


COMMENT

# Working-Class Leaders and Their Political Work Between Civil-Societal Engagement and Class Conflicts: The Case of August Bebel – A Comment to John D. French

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## Abstract

John D. French's stimulating article, which explores the scope for comparing working-class leaders across time and space, is considered in this contribution by reference to my biography of August Bebel and with a particular focus on the following topics: a) historical actors as shaped by their own particular time and place; b) the importance of personal relationships and networks in making people who they are; c) the importance of psychological elements and the risk in interpreting them in retrospect – recovering them depends upon the sources available; d) how charisma reflects an interdependence between attribution and individual qualities; e) the importance of political milieu for the flourishing of individual working-class leaders; and f) the relationship between political work to both civil society and existing class relations. Using these approaches allows us to write cross-border and cross-temporal “embodied social biographies”, as suggested by French.

“Life could have been over before it had even begun” – so begins the first chapter of my biography about August Bebel, famous leader of the German Social Democratic Party in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> This short sentence challenges one of the central problems John French addresses in his article in this volume: “Biography has always been based on a simple lie: the individual's past is recounted in light of his future.”<sup>2</sup> What my opening sentence makes absolutely clear is that nothing was certain and predictable if you were born into a family from a lower-class background. The overall mortality rate among children in the German states in the 1840s, the decade in which August Bebel (1840–1913) was born, was twenty per cent – the rate was even higher among the lower and working classes. Bebel survived these dangerous childhood years; his younger brother Carl Friedrich was less fortunate, dying at the age of four.

<sup>1</sup>Jürgen Schmidt, *August Bebel: Social Democracy and the Founding of the Labour Movement*, transl. Christine Brocks (London, 2019).

<sup>2</sup>John French, “Common Men, Exceptional Politicians: What Do We Gain from an Embodied Social Biographical Approach to Leftist Leaders like Germany's August Bebel and Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva?”, in this dossier.

Of course, this is only one illustration of the many severe problems in writing biographies. Asking what caused and led to the success of working-class leaders, especially if they come from a socially deprived background, is a very legitimate, important, and interesting question. However, it risks narrowing the perspective and positing a clear path from the end to the beginning, and vice versa. On the other hand, we cannot – as Fustel de Coulanges advised historians – banish from our minds everything we “know of the later course of history”.<sup>3</sup> The aspect French touches upon is not only a problem in writing a biography; it is a general methodological problem in the historical sciences.<sup>4</sup> For example, it makes little sense to write a history of the German workers’ movement in the long nineteenth century and cover the result of enforcement, stabilization, and success only at the end of a historical analysis. Instead, it is important to perceive the historical context, as well as the points of departure and alternatives in history, because the process that led to the success of the German labour movement was by no means preordained, nor was it irreversible. The analysis of an individual’s life course in the context of historical processes is exciting, and offers any number of thought-provoking questions: What were the causes of success? What was the extent of the success? What were its limits?

Asking, and answering, these questions requires a method every historian considers, or should consider: searching for cross sections in life, for moments when different choices were possible, when things could have developed in a totally different way. Looking back on a successful life, it is tempting to construct some sort of coherence, but life is full of watersheds and crossroads. These points of reversal have to be identified and analysed as moments of decisions and determination, but also as moments when the protagonist being portrayed can be said to have taken the “wrong way”, made mistakes, misjudged; otherwise, a biography can easily become a hagiography. On the other hand, if the analysis and narrative of a biography suggest there were points of no return, biographers should note them clearly, without fear of being accused of falling into the biographical trap French mentions. The strength of a biography lies especially in arguing why such moments became points of no return.

With regard to the biography of August Bebel as well as those of other working-class leaders, in turning these basic methodological reflections into specific research the following aspects need to be taken seriously: situating the person in place and time; integrating personal relationships; taking generational aspects seriously; carefully weighing up how much psychology is possible (especially if the sources are lacking); being careful when using the difficult concept of “charisma”; placing working-class leaders within the working-class movement and within a framework of (civil) societal engagement; and describing the type of work performed by working-class leaders, which stands in sharp contrast to the manual work they normally, formerly, performed. These aspects will structure my following comments.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Walter Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte” (1940), in *idem*, *Illuminationen. Ausgewählte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977), pp. 251–261, 253f.

<sup>4</sup>See Aloys Winterling, “Probleme historischer Biographie am Beispiel des Kaisers Caligula”, *Historische Anthropologie*, 20:2 (2012), pp. 186–199, 186; Jacques Le Goff, *Ludwig der Heilige* (Stuttgart, 2000), pp. 4f.

## Biography in Place and Time

As John French's comparison has shown, the political careers of working-class leaders may develop in different centuries, contexts, and places. From a global perspective, many other dimensions can probably be added to this pattern. This aspect is a strong argument to "avoid the superficiality of the 'man/woman and his/her times' approach" and, instead, consider "the exercise and mechanics of leadership in an actor-centred manner attentive to the discursive and performative".<sup>5</sup> However, in terms of place and time, French's 500-page biography on Lula da Silva situates Lula in the history of Brazil in the twentieth century, showing the 1978–1980 strikes as central to Lula's further development as a union and political leader.<sup>6</sup> Lula's rise, his organizational and rhetorical abilities, are put in the context of the cultural, economic, and political history of his time.

The same is true for a biography of August Bebel. For example, when Bebel first became interested in politics he joined the liberal-oriented German labour movement and was deeply concerned about Germany's evolution towards becoming a nation state. An actor-centred biography simply does not help in this case to understand the protagonist's attitudes. Without the wider frame of the German nation-building process from the 1860s to 1871, when the German Empire was founded, we cannot hope to understand why Bebel developed an anti-Prussian attitude and favoured a "greater German solution" (including not only the various German kingdoms, grand duchies, etc., in a German nation state, but also the German-speaking Habsburg monarchy). This distinct attitude towards German nation-building also remained *one* decisive obstacle to the two working-class currents uniting in the 1860s. And, with regard to August Bebel, his attitude guaranteed him the support of his liberal fellows.

After unification of the two labour parties in 1875, we cannot understand the consolidation of Marxism within the Socialist Workers' Party (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei, SAP) without the twelve years of state persecution between 1878 and 1890. In this period, August Bebel not only became one of the central figures in organizing conspirative and parliamentary methods as means of resistance, but, in 1888, also resolved to give up his career as a successful entrepreneur and devote his life to politics. All these contextual factors of place and time have to be considered if we are to understand why Bebel saw himself (and the German labour movement) as an enemy of the ruling state and bourgeois society.

Central to any biography should therefore be a sophisticated analysis of the person in their time, connecting structure and agency<sup>7</sup> as a means to understand the protagonist in the specific contexts of time and place – a challenge French rose to perfectly in his book.

## Personal Relations

At the age of four, Bebel became a half-orphan. By the age of thirteen he had lost both parents. In 1859, aged nineteen, he lost his last surviving brother, who was one year

<sup>5</sup>French, "Common Men, Exceptional Politicians", p. xx.

<sup>6</sup>John D. French, *Lula and His Politics of Cunning: From Metalworker to President of Brazil* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2020).

<sup>7</sup>Volker R. Berghahn and Simone Lässig (eds), *Biography Between Structure and Agency: Central European Lives in International Historiography* (New York, 2008).

younger. Despite these strokes of fate, which also coincided with financial and material problems, Bebel did not end up in misery, on the brink of pauperism. A family network in Wetzlar, the birthplace of August's mother, saved him. He also benefited from the municipal orphans' trust, which enabled him to apprentice as a wood turner. And the family of the master with whom Bebel learned his craft became a surrogate family, within which he was educated, gained respect, and won trust. Shortly after his apprenticeship ended, August's master died. The widow resolved not to continue the business. Acknowledging his debt of gratitude to his master's widow, the seventeen-year-old August finished the last remaining commissions before selling off the machines, tools, and materials. Again, these close personal relationships demonstrate the risks August Bebel faced at the start of his career. Generally, orphans ended as paupers. Other journeymen had to work for indifferent or even perhaps violent masters. August learned a lot during his apprenticeship, and this helped him to start his own business as wood turner just a few years later. This is not a retrospective description of a businessman who later became successful, as August Bebel did indeed become in the 1870s and 1880s, but the description of a starting point replete with possibilities.

On the political side, August's personal relationship with Wilhelm Liebknecht was central. Liebknecht was an important influence on Bebel, and steered him to the left, turning him from being a leftist liberal to become a socialist. As a young man active in the 1848 Revolution and with close connections to Karl Marx, Liebknecht was fourteen years Bebel's senior. Despite this generation gap, it must have been friendship at first sight between the two men. In November 1866, when Liebknecht's wife Ernestine wrote to her incarcerated husband to say that Bebel had initiated donations to support their family, he answered: "What you are telling me about Bebel doesn't surprise me; I knew he is a noble fellow."<sup>8</sup> There were many different aspects to the friendship between Bebel and Liebknecht. Though Liebknecht was not one of the theorists of the labour movement, he was, thanks to his academic education, a constant source of knowledge for the eager-to-learn woodturner craftsman Bebel. Both found common ground in their aversion to Bismarck's Prussia and its expansionism aimed at forging a unified Germany without Austria. In their opposition to Ferdinand Lassalle and his General German Workers' Association (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein*, ADAAV), they met halfway. Liebknecht had previously been a member of Lassalle's ADAAV and had fathomed its strengths and weaknesses. Bebel came from the opposite side. As a liberal opponent of Lassalle's socialist ideas and "in constant struggle with the Lassalleans", Bebel had read Lassalle's writings "in order to know what they want".<sup>9</sup> In so doing, he had gained new insights into socialist thinking. Thus, it was not only Liebknecht's influence that turned Bebel into a "Marxist", but it was also the friendship between the two of them.

Finally, the relationship with his wife Julie should be mentioned. She was a central towering figure in Bebel's development both as an entrepreneur and as a politician. When Bebel was detained in the fortress of Königstein from 1872 onwards, his

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Schmidt, *August Bebel*, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup>August Bebel, "Aus meinem Leben" (Stuttgart, 1910–1913), in *idem, Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, vol. 6 (Munich, 1996), p. 100.

wife managed the business in consultation with him. It was with a degree of pride that Bebel wrote to a party friend that “the business, which is now managed by my wife, leaves nothing to be desired”. In addition, Julie played a role in her husband’s political rise, although it burdened their family life. In a letter to Natalie Liebknecht, Wilhelm’s wife, Julie gave vent to her emotions: “[...] all this rushing around and the heavy workload and the continuous fight for their political views alienate them from us and destroy their right sense of family”.<sup>10</sup> Bebel had the utmost confidence in his wife. Julie took over several political roles and responsibilities on her husband’s behalf. She served her husband as organizer and secretary of the Social Democratic Party (SPD); Bebel and Engels portrayed her as an “unsalaried accountant”.<sup>11</sup>

In summary, without their friends, comrades, family, and party networks, we cannot explain the success of working-class leaders. Personal relationships matter in making people who they are. Powerful networks and influential relationships help make a political career.

### Psychological and Generational Aspects

Relying on Jean-Paul Sartre, French insisted that we must understand an individual’s childhood to “discover the whole man in the adult; that is, not only his present determinations but also the weight of his history”. For twentieth-century working-class leaders, for whom we have many different sources (especially oral history and interviews), this is a legitimate postulation. However, if we lack sources, such attempts risk leading to a kind of kitchen-sink psychology.

In the case of Bebel, we simply do not know how he came to terms with all the personal losses he experienced in the first two decades of his life. But what we can at least try to reconstruct is his childhood experience as a lower-class child like many others in the early 1840s. The sparse autobiographical information we have on Bebel shows that he experienced violence at home, knew what scarcity meant (without falling into existential poverty), and that for him, as for most working-class children of his time, childhood meant work. August Bebel experienced and suffered every aspect of this. However, he did not fall victim to the criminal exploitation of child labour in the course of Germany’s nascent industrialization, when standardization and automation of working processes allowed adult workers to be substituted by cheap child labour. Bebel’s work in his foster aunt’s mill was embedded in an everyday routine. He had to take responsibility and contribute to the turnover of the mill. There is nothing to idealize about this child labour, yet it was the common and unquestioned everyday experience of the lower classes. August still had time to go ice-skating or to roam through Wetzlar and its environs. He was fortunate that his foster aunt did not prevent him going to school. We do not know exactly who or what ensured August a good school education. His aunt may have seen schooling as a key to social mobility and future opportunities, as was commonly the case for the

<sup>10</sup>Julie Bebel to Natalie Liebknecht, 12 September 1887, in August Bebel and Julie Bebel, *Briefe einer Ehe*, edited by Ursula Herrmann (Bonn, 1997), p. 631.

<sup>11</sup>August Bebel to Friedrich Engels, 4 June 1892, F. Engels to A. Bebel, 20 June 1892, in Werner Blumenberg (ed.), *August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels* (London [etc.], 1965), pp. 542, 547.

upper strata of the lower classes (quite possibly so given the urban, petit bourgeois background of the Wetzlar relatives). It may also have reflected the enforcement of compulsory schooling and the improvement in elementary education that helped Bebel to have a start at school.

Therefore, if we do not have enough material for a psychological reconstruction of a childhood, we should shy away from it. But the reconstruction of socialization patterns and institutions is of great importance for understanding the starting point of working-class leaders.<sup>12</sup>

Socialization also takes place within generational frameworks.<sup>13</sup> Those born in Germany around 1840 were too young to perceive the 1848 Revolution as a kind of awakening. It also meant that during their apprenticeship in the 1850s they had few opportunities to get in contact with a vibrant labour movement because this was a period of political conservative reactionism and suppression. But what could impress them deeply was the question of German unification, with wars against Denmark and Austria in the 1860s and heated public debates. The 1860s were also the period in which workers “re-learned” the importance of strikes as a weapon to back up their interests.<sup>14</sup> There is an obvious similarity here to Lulu da Silva’s generational experience in the 1978–1980 strike wave. And, in August Bebel’s case, Bebel’s experience as a failed strike intermediary during the 1865 strike of Leipzig book printers was another important experience for him in his development from being a liberal to becoming a representative of the socialist working class. As mediator, he perceived the economic conflicts between employers and employees as congruent with the divide between capital and labour. Also, he considered it highly unfair that the state and its institutions sided with the employers.

Therefore, I believe French’s plea to consider childhood experience should be carefully considered, taking socialization and generational experiences as serious contributions to understanding the “whole man” – or “whole woman” – without falling into the trap of psychological speculation.

## Charisma

French rightly makes a clear distinction between the journalistic, empty-abstract use of “charisma” and the charisma concept developed by Max Weber. In his book, French writes: “Throughout his career, Lula has consistently been an institutionalist – whether for the union or the political party. He never sought an unmediated relationship between atomized individuals and an anointed saviour that is considered central to ‘charismatic’ or ‘populist’ leadership.”<sup>15</sup> This is definitely true for Bebel

<sup>12</sup>See especially Christina Morina, *Die Erfindung des Marxismus. Wie eine Idee die Welt eroberte* (Munich, 2017).

<sup>13</sup>Jürgen Schmidt, “Generational, Biographical and Life-Course Approaches to the History of the German Labour Movement in the Nineteenth Century”, *German History*, 37:3 (2019), pp. 295–313.

<sup>14</sup>*Idem*, *Brüder, Bürger und Genossen. Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung zwischen Klassenkampf und Bürgergesellschaft, 1830–1870* (Bonn, 2018).

<sup>15</sup>French mentions this briefly in his essay in this dossier, but goes into much more detail in his book (French, *Lula and His Politics of Cunning*, pp. 264ff., 279).

as well. He was the perfect organizer for the SPD and in no way a saviour.<sup>16</sup> However, in John French's sense the contrast between the "institutionalist" and the "anointed saviour" is constructed too sharply. Weber defined charisma solely as attribution and recognition by followers instead of in terms of personal skills or character traits.

I believe charismatic power should be understood as an interdependence between attributed and individual qualities. A charismatic personality is developed only through the reciprocal linkage between both aspects and created by staging through different media. From behind one's desk and all alone, no one will emerge as a charismatic leader. Within this framework, we can apply good arguments to address the concept in relation to very different working-class leaders – independently from time or place, in a truly global context. In the case of Bebel, we find many examples of how this charismatic relationship between followers' attribution and personal skills conjoined.

One day, in February 1890, the factory worker Moritz Bromme learned that Bebel was to give a speech that night in the Saxon town of Meerane. Bromme left work, went to the slipper factory where his father worked, met up with him and some of his colleagues and "shortly after 4 p.m. we were marching off towards Meerane [...]. We wanted to hear Bebel".<sup>17</sup> Bebel electrified the workers. In the same year, Bebel spoke at a meeting in Hamburg. "According to a general estimate, 40,000 to 50,000 people were on their feet, 10,000 to 12,000 of them in the halls." "I have never seen anything like it", Bebel wrote to his wife. "When I entered the rostrum, there was a storm of applause so that the walls started to shake. The same happened when I left the rostrum after a speech of 1 ½ hours – I was in good shape and despite the huge room my voice carried." After his speech,

the chairman shouted hip hip hurray for me, the enthusiasm could not be curbed. Thousands of hats waved, a thunder of voices, what a spectacle, it was exceptional. But the best was that when after the meeting was finished the people left the room and passed the rostrum, they started waving their hats and shouting hip hip hurray time and again, so that I finally got a sore neck from all the nodding.<sup>18</sup>

This quote illustrates charismatic moments among Bebel's followers, but also the retrospective pride of Bebel himself in his own success and charisma.

### Working-Class Leaders within Working-Class Movements

The above quotation leads to another aspect central to understanding and analysing working-class leaders. As French postulated, we can understand them only in close relation to the movement itself. Firstly, despite their central role, these working-class leaders did not "make" the movement. They influenced the movement, they shaped and

<sup>16</sup>However, in Bebel's own words a lot of party members regarded him as such a figure: "The more often people see one's name in the newspapers, the more the number of letters from everywhere increases. Everyone believes that one is their saviour and thus the workload grows to such an extent that I often think; to hell with being a celebrity" (quoted in Schmidt, *August Bebel*, pp. 115f.).

<sup>17</sup>Moritz T.W. Bromme, *Lebensgeschichte eines modernen Fabrikarbeiters*, mit einem Nachwort hrsg. von Bernd Neumann (Frankfurt am Main, [1905] 1977). pp. 130f.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Schmidt, *August Bebel*, p. 114.

directed it. But it needed the members, the fellow campaigners, even opponents, to forge a working-class movement, to see it develop and (under ideal conditions) flourish.

In addition, in the relationship between working-class leaders and “their” movements we can analyse the specific action and political work of the leaders independent of their future success. Bebel’s prestige and profile relied first and foremost on the fact that he was one of “them” – one of the workers and artisans who had fought to get into the Reichstag and who represented their interests against the existing political and social system. Bebel’s reputation as an artisan-politician had already been established in the early 1870s. That he had been a successful businessman since the mid-1870s with his wood-turning firm and, since the late 1880s, a man who made his living from politics (in the broadest sense) did not harm his working-class credentials. By 1890, his role as a politician and party leader had long been accepted. His artisan background was by no means merely an echo of bygone days; he “felt”, as the sociologist Robert Michels pointed out, that he belonged to the working class.<sup>19</sup> Bebel differed significantly from other party members and voters owing to his financial and material success, as well as the social and cultural capital he gained as a result of his political rise. But it was precisely this success that manifested progress – in which the supporters and members of the SPD believed.

Although, from 1889 onwards, Bebel made his living from politics, it was important to him not to be financially dependent on having a paid party position. In 1908, he advised Karl Liebknecht, Wilhelm’s ambitious son and, ten years later, one of the founders of the Communist Party of Germany (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD): “If you ever hold a leading party office, you have to be financially independent from the party.” However, this was a kind of self-deception on the part of August Bebel. For example, he was able to quit his job as a travelling salesman in late 1888 owing to the financial success of his book *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* – roughly 20,000 copies of which were sold during the time of the “Law Against the Publicly Dangerous Endeavours of Social Democracy” alone – and his well-paid work as a publicist. He was not dependent on a salary from the party, but we must assume that most of his readers were party members, buying his publications with their wages and financing his royalties with their membership fees. It is fair to say that even though Bebel did not get a salary from the party and even donated generous amounts of money to the SPD, he owed his financial success to social democratic politics and the party. The precise analysis of this overlap between party organization and party grass roots on the one hand, and the activities of the leaders on the other, has to be a decisive methodological tool to make a social biography of working-class leaders convincing. It was, in fact, the Social Democratic Party milieu in general that enabled Bebel to make a living from politics and to devote his life to political work.

### Political Work Between Class Struggles and Civil-Societal Engagement

However, political work did not come naturally to Bebel, and it remained hard and arduous. No sooner had he decided in favour of professional politics than he wrote

<sup>19</sup>Robert Michels, “August Bebel”, *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 37 (1913), pp. 671–700, 674.



to Friedrich Engels regarding the next session of the Reichstag: "All this business ruins one's summer. But that's how it is, one just has to do it."<sup>20</sup> These remarks reveal the sense of duty and honour typical for a labour party. In the correspondence of social democrats, party officers shared their woes on the appeals as well as the burdens of political work. Politics was a serious matter. Social democratic politicians of the nineteenth century were disciplined in their approach to work and shared a special work ethic. The multiple roles they had required time and commitment. In addition, against the backdrop of being politically excluded in the German Kaiserreich, they were emboldened to demonstrate their skills and achievements. Another reason for labour leaders to work as hard as they could was that they felt obliged to the majority of party members who performed hard, physical work. The intellectual political work of the labour leaders, encouraged by their grassroots supporters, was their contribution and sacrifice in the fight for the party's cause. Aspects of masculinity have to be considered as well. Defeating the political enemy in debates through argument (or, during the years when the German labour movement was being formed, in brawls) demonstrated male strength and self-confidence. As Bebel's description of his triumphant Hamburg success in 1890 illustrates, he was rather susceptible to being a celebrity – but also to the satisfaction of advocating the cause of the labour movement and its interests.<sup>21</sup>

For Bebel and the party, the main objectives of political work were to strengthen grassroots democratic and citizen engagement among the working class and to establish a stable organization resistant to the attacks of bourgeois society. In practical political life, the result of this work was the political success of the German Social Democratic Party in the form of one election victory after another, with ever more votes and an increasing number of people joining the party. The reward for all the hard work was the socialist state of the future.

However, this form of political work involved (and involves) more than just discussing ideas, concepts, and programmes, fighting positional and factional struggles within a political system. It also required – apart from personal character traits – money, time, and availability. Throughout his life, Bebel continued to struggle with this problem. It is safe to assume that more socialist politicians gave up and withdrew from politics than did not. In the specific situation of the German Kaiserreich, especially during the twelve years of the "Law Against the Publicly Dangerous Endeavours of Social Democracy" (1878–1890), fear of persecution and fear of losing one's job exacerbated civil-societal engagement in the political arena.

But for those, like Bebel, who decided to take this route, political work meant combining the fight for social justice with a commitment to civil society: the self-activation of citizens for progressive aims. Alongside his commitment to this civil-societal aspect, August Bebel was deeply convinced of the evils of the class structure of the German Empire (and of Western capitalism) which, in his vision, would face "great collapse". This conflictual framework of civil-societal engagement, on the one hand, and class relations, on the other, as a result of the political work of working-

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Schmidt, *August Bebel*, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup>For the impact of São Paulo working-class manhood on Lulu da Silva, see French, *Lula and His Politics of Cunning*, p. 117.

class leaders can best be researched in a politically, socially, economically, and culturally embedded biography, to paraphrase French's notion of a "social biography". For example, the political work of August Bebel (and Lula da Silva) can be analysed and described in relation to three aspects. The first is the contact and communication function. Building networks is key here. We mentioned this aspect above. The second aspect is the management function. The aim of the labour movement was to establish permanent, resilient, and sustainable structures. The third function is that of mediation. Mediation meant, above all, asserting the interests of the workers and taking power. Within the framework of this understanding of political work, a left-wing, socialist identity, or even class power, developed that reached from the pubs to the residential districts to the party press and party events. In return, the working-class leaders were the landmark of this movement. Within this intertwined process, a class movement emerged representing only a part of society. But this class movement was based on the civil-societal engagement of the many and their ability and possibilities to invest time, money, or sometimes even their individual fate for the good of the movement. This civil-societal engagement, again, could extend beyond their own class and help to democratize society as a whole. Using this approach of political work as part of a social biography of working-class leaders opens a multifaceted perspective, including structures, agencies, and experiences of working-class leaders and working-class movements.

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