of alterations in the way that ordinary people expressed their dissatisfaction with, and made claims on, political authorities that gradually emerged from the 1760s onwards. The shift took place as the old repertoire of contention involving rough music, festivals, field invasions, grain seizure, charivari, pulling down houses, and forced illumination was transformed and replaced by new forms of collective action relying on the protest march, demonstrations, and public meetings. Whereas the older repertoire had been parochial and particular in the sense that contention most often addressed the specific issues and interests of a community, and 'varied greatly from group to group, issue to issue, locality to locality', the new repertoire was, in contrast, cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous (Tilly, 1995, p.45). Cosmopolitan because it addressed issues that were of interest to many localities and often targeted political institutions with power and authority stretching across many communities; modular because the repertoire could be applied in various settings and political contexts; and autonomous because it could be activated on the claimants' own initiative without the support from local power-holders (Ibid, p.46).

The new forms of protest were put into practice to great effect in a number of contentious confrontations in the United States and England in the 1760s and with the rise of the Boston Tea Party and the Wilkites' struggle for civil liberties they began to crystallize into a new form of popular politics characterized by '1) a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities… 2) employment of combinations from among the following forms of political actions: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, publics meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering…; and 3) participants' concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies' (Tilly, 2004, pp.3-4). Although Tilly hesitated to describe the Wilkites and the Boston Tea Party as social movements in their own right he went as far as to acknowledge that, 'their innovations moved popular public politics towards social movement forms' (Tilly, 2008, p.129).

The academic literature has put forward a number of explanations as to why the social movement came into being during the period 1760-1830; among the most prominent factors were wars (and especially the end of the Seven Years War), parliamentarization and state centralization, capitalization and proletarianization, industrialization, urbanization, and revolution in print technology (Tilly, 1995; Rudé, 1962; Tarrow, 1998). Some of these were directly causally linked to the rise of the social movement by enabling the coordinated mobilization of a large number of people in the new repertoire of contention, whereas other factors coalesced into more complex socio-political processes that sum up most of Western Europe's early, modern history. While these processes locate the origin of the social movement somewhere between the 17th and 19th century, the literature has been less clear on

why the 1760s became the decade when these large-scale historical processes accumulated enough critical mass to give rise to the first campaigns, which could reasonably be said to carry the embryos of what would eventually develop into full-scale movements. The question of exact origin becomes, of course, to some extent less relevant when emphasis is put on the incremental emergence of the social movement over a period of 70 years as such a lengthy time-span blurs the distinction between the many preludes to the social movement like the Wilkites and the Boston Tea party and the actual complete formation of the phenomenon itself. However, if we are interested in why the preludes began to take form in the 1760s as opposed to, say, the 1740s, inserting political philosophy as an explanatory factor into the genealogy of the social movement complement our current understanding of the dynamics of its origin in at least two ways.

Bringing in political philosophy provides an explanation capable of determining the timing of the origin with much greater accuracy. Several influential works on political philosophy were published in the years immediately prior to the rise of the Wilkites, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762). We know that Wilkes was a voracious reader who collected 'famous (and infamous) books' (Deane, 1973, p.85). During his studies in Leiden 1744-46, his father provided him with as much money as he pleased, so, Wilkes confessed, 'I had three or four whores and got drunk every night. I woke up with a sore head in the morning, and then I read' (Cash, 2006, p.13). By 1764, when he had to auction off his library to cover debt, it consisted of more than 1700 books; among them we find *Oeuvres de Rousseau, 4 vol.* as well as works by Montesquieu, Voltaire, Helvétius, Hobbes, Hume, Locke, and Adam Smith (Baker, 1764). A catalogue for an auction in 1802 revealed that Wilkes had the complete works of Rousseau on his bookshelves (Deane, 1973).

In Leiden, Wilkes also met and developed a close friendship with Paul Heinrich Dietrich, later known as the Enlightenment philosopher Baron d'Holbach. Both men were fascinated by the political and philosophical ideas of their time and they often walked along the Rhine in deep discussions, 'sometimes talking until morning' (Cash, 2006, p.15). Even though Wilkes never became 'anything like the creative philosopher d'Holbach… he [ ] put into practice those Enlightenment ideals the philosophers talked about but never suffered for. They called him Gracchus, after two brothers of classical Rome who had united the plebs and equities against the senate' (Ibid, p.166). After Wilkes won the seat in the House of Commons for the county of Middlesex in 1768, Diderot, who had also been a close friend of Rousseau before Rousseau's break with the Encyclopaedists (Damrosch, 2007, p.207), was among the first to congratulate him with the words, 'I received, with the greatest pleasure, the news of your election… How pleasing it is to reign in the hearts of men! You reign in those of your fellow-citizens; you deserve to reign in them; you have supported their rights; and genuine son of freedom, as they are, they have crowned with applause, the champion of their liberties' (Almon, 1803, pp.243-244).

Bringing in political philosophy also offers an insight into why people found the new repertoire of contention meaningful to engage in. The social movement arose as an

instrument to express people's shared beliefs and common interests in a changing political arena, but it was in itself an expression of a shared understanding of how ordinary people were to participate in politics. In the same way that framing processes attempt to render social movement activism meaningful to a wider audience (Benford and Snow, 2000), the social movement, as a political phenomenon, had to have been made meaningful before people began to engage in this form of politics. In the same way that the crusades and the processions of medieval flagellants of the 13th century found legitimacy and meaningfulness in the religious beliefs at the time, the social movement as a distinct form of political struggle that set itself apart from these medieval forms of claim-making, but also from struggles such as the riot, the revolution, and the peasant rebellion, had to resonate with people's concept of legitimate, meaningful, and justifiable political action in the second half of the 18th century. Humans are after all rational beings – even members of the lower classes - who reflect upon, interpret, and justify their actions and usually refrain from acting in ways that are meaningless, especially if such actions potentially come at high costs as was the case for the Wilkites.

When ordinary people gathered in large crowds carrying banners and shouting slogans such as 'Wilkes and Liberty', 'Wilkes, Liberty, and No.45' or 'Wilkes, Liberty and Coal Heavers Forever' as they walked through the streets of London, the meaning and justification of this behaviour drew from a frame of reference or an interpretation of a narrative of how people could and should participate in politics. Even when protests and the making of claims failed to bring about the intended outcome the way that claims were delivered was deemed rational and justifiable perhaps even heroic, although not necessarily always legal, by protesters. The interpretation of what was meaningful and justifiable collective behaviour obviously reflected previous experiences of interaction with political authorities, the law that regulated such interaction, and protesters perception of the legitimacy of authorities, but since the social movement was a new form of popular politics and because it signified a break with the older repertoire of contention, the interpretation must have drawn from political principles that were new too.

In political terms, the most important innovation of the social movement as a form of contention was the use of popular collective actions to negotiate political change with power holders on behalf of the people. Up until the Wilkites, contention aimed at challenging the authority of the Crown had usually carried an inherent threat of a violent uprising if demands went unmet; with the rise of the social movement protesters began to make a deliberate effort to avoid violence because the strength of their claim-making rested with the idea of popular sovereignty not in their potential for exercising violence. When Wilkes, on rare occasions, gave a speech to the people 'he always accompanied his words with a plea to hold down their violence' and whenever he could, he did 'his best to hold down election riots' (Cash, 2006, p.220). The ability to demonstrate strength through violence did not translate into a right to influence the policy making process. The only legitimate foundation for governance was the will of the people. Reform rather than revolution was to become the hallmark of the social movement.

The underlying political ideas and principles which shaped the emergence of these new forms of political action can be traced to the most influential strand of political philosophy in the late 17th and 18th century, social contract thinking. To explore how the rise of the social movement was linked to the ideas of the people and of popular sovereignty, the next section describes how the notions of consent, participation, and veto evolved within the writings of the three most influential social contract thinkers: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Consent, Participation, and the Right to Veto
Modern social contract thinking - first associated with Hobbes and later with Locke and Rousseau - is based on the notion that all humans (or more precisely all men) are born free and equal. From this starting point, three principles for the exercise of legitimate political authority are derived: that of consent, that of participation, and the right to veto. If all men are to be free and equal in a political community they must, at a minimum, give their consent to the laws that govern the community because freedom implies that there can be 'no obligation on any man which ariseth not from some act of his own' (Hobbes, 1998, p.144). By voluntarily consenting to the law and by submitting to the authority that upholds the law, contractors preserve their freedom and enable 'the end of the institution of sovereignty; namely, the peace of the subjects within themselves, and their defence against a common enemy' (Ibid). On the other hand, if they cannot give their consent to existing laws they must have the right to veto the contract because without the right to veto the withdrawal of consent is meaningless as it is without consequences. Finally, in order to secure consent, contractors should participate in the formulation of the contract so as to create a contract that reflects their norms, values, and preferences. This is the core of legitimate authority in modern social contract thinking in its barest skeleton outline. Freedom and equality become inseparable from and indispensable for consent, participation, and veto because 'without freedom there cannot be government by consent; and it is the freedom to participate in the process of government, and to protest against, dissent from, and oppose the decisions that are made in my name, that confer on me the dignity of citizenship' (Scruton, 2002, p.7). How parties to the contract are to participate, express their dissent, and undertake their veto power has occupied political philosophers since *Leviathan* and the answer became a driving force in the rise of the social movement as a political phenomenon.

For Hobbes the social contract was an instrument to lift humans out of a state of nature and into a political community where the perpetual warlike conditions of the former would give way to the pursuit of a common good in the latter. The pre-political situation of the state of nature was transcended once a group of people agreed to establish a social contract to regulate the interaction between members of the group and empowered an authority to uphold the rules and regulations specified in the contract. Through the contract people would 'forswear unilateral action in the defence of one's rights provided all others forswear such action as well' (Shapiro, 2003, p.114) and instead of pursuing rights individually, contractors would authorize a sovereign body to protect the rights of every individual member

of the political community. The contract, uniting a community under one political authority, was thus exclusively a contract between the individual members of the community undertaken for the sake of self-interest, leaving the Leviathan purely as the contract's enforcer. After the initial consent had been given to this arrangement all parties to the contract were to comply with the decisions of the sovereign.

As the sovereign stood outside the contract he was also above the law (Lessnoff, 1986, p.54). This led to the logical conclusion that the people are prohibited from mobilizing against the sovereign 'because he that protestth there [in the sovereign assembly], denies their sovereignty' (Ibid, p.152). If a person within a community could not conform to the rule laid down in the social contract he had to return to the state of nature where 'he might without injustice be destroyed by any man whatsoever' (Ibid, p. 117). Of course there were circumstances under which subjects were entitled to protest but they were few. Disobedience was only justifiable 'if the sovereign command a man…. to kill, wound, or maim himself; or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, air, medicine, or any other thing, without which he cannot live' (Ibid, p. 144). The protection of life, limbs, and conscience were absolute entitlements, which the sovereignty could not lay a claim on, as no one would have entered the contract in the first place if it came with an obligation to commit suicide, starvation, or self-mutilation. Still, the right to disobey authority was limited to the absolute entitlements; it certainly did not translate into a right to collective defiance.

The single most important objective of the social contract was to create the social order that was lacking in the state of nature and social order was, to Hobbes, incompatible with any form of claim-making involving collective action. Once agreed upon, the contract was nonnegotiable, regulated by law, and biased towards status quo. To borrow from Albert Hirshmann's terminology, the only form of veto available in Hobbes' social contract thinking was exit. People were not allowed to voice dissent especially not collectively.

Later, social contract thinkers found it difficult to reconcile with the idea that the sovereign body upholding the contract was not party to it; hence, they were above the law and shielded from the voice of the people. Some have had moral squabbles over Absolutism while others have had more practical reasons for opposing Hobbes' view on popular contention. John Locke belonged to the latter category. Whereas Hobbes had developed his social contract against a background of religious wars and revolutionary uprisings – the Thirty Years War, the Scottish Revolution in 1640, the Irish Revolution in 1641, the Fronde in France (1648-52), and the climax of the English civil war in 1648-49 - the most pressing political problem for Locke was to come up with an argument in support of the Whigs' attempt to block King Charles II's younger brother, James, from acceding the thrown after Charles' death. James was a Catholic and there was widespread fear among members of Parliament that once in power, James would overturn Protestantism and restore Catholicism (Rawls, 2007, pp.105-106). In *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke made a forceful case for the disposal of James if worse came to worst, and although James was never

mentioned, it was clear from Locke's social contract theory how collective resistance to the Crown could become legitimate under certain circumstances that bore great resembles with the Exclusion Crisis of 1679-81.

Locke found the solution to the problem of how to legitimately contend the king in the political institutions of England's systems of mixed constitution. Under this form of rule, sovereignty was shared between the Crown and the Parliament giving some parties to the contract (the aristocracy), aside from the king, direct influence on the formulation and renewal of policies and laws. This form of political power was a radical break from Hobbes' concept of sovereignty, which enabled Locke to redefine the parties to the social contract. By having a direct say in the legislation through their right to select representatives, Locke argued that the social contract in England's systems of mixed constitution became an agreement between the community and the government thus making the Crown accountable to the ruled for 'as supreme execution of the law made by a joined power of him with others, allegiance being nothing but an obedience according to law, which, when he violates, he has no right to obedience' (Locke, 1978, p.193). To Locke a deliberate violation of the law by the Crown would justify an 'appeal to heaven' by which he meant an armed revolution (Sabl, 2001, p.309).

Locke was cautious not to extend this right to every group who felt mistreated or misrepresented. Patience and resilience were the virtues of the populace for 'great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws, and all the slips of human frailty will be borne by the people without mutiny or murmur. But if a long train of abuses, prevarications, and artifices, all tending the same way, make the design visible to the people and they cannot but feel what they lie under, and see whither they are going, it is not to be wondered that they should then rouse themselves, and endeavour to put the rule into such hands which may secure to them the ends for which government was at first erected' (Locke, 1978, p.231). The disposal of the King was not only a means to end corrupt governance, it was also 'the best fence against rebellion, and probablest means to hinder it. For rebellion, being an opposition, not to persons, but authority, which is found only in the constitutions and laws of the government' (Ibid). As a pre-emptive strategy to avoid a rebellion, the revolution was even more important to Locke than it was as an instrument to re-establish law-based and lawful governance as the rebellion could bring back the state of war and thereby dissolve the social contract all together. For Locke, social contract theory introduced the possibility of legitimate collective contention, but he insisted that the people's right to hold the sovereign accountable to the law through revolution was restricted to instances of gross violations or abuses and it only allowed for the removal of the sovereign. No other forms of contention were legitimate.

Rousseau's social contract thinking took a radically different perspective on how the people can secure legitimate political authority and preserve their freedom when they live in a community where they will have to submit to the wills of others. Like Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau's starting point was the social contract where, as in all

contracts, obligations are undertaken voluntarily which, *inter alia*, meant that the obligations arising from the law governing a community accordingly had to be freely chosen. But contrary to Hobbes and Locke who 'sought of the contract as a historical event, Rousseau's innovation was to see it as unconnected with history' and instead of transferring a group of people from a state of nature into a political community when contractors consented to place sovereignty in the hands of one authority, the social contract was 'an implicit understanding that exists continuously, here and now, as the share commitment without which no system of any kind can be legitimate' (Damrosch, 2007, pp.346-47).

The stipulation of freely chosen obligations combined with the lack of an origin historical contract meant that sovereignty for Rousseau ultimately rested with the people, or to be more precise, 'the social contract gives the body politics (the total number of people) absolute power over all its members [ ]; and it is this power which, under the direction of the general will, bears, as I have said, the name Sovereignty' (Rousseau, 1973, p.186). It also meant that every individual member of the community had to be actively involved in the making of the law as only self-imposed obligations were binding within a contract framework. Of course, once laws were in place, people were obligated to obey them, or better yet, they had a shared interest in obeying them, because the laws were an expression of the general will and 'the general will alone can direct the State according to the object for which it was instituted, i.e. the common good' (Ibid, p.182). This led to the somewhat paradoxical revelation that the individual's freedom to participate in the legislative process came with an obligation of obedience to the law, or as Rousseau elegantly put it, 'obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty' (Ibid, p.178).

Rousseau was sceptical about using a system of representation to come to an understanding of the general will dismissing it as coming 'to us from feudal government, from the iniquitous and absurd system which degrades humanity and dishonours the name of man' (Ibid, p.240). He was therefore highly critical of the English parliamentary system, which only offered a sliver of freedom 'during the elections of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing' (Ibid). To understand Rousseau's resentment of representative democracy it is important to remember that members of the British House of Commons 'did not think they had any responsibility to the people who had elected them other than to provide all the liquor the voters wanted on election day. True, if the candidate were the twenty-one-year-old son of a nobleman, he had a particular obligation to the people: he had to stand in the hustings bowing to the voters as they threw rotten vegetables and eggs at him. That done, his obligation to the voters was complete' (Cash, 2006, p.278).

In light of this, Rousseau argued that to truly participate in the legislative process, people had to convene face to face and deliberate the issues in front of them in the same way that citizens had assembled in ancient Greece. Although face to face popular meetings would allow the individual citizens to express their interests in relation to a particular issue there was still a risk that these conventions wouldn't

lead to an expression of the general will for, according to Rousseau, 'there is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will; the latter considers only the common interest, while the former takes private interest into account, and is no more than a sum of particular wills: but take away from these same wills the pluses and the minuses that cancel one another, and the general will remains as the sum of the differences' (Ibid, p.185). And so, '[W]hen in the popular assembly a law is proposed, what the people is asked is not exactly whether it approves or rejects the proposal, but whether it is conformity with the general will, which is their will. Each man, in giving his vote, states his opinion on that point; and the general will is found by counting the voting' (Ibid, p.250).

To outline theoretically how a political system based on popular sovereignty could work was one thing, to overcome the practical problems involved was immensely more complicated. For one, the size of the population and geographical territory of most countries made it impossible for people to meet in person. Another problem, which was especially salient for the British, was the weather because 'for half the year your public squares are uninhabitable', Rousseau complained. To make matters worse for the British 'the flatness of your languages unfits them for being heard in the open air…' (Ibid, p.241). Add to that, that deliberations of political issues are so time consuming that the Greeks had to have slaves to make the system work and the whole idea of popular sovereignty becomes so terribly complicated and fraught with obstacles that 'a true democracy has never existed, and never will' (Ibid, p.217). We can only strive to aspire to the ideal of popular sovereignty.

What Rousseau didn't have the imagination to foresee in 1761, when he was working on *The Social Contract*, was that public negotiations and deliberations could take many forms. Instead of meeting in open places to give speeches individually people could demonstrate their common interest by carrying banners, shouting slogans, and show their support for leaders who could speak on their behalf. Whereas the older repertoire of contention was designed to express claims that were parochial and particular, the cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous nature of the modern repertoire of contention enabled people in large numbers to give voice to what they considered the general will. Protest marches, demonstrations, public meetings, vigils, petition drives, pamphleteering, and rallies were all performances through which the people collectively could voice their opinion on any issue of interest to the body politics. These forms of contention were also capable of expressing the will of the people without resorting to the violence or physical intimidation that had characterized the older repertoire. In other words, people could express their common interest without violating the rights of other parties to the social contract. While it is clear that 'the national social movement grew out of [the] older sorts of organized challenges to political authorities', Rousseau's social contract thinking reshaped the notions of consent, participation, and veto so that, 'when states pressed their subject populations for greatly increased contributions (in the form of taxes, conscripts and requisitioning) to war-making efforts, political entrepreneurs discovered that they could turn the

essentially conservative idea of ancient popular rights into a progressive doctrine of popular sovereignty' (Tilly, 1996, p.41).

The next section explores how the idea of popular sovereignty became the cornerstone in the origin of the social movement and how it shaped the repertoire of contention.

British Politics, Wilkes, and the People

There is good reason to believe that 'if a date is to be found for the beginning of the democratic movement, the historian will choose the years of Wilkes's election and rejection, 1768-69' (Redlich and Hirst, 1903, p.66). However, situating the origin of the first modern social movement in 1768-69 would ignore the events that took place in 1763, events, which in many ways, served as a precursor for the subsequent rise of the movement. That year, 'John Wilkes became what in English history is called a Radical' and as a radical '[H]e wanted radical change in laws and institutions so that they would protect all people and give them a voice in government' (Cash, 2006, p.118). It was also the year that Wilkes was charged with seditious libel and thrown in the Tower of London for publicly criticizing the peace treaty ending the Seven Years War between France and Great Britain.

The trial that followed became a launching pad for the first campaign to promote civil liberty to the general English population as Wilkes linked the charges brought against him and 48 other persons involved in the publication of the *North Briton* to the freedom of all Englishmen. In his defence, he made repeated references to the Bill of Rights which protected the freedom of speech and, on Friday 6 May, in the Courts of Common Pleas he declared that, '[T]he liberty of all peers and gentlemen, and what touches me more sensibly, of all the middling and inferior set of people, who stands most in need of protection, is in my case this day to be finally decided upon: A question of such importance as to determine at once, whether English liberty as a reality or a shadow' (A Complete Collection of Genuine Papers, Letters, & c. in the Case of John Wilkes, ESQ, 1767, p.41). As he left the courtroom a free man, he was greeted by a crowd shouting 'Wilkes, Liberty, and Number 45' referring to the issue of the *North Briton* in which the now infamous critique of the peace treaty and King George III had been published. At this point, the campaign for extending civil rights to Englishmen of all classes combined with the repeated public displays of collective support could have escalated into something that bore significant resemblance with the modern social movement. Unfortunately, Wilkes got involved in a pistol duel, which left him with a bullet in the abdomen. To make matters worse, the Parliament revoked his political immunity arguing that MP's privileges did not include the writing or publication of seditious libel. Faced with potential imprisonment Wilkes decided to flee the country for Paris in December 1763.

Wilkes had hardly set foot on French soil before he headed to his dearest friend's house where he was welcomed into the French intellectual elite. The d'Holbachs were renowned for hosting a long list of distinguished guests including Diderot, Helvétius, d'Alembert, Condorcet, and, at one point, Rousseau, who met daily to

discuss the entrees into the great *Encyclopédie*, which was published underground. Over the next couple of years, Wilkes became a regular guest in the d'Holbachs home. His also spent two weeks in Geneva in August 1765 visiting Voltaire who, according to Wilkes, had 'done more to free mankind from the gloomy terrors of superstition and to persuade the practice of humanity and benevolence, than all the philosophers of antiquity' (quoted from Cash, 2006, p.189).

In one of history's curious twists Wilkes and Rousseau never met, neither during Wilkes' four years in exile in France nor during the three years Rousseau spent in England. From his refuge on Ile Saint-Pierre, Rousseau did take initial steps to arrange a meeting between the two. In a letter dated August 15, 1765 Rousseau wrote to a Mr. Loitard explaining that 'I have seen a lot of Englishmen lately but as far as I know Mr. Wilkes was not one of them'. Then ten days later, he wrote to Mr. Loitard asking him to "come alone, unless it is so incredibly pleasant to him to come with Mr. Wilkes". A week later, Mr Loitard responded 'I was thinking I would visit you with Mr. Wilkes but I can understand from a passage of your letter that you would rather not see him' (Seeber, 1964, p.542-543, my translation). One reason for the convoluted invitation, which evidently never reached Wilkes, could have been that Rousseau '*en philosophe*, [applauded] Wilkes' boldness and at the same time, [knowing] of his cynicism and notorious lechery, [would] regard a visit from this political agitator as highly indiscreet' (italic in original. Ibid, p.543). Yet, even without meeting Rousseau it is clear that Wilkes established personal relationships with a significant number of the most influential philosophers of the time; his 'correspondence contains letters to many prominent Frenchmen – Crébillon, Suard, Helvétius, D'Holbach, and others – but none to Rousseau' (Ibid).

Back in England, the years following Wilkes' exile were times of widespread mass mobilization. With the end of the Seven Years War, war-generated demand for ships, canons, coal, and uniforms fell drastically throwing a number of industries into recession with unemployment, poverty, and discontent as a result. Aside from some 60 recorded riots in 1766, 'there were strikes, machine breaking, and crowd activity among silk-weavers (1763, 1965, 1968-71), pitmen (1765), sailors, coal-heavers, watermen, coopers, hatters, glass-grinders, sawyers and tailors (all c.1768-70)' (Brewer, 1981, p.18). Up until 1768, most of these protests shared few similarities with the cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous repertoire that would later come to characterize the social movement, nor did they make any appeal for civil liberty or popular sovereignty. Only on one occasion, in February 1765, as John Williams was being pilloried for republishing the *North Briton* no.45, did Wilkes' name return to the lips of the London crowd as '[A] mob of ten thousand men and women gathered at the pillory and cheered Williams without cessation for the hour he was exposed. They put into his hand a nosegay of laurel and myrtle. They shouted, "Truth in pillory', "Number 45 forever!" "Wilkes and Liberty" (Cash, 2006, p.179). Aside from this display of support, the campaign for civil liberty to Englishmen of all classes had by all accounts come to a halt.

It was only with Wilkes' return to England in early 1768 that popular protests began to take on a new dimension 'that foreshadows the social movement repertoire' (Tilly, 2004, p.17). Workers started to link their struggle for employment and better wages to Wilkes' campaign for political freedom. In March 1768, weavers protesting wage cuts paraded down Piccadilly distributing pamphlets proclaiming "Wilkes and Liberty". A month later, dissatisfied coal heavers marched down the Ratcliff High carrying banners with the inscription 'Wilkes and Liberty and Coal Heavers Forever'. When Wilkes was imprisoned in late April, a huge crowd gather daily at St. George Field where they called 'for lighting up of houses as well as ritually burning a boot and a bonnet' (Ibid).

The old repertoire of contention had by no means been discarded altogether, as Benjamin Franklin's eyewitness report illustrates. After the Massacre of St. George Field on May 10, the capital was 'a daily scene of lawless riot and confusion', Franklin tells us. 'Mobs patrolling the streets to noonday, some knocking all down that will not roar for Wilkes and Liberty; courts of justice afraid to give judgement against him; coal-heavers and porters pulling the houses of coal merchants that refuse to give them more wages; sawyers destroyed saw-mills; sailor unrigging all the outward bound ships, and suffering none to sail till merchants agree to raise their pay; watermen destroying private boats and threatening bridges' (quoted from Cash, 2006, p.223). Still, despite the violence, the intimidation, and the use of old forms of protest, we begin to see the contours of a campaign take shape, which increasingly relied on a cosmopolitan, modular, and autonomous repertoire.

Based on the quickly growing popular support, Wilkes decided to run for the House of Commons. After receiving the nomination, he gave a speech to a large gathering in London, in which he said, 'I stand here, gentlemen, a private man, unconnected with the great and unsupported by any party. I have no support but you: I wish no other support: I can have none more certain, none more honourable' (Ibid, p.207). The crowd burst into a roar of 'Wilkes and Liberty' echoing the cry for civil liberties of 1763. By combining a campaign for political office with a call for popular support it was becoming increasingly clear that, for Wilkes, legitimate political power was to 'emanate from below, not percolate down from above' (Brewer, 1981, p.191). The campaign was no longer merely a matter of extending rights to groups that had previously been excluded; by appealing for the support of the ordinary man in an electoral race, it was gradually embracing the idea of popular sovereignty.

As the crowd mobilized behind Wilkes, several influential civil society organizations threw their support behind him too. Whether these organizations actually shared the Wilkites' view on civil liberties and democracy is debateable, but '...in the corrupt machinery of local government there was still enough of a popular instinct left to provide powerful assistance to the cause of Wilkism. The Common Council of the City of London, Guilds, Municipalities, and even, in some instances, the County Benches forwarded their petitions and remonstrance's, urged on by Radical merchants, constitutionalists like Burke, or Whig squires with democratic sympathies (Redlish and Hirst, 1903, p.67). Some 60,000 people petitioned the

Crown in support of Wilkes' candidature for the House of Commons. The support of such a large proportion of the London population signalled that a transformation of the idea of 'the people' was taking place with the populace 'functioning as an active political presence (attending hustings and demonstration, and attacking the persons and property of prominent MPs) in numbers and with a vociferousness unknown thirty years before' (Dew, 2009, p.247).

On 20 February 1769, the movement took on a more organized form when 400 men gathered in the London Tavern to form the Society of the Supporters of the Bills of Rights, taking their name after the 1689 Bills of Rights, which had repealed the doctrine of the divine right of the monarch. The Society of the Supporters of the Bills of Rights showed as little respect for the British parliamentary system as Rousseau did when they declared that they would 'refuse obedience' to the House and put their 'trust to the laws of the land' (Cash, 2006, p.278). The idea that law should reflect the sentiments of the people was certainly not foreign to British political thought; indeed, the law of the land had deep roots in English legal tradition and Britain's constitutional arrangements were to be found partly in conventions, customs, and in statutes and not in abstract legal principles of a written constitution. But in combination with the denouncement of obedience to the House the Society of the Supporters of the Bills of Rights was expressing a much more radical interpretation of the political role of the people of England. Only by introducing genuinely democratic ideals was it possible to combat the corruption of the parliamentary system.

Taken together the many protests, political events, and expressed political ideas that characterized the Wilkite movement in the 1760s are evidence of new ways of both thinking and acting politically. British politics had since the time of Charles II been a 'contest for control of the state between the king and his ministers on one side and the privileged gentlemen of Parliament on the other. Now the common folk had entered into the play' (ibid, p.162). As the common folk mobilized behind John Wilkes' campaign for civil liberties to Englishmen of all classes and, later, his electoral campaign for the House of Commons, the first features of what would become the social movement began to take shape.

Conclusion
This article has argued that the simultaneous origin of the first social movement and publication of Rousseau's social contract theory was more than an interesting historical coincidence. Rousseau's interpretation of the social contract broke radically with previous understandings of how ordinary people should participate in politics thereby paving the way for new forms of negotiations between citizens and holders of power based on the idea of popular sovereignty. Whereas Hobbes had made a strong argument against all forms of collective, public protest, Rousseau encouraged public gatherings to discuss how law could promote the common good of a community.

Since the publication of Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *Rousseau Considered as One of the First Authors of the Revolution* in 1791, Rousseau's name has been much more closely associated with the social revolution than with the social movement but despite being hailed as an inspiration for the revolution, Rousseau actually made a very strong argument against the exercise of physical force as a basis for legitimate political power; 'let us then admit that force does not create rights, and that we are obliged to obey only legitimate powers' (Rousseau, 1973, 68) he argued, where legitimate powers are the powers we voluntarily consent to. Rousseau cautioned against a violent overthrow of the government arguing that 'such events are rare; they are exceptions, the cause of which is always to be found in the particular constitution of the State concerned' and then he added somewhat cryptic that revolutions 'cannot happen twice to the same people, for it can free itself as long as it remains barbarous, but not when the civic impulse has lost its vigour' (Ibid, p.198). He never explained what types of constitution were prone to cause revolution, nor did he elaborate on what he meant by barbarous so as to identify the specific circumstances where a revolution would set the people free. What he did seem to suggest was that a revolution in a state governed by the people could not recover the liberty of the people if it had 'lost its vigour'. Once sovereignty rested with the people, as it does in democracies, the revolution made little sense. In this perspective, Rousseau's interpretation of the social contract appears to resonate much more directly with the social movement than with the revolution.

We do not know whether John Wilkes ever read *The Social Contract* but we have circumstantial evidence to suggest that he must have known about Rousseau's political philosophy. This evidence includes his large collections of books on politics and philosophy (among them the complete works of Rousseau), his friendships with many of the most prominent Enlightenment philosophers, and two references to Rousseau in the *North Briton*. There are also substantial overlaps between Rousseau's ideas of freedom and popular sovereignty and the way that Wilkes mobilized ordinary people behind his campaign for civil liberties to Englishmen of all class. The underlying premises for political freedom were for Rousseau as well as for Wilkes people's ability to public express their opinion of and participate in shaping the law. In the 1760s, such ideas were radical and no one knew exactly how to turn abstract principles into concrete actions that could alter existing political institutions. No one set out to invent the social movement for this purpose but over the course of the decade the older repertoire of contention slowly began to morph into new forms of contention, which would eventually become the basis for the social movement.

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