

Transnational Social Movement: Examining its Emergence, Organizational Form and Strategies, and Collective Identity

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The transnationalization of collective action has brought about new ways of conceptualizing crucial elements in political mobilization such as the role of the state and the domestic context in the struggle, organizational form, strategies, and collective identities of social movements. These views imply rethinking the role of the state as the primary site of struggle because of its being embedded in an increasingly influential global polity, that it is advantageous for transnational networks to operate in a less structured organizational set-up to afford activists greater autonomy and flexibility to pursue other causes, and that activists can cast aside individual identities and rally behind an all-inclusive identity like being anti-neo liberal globalization. However, the paper argues that discarding conventional frameworks for social movement analysis can be problematic in comprehending transnational mobilizations. In line with this, it might be prudent to still regard the state and domestic context as the primary site of resistance, that coalition networks should be more structured to efficiently pursue their goals; and that networks should be more sensitive to identities by way of consciously addressing the needs of specific sectors in a coalition for instance.

Key words: globalization, transnational social movements, state, organizational form and strategies, identities

INTRODUCTION

Transnational mobilization has been an increasing focus of globalization research (e.g. Smith and Johnston 2002; Cohen and Rai 2000; Richter, Berking and Muller-Schmid 2006). This has been largely brought about by the connection being made by the literature between processes related to globalization and the transnationalization of collective action. Increasing interconnectedness coupled with the perceived inequities brought about by the neoliberal agenda of globalization has been bringing together activists across the globe to form collective political mobilization.

This paper aims to engage the literature on the transnationalization of political mobilization with the attempt to examine the implications of this form of contention to issues salient to social movement organizing. Specifically, the literature review aims to address the following questions: What factors led to the emergence of the transnationalization of collective action? Why do activists involve in this kind of political mobilization? What are the implications of transnational political mobilization on how contention is conceptualized – along issues relating to the role of the state or domestic context in the resistance, organizational form and strategies, and collective identities of social movements?

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first part is devoted to defining the characteristics of the current wave of the transnationalization of collective action. The next part examines the processes that gave rise to this form of collective contention. The third part discusses the implications of the transnationalization of political mobilization on the role of the state or domestic context as site of resistance, organizational form and strategies, and collective identities of social movements.

CHARACTERIZING TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Although variously defined, the following definition of social movements is a useful starting point. Social movements are a “distinct social process consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engage in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly defined opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity” (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 20). Social movements are distinct from political and interest groups although they are often compared with each other. Social movements are different in the sense that they are networks which may or may not include formal organizations, depending on shifting circumstances. In view of this, a

single organization regardless of its dominant traits is not a social movement. Although the organization may be involved in a social movement process, it is not identical to a social movement as the two illustrate different organizational principles (ibid. 25).

Transnational social movement has been variously referred to as global social movement (Cohen and Rai 2000; Della Porta et al. 2006), global civil society (Keane 2003; Lipschutz 1992; Scholte 2003; Kaldor 2003), or international civil society (Colas 2003). Global social movements are defined as “supranational networks of actors that define their causes as global and organize protest campaigns that involve more than one state” (Della Porta et al. 2006:18). Global civil society has been used to “refer to those independent NGOs and social movements that operate across national boundaries” (Kaldor 2003:559). However, Colas (2003) offers a definition of international civil society as not necessarily referring to the social movement actors but as an “international space created by the expansion of capitalist relations of production where modern social movements pursue their political goals” (264-5).

Meanwhile, Khagram and Alvord (2006) define transnational social movement activities as “phenomena and dynamics that cross, alter, transcend, and even transform borders and boundaries.” By referring to the activities as transnational, they are contrasted with “dominant types of ostensibly bounded and/or bordered units, actors, structures, and processes that are typically associated with notions of ... nation, State, nation-state, and nation-state system” (66). Moreover, Piper and Uhlin (2003) characterize social movement organizing as transnational when either of the following factors is present:

First, it may focus on transnational issues, related for instance, to the environment or health problems. Second, the actors themselves may be transnational, either in the strong sense of having an organizational structure that is not territorially bounded and including citizens of more than one state (like transnational advocacy networks), or in the weaker sense of being concerned with issues in a country other than where the activists are citizens (such as solidarity groups supporting an independence movement in a foreign country). Third, transnational methods and strategies may be applied (e.g. e-mobilization and other net-based activities). Fourth, the targets of activism may be based in one or several countries than where the activists themselves are located, thus requiring crossborder interaction (5).

Some of the literature on transnational activism examines the networks or organizations that facilitate the political mobilization. For example,

Keck and Sikkink's (1998) groundbreaking study defines transnational advocacy networks as made up of "relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (2). Tarrow (2001: 11 cited in Kolb 2005: 99), on the other hand, defines transnational social movement organization as "socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interaction with power holders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor."

A number of literature prefer the term transnational over global or international to refer to crossborder activities of social movement actors (e.g. Khagram and Alvord 2006; Tarrow 2005; Piper and Uhlin 2003). Khagram and Alvord (2006) cite the following reasons on why this is so:

First, most crossborder or crossboundary civic organizations and activities are probably not global in scope, orientation, or mind-set. Second, even those campaigns, organizations, networks, and/or movements that claim to be global do not involve or reach all corners of the planet. Third, the term "transnational" directs our attention to activities and organizational forms that may cross levels (local, national, regional, international etc.) as well as borders (65-66).

Transnational social movement is not a new phenomenon. Keck and Sikkink (1998) contend that historical precursors to the current wave of transnational activism include the nineteenth century campaigns to abolish slavery in the United States, the international movement for women suffrage, and the elimination of foot-binding practices in China. Tarrow (2005) likewise espouses that when examined via the two mechanisms in which transnational activism operates namely the diffusion of movement across borders and international mobilization, then this form of mobilization is not new. Diffusion of movement across borders is manifested in the nineteenth century anti-slavery movement that spread from England to France, the Netherlands, and the Americas. An example of international mobilization is illustrated in the campaign that made the First of May an international worker's holiday which was transmitted to Europe from the American eight-hour-day campaign through the socialist international. Moreover, Scholte (2003: 286) writes that prototypical global meetings during the nineteenth century were conducted by pacifists, anarchists, the first and second workers' internationals, Pan-Africanists, advocates of women's suffrage and Zionists. In addition, the International Red Cross has been providing humanitarian relief worldwide dating back to the 1860s.

If transnational activism is not new, what then is new and different about the contemporary wave of transnational activism? In their study of transnational networks, Keck and Sikkink (1998: 10) write that the dramatic increase in terms of "number, size, and professionalism, and the speed, density, and complexity of international linkages" among the later forms differentiate them from the earlier ones. Similarly, Tarrow (2005: 4-5) argues that the contemporary wave "involves a broader spectrum of ordinary people and elites, and that it extends to a wider range of domestic and international concerns." The factors that gave rise to the dramatic increase of transnational movement organizing will be discussed in the next section.

EMERGENCE OF THE CURRENT WAVE OF TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The latter part of the 20th century witnessed the growth of the transnationalization of political mobilization (Scholte 2003; Kaldor 2003; Tarrow 2000). This growth has been largely associated with the acceleration of processes related to globalization (Bandy and Smith 2005; Kaldor 2003; Falk 2005; Scholte 2003; Keily 2005). Although variously defined, the paper offers some definitions of globalization that might be useful for the understanding of the transnationalization of collective action. Globalization (is) "a process leading to greater interdependence and mutual awareness among economic, political, social units in the world, and among actors in general" (Guillen 2001: 236). Tarrow (2005: 5) associates globalization with the process of "increasing volume and speed of flows of capital and goods, information and ideas, people and forces that connect actors between countries. Held and McGrew (2002: 1) however write that globalization "denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction. It refers to a shift or transformation in the scale of human organization that links distinct communities and expands the reach of power relations across the world's regions and continents. All these definitions emphasize time-space compression that facilitates interaction among actors globally.

During the 1990s, the process of globalization has accelerated for various reasons including "the collapse of previously closed (mostly socialist) societies, the spread of neoliberal ideas, and above all, the development in information technologies" (Kaldor 2003: 560). The global interconnectedness opens up opportunities for citizens' groups to engage in transnational mobilization (Kaldor 2003; Lipschutz 1992). Kriesberg (2008) elaborates on this by

identifying four interactive trends in the contemporary world that tend to support the growth of nongovernment organizations, including transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs), namely: growing democratization, increasing global integration, increasing convergence and diffusion of values, and proliferation of transnational institutions.

Della Porta and Tarrow (2005: 7) write that three significant changes in the international environment helped facilitate the transnationalization of collective action. First, the development of forms of nonstate actions largely facilitated by the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the Cold War “produced a wave of Western governmental support for NGO activity in both East-Central Europe and the former Soviet Union. This also led to the development of nonstate groups that might otherwise have been branded as ‘pro-communist’ in the days of the Cold War.”

Second, the advancement in communication technology and cheaper air travel allowed activists to collaborate with one another across borders. In relation to this, the increase in migration flows across borders stimulated the formation of “immigrant activism.” Finally, attention to the international environment has been emphasized by the “growing power of transnational corporations and international institutions, treaties regulating the international economy, and international events like the global summits of the World Bank, the Group of Eight, and especially the World Trade Organization” (ibid. 8).

Inasmuch as globalization provides the general context for transnational mobilization, its content, particularly its neo-liberal economic agenda, provides as much push for collective action. Social movement protests against the ill effects of neoliberal globalization have been the subject of various works on transnational contention (e.g. Cohen and Rai 2000; Della Porta et al. 2006; Halperin and Laxer 2003; Bandy and Smith 2005; Applebaum and Robinson 2005; Amoore 2005; Gills 2008). Mobilizations have centered on several issues resulting from the implementation of the neoliberal economic project, some of which are identified by Della Porta et al. (2006) in the following.

In the north (economic globalization) has brought unemployment, a decrease in job security, and an increase in unprotected working conditions, with frequent trade union mobilization in both industry and agriculture. Also in the south of the world, the negative social effects of the neoliberal policies imposed by the major international economic organizations, forcing developing countries to make substantial cuts in social spending, have triggered fierce protests.

Already weak political regimes have allowed private exploitation of natural resources as well as development projects with major environmental impact... A main claim of the movement, which is now finding new support from unexpected quarters, is the perniciousness of neoliberal policies for economic development (11).

Falk (2005) characterizes this movement as "globalization from below" to oppose the excesses of "globalization from above." The latter is associated with "the growing power of corporate capital vis-à-vis countervailing forces, which is reflected in the dominance of transnational corporations, global finance, and the decline of the 'compassionate state'" (Kiely 2005: 139). The movement for "globalization from below" is also referred to as the "global justice movement" (Evans 2008).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

To effectively challenge "globalization from above," the countervailing mobilization must be "global, broad based, cross-sectoral, and capable of collective action." Hence, social movements have been "seeking to communicate across borders, to develop common grievances, and to organize in the pursuit of international alternatives" – toward the realization of a "globalization from below" (Bandy and Smith 2005: 231).

The transnationalization of political mobilization has implications on issues related to contentious political actions such as: on how to conceptualize the role of the state or domestic context in the contention, as well as the organizational form, strategies, and collective identities of social movements. Changes in the organizational form, strategies, and collective identities of social movements take place as activists mobilize beyond national borders.

Role of the state and domestic context in the resistance

Studies on social movements have mostly regard the state as the site of contention (e.g. Tilly 1984 as cited in Smith and Johnston 2002). Nonetheless, Smith and Johnston (2002) write that the capability of the state to influence domestic and economic decision-making may require rethinking amid the acceleration of global integration processes. The state's capability to decide is increasingly constrained by "an expanding web of commitments to other international actors." The states' entering into treaties and intergovernmental organizations signify a "more interdependent and densely integrated interstate system. This means that states have adopted limitations on their capacities

for independent action in exchange for greater security and predictability in the broader system" (1-2).

For instance, a state may enter into international agreement to uphold human rights norms. In return, it gains security "against the possibility of mass flows of political refugees across its borders that would result from other states' human rights violations." In economic realm, states give up their autonomy to regulate their domestic economies "in exchange for both access to other state's markets and greater predictability and transparency in global economic relations." Moreover, globalization processes have given rise to transnational entities and actors, including "transnational corporations, international nongovernment organizations, transnational banks, and global criminal networks" that pose challenge to states as "predominant players in the international arena" (ibid.).

Nonetheless, Smith and Johnston (2002: 2) qualify that states continue to be relevant in understanding global political processes, "but it does show that many contemporary, state-level political conflicts are at least partly shaped by global forces." They added that the appreciation of national polities being "nested in an increasingly influential global polity that affects political conflicts" require giving attention to the global system in order to better understand domestic political struggle.

The recognition of the interaction between domestic and international context to explain the emergence and outcomes of transnational political mobilization has been the subject of recent theorizing. Sikkink's (2005) interactive model for instance illustrates this interaction. It argues that the openness or closedness of international and domestic institutions affect transnational political mobilization.

International political opportunity structure refers mainly to the degree of openness or closedness of international institutions to the participation of transnational NGOs, networks, and coalitions. It can be operationalized by "looking at the formal and informal mechanisms or procedures for inclusions and participation in different international institutions." For instance, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) institutions "have provisions for NGOs to seek and be granted consultative status" and at the same time many have "developed practices that permit some NGOs to speak at meetings and present written materials for inclusion in the record." In contrast, the World Trade Organization (WTO) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has no provisions for NGO participation (Sikkink 2005: 157).

Domestic political opportunity structure refers “primarily to how open or closed domestic political institutions are to domestic social movement or NGO influence.” Like in the case of international political opportunity structure, this can be operationalized by examining formal and informal mechanisms or procedures for participation on different issues (ibid.). Sikkink’s framework essentially contends that more open domestic and international political opportunity structures facilitate the emergence of and positive outcomes for transnational collective mobilizations. Another point she emphasized is that opportunities and threats are not objective structural factors but are perceived by the activists.

The interplay of domestic and international structures is also analyzed by Risse-Kappen (2008). He writes that the impact of transnational actors and coalitions on state policies is likely to vary depending on the conditions of domestic structures and international institutions. Accordingly, the impact may vary because of:

1. differences in domestic structures, i.e. the normative and organizational arrangements which form the “state,” structure society, and link the two in the polity; and
2. degrees of international institutionalization, i.e. the extent to which the specific issue-area is regulated by bilateral agreements, multilateral regimes, and/or international organizations (460).

Risse-Kappen puts forward the proposition that “under similar international conditions, differences in domestic structures determine the variation in the policy impact of transnational actors. Domestic structures mediate, filter and refract the efforts by transnational actors and alliances to influence policies in the various issue-areas” (466).

Transnational actors have to overcome two main hurdles before they can influence policies. “First, they have to gain access to the political system of their `target state.’ Second, they must generate and/or contribute to `winning’ policy coalitions in order to change decisions in the desired direction.” Their ability to influence policy changes is affected by the “domestic coalition-building processes in the policy networks and on the degree to which stable coalitions form sharing the transnational actors’ causes” (ibid.).

Risse-Kappen’s emphasis on the importance of the domestic context is likewise raised in other works (e.g. Laxer and Halperin 2003; Lewis 2002; Rootes 2005). The domestic context still largely shapes the contours and

direction of transnational mobilization, and primarily provides the opportunities and resources for political mobilization. As articulated by Laxer and Halperin (2003) in reference to the anti-neoliberal globalization struggle:

What we are concerned with is being clear about where political action works best in opposing globalism. Trying to reduce the power of corporations and capital in the global arena will produce limited results unless joined by strong efforts at national and local level. If a significant organized domestic constituency is lacking, external actors usually accomplish little. Crossborder solidarities depend on the ability of nationally and locally mobilized forces to forge links with similarly mobilized forces abroad (15).

Transnational mobilization, therefore, is more likely to appear in conditions where there are open domestic political opportunity structures and corresponding support from existing local civil society groups. And when pursued with the presence of these elements, the mobilization will likely result in positive outcomes (e.g. Lewis 2002; Piper and Ford 2006; Law 2002; Sim 2003; Rothman and Oliver 2002). This is shown for instance in a study conducted by Tammy Lewis (2002) on transnational social movement organizations working on the conservation of environment in Ecuador, Chile, and Peru. Lewis' study concludes that "transnational SMOs pursued conservation projects in countries with more open political structures and active voluntary sectors than in countries where preservation was most urgent for the local and/or global ecology" (7). The mobilizations succeeded in influencing conservation policies and practices, such as the establishment of national parks and management of protected areas by domestic NGOs largely because of the more open domestic political opportunity structures.

Also, the studies of Piper and Ford (2006), Law (2002), and Sim (2003) on transnational political mobilization in Hong Kong show that activism for migrant workers' rights thrived in the area because of the government's tolerance for political mobilization. Moreover, the relevance of the domestic context as resource for political mobilization is shown in the case of the Filipino activists who largely facilitated the activism in Hong Kong. The Philippines' relatively conducive environment for social movement mobilization and its long tradition of activism nurtured the activists in Hong Kong. The mobilizations yielded positive outcomes such as the non-implementation of a planned drastic wage cut on the salaries of domestic workers during the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in Hong Kong; the authorities' reduction of agency fees for the renewal of work contracts; and

the enactment of voting rights for Filipino migrants (2003 Absentee Voting Rights Bill in the Philippines RA 9189).

Moreover, the study of Rothman and Oliver (2002) on the antidam movement in Brazil articulates as much the importance of the local context in transnational struggle. They said that “the initiative for protest and resistance always began with the local people, as did the initiative to seek external resources. External agents were reactive, requesting for proposals, or entering an area after the disruption has started” (128).

This section emphasizes that even though states are nested in an increasingly powerful global polity committing themselves to transnational institutions, which can in turn affect their decisions on domestic matters, this does not mean that states should be relegated to the background as targets of protest actions. Decisions on whether to commit to transnational arrangements are still largely made by the state. In addition, the undiminished relevance of the domestic context lies in its being the primary provider of resources for transnational activism. Two factors are especially crucial in the domestic arena: the open political environment and local civil society groups that lend support to transnational activism. Social movement entrepreneurs should therefore be able to continue to nurture the domestic arena if they aim to engage in transnational activism.

ORGANIZATIONAL FORM AND STRATEGIES

Transnational activism also creates new strategies and forms of organization (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Tarrow 2005; Smith 2007). This change is captured in Jackie Smith’s (2007) study of the 1999 protests at the Third Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle, Washington which analyzes the strategies or “repertoires of actions” employed by those involved in this form of political mobilization. In the Seattle protests, the study suggests that a division of labor existed between groups with local or national ties and those with transnational ties such that the former took on mobilization roles while the latter provided information and the framing of the campaign and struggle in general. Likewise, an examination of the tactics employed shows that “national protests `repertoires’ have been adapted for use in global political arenas,” while there is also evidence of “protest innovation in response to global political integration and technology.” Although the study merely focused on one protest episode, it nonetheless suggests that transnational protests affect the organization and character of social movements (468).

Smith identified the following as some of the older or existing protest forms used in Seattle: teach-ins which were first used in anti-Vietnam war protests; press center and press conferences for mainstream media; irreverent and humorous street theater and puppet shows; and disruption tactics such as blockade of international conference site, civil disobedience, and vandalism against corporate sites (480-482).

Although earlier 'protest repertoires' are adopted, other tactics are "innovative in the sense that they target multilateral arenas and that they often involve TSMOs." These tactics "often rely on new technologies, ironically the same ones that have fueled the global economic expansion the protesters resist." The innovations include the creation of transnational associations and "transnationally oriented movement media" exemplified in NGO newspapers presenting "counter-hegemonic interpretations of negotiations and highlight the proposals and activities raised by challenger groups" (483).

Moreover, the activists borrow from official templates for their collective action. For example, they organized a People's Assembly to parallel official deliberations. Another means of borrowing official forms is by "getting sympathetic experts or even movement activists onto national delegations to international meetings." Another form of borrowing involves "dramaturgy in the application of international legal principles." In Seattle, the "Global People's Tribunal on Corporate Crimes Against Humanity" dramatically "brought to trial" corporate practices around the world. The lawyer-activists facilitating the event "educated the audience and 'jury' on the relevant international law and tribunal procedures." At the end of the "proceedings," the Tribunal "indicted" the governments whose laws allowed the operation of the guilty corporations (483-484).

Another innovation is electronic activism extensively using Internet sites and electronic list serves enabling the expansion of communication with dispersed constituencies and audiences. The communication networks enabled the organizers "to almost instantaneously transmit alternative media accounts and images of protests to contrast those of mainstream, corporate-owned media outlets" (484).

Smith's study concurs with what is documented in other studies (e.g. Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Della Porta et al. 2005) with regard to the repertoire of contention employed by actors in new transnational contention, such that activists are reverting to the more contentious forms of collective

action. This is contrary to the conclusion of a study conducted in the 1990s (e.g. Marks and Mac Adam 1999 as cited in Della Porta and Tarrow 2005) predicting that social movements will tend to shift from contentious to more contained forms of collective action as they change the focus of their activities from the national to the international level (241). This is because the targets of protests at the international level (such as the WTO) exhibit the same low democratic accountability and transparency like those at the national level.

Change in strategy is also manifested in “the ease with which activists who enter politics in one campaign can shift smoothly to cognate campaigns, and the rise of composite movement organizations.” For example, after 11 September 2001, “many activists from the global justice campaign moved rapidly into antiwar activities, often framing their new target as an extension of their opposition to global social injustice.” This flexibility is not only evident among the new activists but is also seen in the nature of their organizations. Since the 1990s, there is a trend of a shift from single issue to multi-issue organizing among transnational movement organizations. This trend is especially evident in the global South where for example dictatorship and corruption “provide opportunities and threats that encourage the formation of broad-based opposition groups instead of the focused campaign coalitions” (212). The adoption of multi-issue frame is also manifested in the movement’s identification of linkages between issues, such as between environmental protection and human rights or between peace and human rights (Bandy and Smith 2005; Mittelman and Chin 2000).

Moreover, the central unit of transnational contention has veered away from the bureaucratic movement organizations and has been replaced by “spokes councils and working groups... (that) mediate between the need for coordination and group autonomy.” The Internet has facilitated the existence of these new forms of organization. In between protest events when activists go back to their localities, they “remain in touch with one another through friendship networks, e-mail contacts, and, increasingly, through online internet connection.” The Internet is credited for speeding up the “organization of event coalitions and eases the maintenance of between-event coalitions. It is at the core of a new type of movement organization, one that is no longer dependent on fixed, place-based activities” (Tarrow 2005: 210).

However, there is growing concern about the lack of formal organizational structure of transnational networks (Bandy and Smith 2005; Chase Dunn and Gills 2005), as diffused movements are likely to suffer from weaknesses or

limitations in actions. Bandy and Smith (2005) explain why the need for a more formal organization structure:

Formalization of transnational ties both helps to sustain long-term cooperative action by routinizing transnational contacts and facilitating the mobilization of resources for transnational action. Most of the goals of social change advocates require long term action over many years to both promote a change in policy or governance structure and then to sustain public awareness and monitor policy implementation. Thus alliances formed on an ad hoc temporary basis find that they must develop more formal organizational routines to facilitate cooperation. This can happen even when activists resist formal structures that can inhibit their flexibility or autonomy (4).

To summarize, the advent of the use of Internet offers innovations on how political mobilization is organized. Among the changes it helped facilitate, is the less formal organizational structure for transnational networks. The less structured set-up affords activists greater flexibility and autonomy. Campaigns and mobilizations can also be conducted on an ad hoc basis because of the facility of communication among the activists. However, there may be need to reflect on the effectiveness of the less structured set-up. Advocating for social change requires long term, sustained action. And this can only be facilitated if the activists operate within formal organizational structure which can give a semblance of consistency, planning and coordination of the activities of movement members.

COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

Collective identity is typically understood as “a shorthand designation announcing a status—a set of attitudes, commitments, and rules for behavior—that those who assume the identity can be expected to subscribe to. These identities are frequently a reflection of ascribed characteristics (e.g. race, class, gender, or sexual orientation) but they can also reflect beliefs, ideologies, or loyalties” (Nepstad 2002: 135). Two main themes can be extracted from the literature dealing with collective identity in the context of transnational mobilization. One, the emergence of the anti-neoliberal globalization as master frame for collective mobilization and two, the more flexible identities of activists such that they can straddle between domestic and transnational mobilizations and can have overlapping memberships in loosely structured networks (such as being members of the labor and environmental movements at the same time).

The construction of a collective “we” is a crucial issue in transnational mobilization. Organizers should be able to frame the issue of contention so as to mobilize sympathizers from a wide array of activists across the globe. Framing is used here in the tradition of how Snow et al. (1986) theorized the concept for social movement analysis. Snow et al. note that social movements “actively engage in the production of meaning for participants, antagonists, and observers... They frame, or assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support and to demobilize antagonists” (McAdam 1999: 338-339). Social movements should also be able to “frame social problems and injustices in a way that convinces a wide and diverse audiences of the necessity for and utility of collective attempts to redress them” (McCarthy, Smith, Zald 1999: 291).

Judging from the wide participation of activists in the anti-WTO mobilizations and World Social Forums, movement organizers are able to cast the anti-neoliberal globalization as a shared master frame for the mobilizations (Della Porta et al. 2006). Activists from different localities and issues such as those working on indigenous peoples in the Philippines, environmentalists in Indonesia, or labor activists in Latin America come together to these mobilizations and relate their issues to the neoliberal agenda of globalization.

Meanwhile, Della Porta and Tarrow (2005: 237) write that transnational activism transforms activists into rooted cosmopolitans with flexible identities and multiple belongings. “Rooted cosmopolitans” are those who are “rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in regular activities that require their involvement in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts.” While activists with “multiple belongings” are those with “overlapping memberships linked within loosely structured, polycentric networks.” For example, activists may be both members of ecological and labor movements and employ both labor and ecological approaches to global issues. Flexible identities are referred to as “identities characterized by inclusiveness and a positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization, with limited identifications that develop especially around common campaigns on objects perceived as “concrete” and nurtured by search for dialogue.” With flexible identities, diversity is stressed as a positive asset for collective action. Della Porta and Tarrow add that: “Concrete common campaigns are perceived not only as built upon a minimal common denominator, but as the basis for the development of a shared understanding of external reality. Notwithstanding

multiple belongings, activists stress the important role of 'subjectivity' and individual involvement."

All these imply that identity will be less of an issue in transnational mobilization. However, a volume by Bandy and Smith (2005) on transnational coalitions shows that identity is still much of an issue in these mobilizations. One of the most common identity conflicts discussed in the case studies is that between activists of developed and developing nations, with "the Northern activists often assume paternal or imperial roles and their Southern counterparts who articulate nationalisms or regionalisms" (239). This is similar to the observations made by Eschle and Stammers (2004) and Piper and Uhlin (2003) about the tendency of transnational networks to be dominated by certain organizations or Northern-based activists.

Conflicts can also be seen in the issue of gender where a study on fair trade coalitions show limited women's movements participation in the network. MacDonald (2005) writes that "the coalitions that have emerged against free trade in the Americas are not free of exclusionary practices. In particular, while such issues as labor and environmental rights have become prominent elements of anti-free trade campaigns, the gendered dimensions of trade have gained relatively little exposure." Women's movements have not been in the thick of trade campaigns and have been slow to mobilize at a transnational level to protest trade agreements (21-22). Among others, MacDonald attributes this to the difficulty encountered by women "who are attempting to interpret and critique complex trade agreements to translate their analysis into terms that are comprehensible to the average women who make up the base of women's movement" (37).

Differences in religious beliefs were also pointed out by Cullen (2005) as a major tension in the Platform of European Social NGOs (the Platform) on the issue of reproductive rights. The Platform is a formal NGO coalition comprising of 39 local, national, and international organizations constituted to defend the interests of disadvantaged social groups across the European Union (EU). Among those represented are women, older people, people with disabilities, unemployed people, migrants, people living in poverty, gays, lesbians, young people, children and families, and those working on issues such as social justice, homelessness, health, and racism (71).

Identity conflict is also discussed in the context of the discussion on democracy issues in transnational networks. Piper and Uhlin (2003) for instance raised the issue of how networks practice the kind of democracy

they are advocating at the transnational level within their ranks. In relation to this, questions about the “constituents, mandate, representative status and accountability of transnational civil society actors” have been raised. The question of representativeness is highlighted by the dominance of Northern-based activists in transnational networks. The problem is not only confined to geographic distribution as a large number of transnational activists tend to be well-educated, middle class people thus prompting a comment that rather than being a “globalization from below,” contemporary transnational activism seems to be more of a “globalization from the middle” (Piper and Uhlin 2003).

Similarly, Ayres (2003) raised the problems of representation and accountability in the movement against neoliberal globalization. He writes:

One of the more erroneous popularized assumptions is to equate NGO representation in the movement against neoliberalism with global representativeness, if not outright support amongst civil society constituencies in various domestic settings. For the most part, the activism inspired by NGOs and transnational social movement organizations, which is at the heart of the mobilization against neoliberalism, is limited to much smaller number of committed and professional social activists (31).

There is, therefore, a need to examine the celebratory collective identity that has been put together via the anti-neoliberal globalization or global justice movement frame amid the problem of identity conflicts confronting transnational networks that are mobilized under this overarching advocacy. Moreover, the tendency of transnational coalitions to work on multi-issues may conflict with the necessity of focusing on the specific needs of movement constituents. When the advocacy of the network is dispersed, it is likely that it will miss addressing the needs of specific sectors that members identify with.

CONCLUSION

Processes related to globalization facilitate the growth of transnational collective action. While globalization provides the context for the political mobilization, its content espousing the neoliberal agenda provides as much push for contention. The transnationalization of collective action is also facilitated by the acknowledgement that any effective movement against neoliberal economic globalization must be transnational in scope.

Some literature celebrates the newness in transnational contention, casting perspectives on how to conceptualize anew the role of the state and the domestic context in the struggle, organizational form, strategies, and collective identities of social movements. These views imply rethinking the role of the state as the primary site of struggle because of its being embedded in an increasingly influential global polity, that it is advantageous for transnational networks to operate in a less structured organizational set-up to afford activists greater autonomy and flexibility to pursue other causes, and that activists can cast aside individual identities and rally behind an all-inclusive identity like being anti-neo liberal globalization. However, there are problems and conflicts with these conceptualizations as discussed in the paper. Hence, there might be a need to revisit conventional frameworks for social movement analysis and apply these to transnational mobilization. In line with the points raised earlier, it might be prudent to still regard the state and domestic context as the primary site of resistance, that coalition networks should be more structured to efficiently pursue their goals; and that networks should be more sensitive to identities (by way of consciously addressing the needs of specific sectors in the coalition for instance).

Given the fact the even national movements face difficulties to survive, transnational networks “must traverse even larger gaps in power, wealth, ideology, culture, strategic interests, and organizational forms” (Bandy and Smith 2005). Hence, more studies should be conducted on transnational mobilizations with the aim of uncovering the problems and challenges they face in their organizations. The compendium by Bandy and Smith (2005) is pioneering for examining crossborder coalitions along this line of inquiry. However, like most studies on transnational social movements, all the case studies, except for one, focus on European and American experiences. Hence, there is a need to study transnational coalitions in other parts of the world for example Asia. Also, Bandy and Smith’s volume focused more on broad based coalitions with less formal organizational structure. It would therefore be a welcome addition to the literature studies dealing with transnational collectivities with fairly organized structure and juxtapose their experiences with the less structured networks.

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