

# THE PROFESSION

## confessions of a recovering structuralist<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Beginning his career as a structurally oriented area specialist in Italy in the mid-1960s, Sidney Tarrow moved on to a paired comparison of France and Italy, then to more process-oriented work on social movements and contentious politics, and finally to European and transnational contention. In this article, he traces his theoretical development as a series of missteps, which – like a hiker crossing a turbulent stream – took him from one slippery rock to another.

**Keywords** contentious politics; political processes; mechanisms; transnational contention

**A**s a Columbia University graduate student listening to my great teacher, David Truman, in far-off 1961, I asked myself whether the approach he was proposing to study interest groups and lobbies could be extended to more contentious forms of politics. Truman called his book *The Governmental Process* (1951), because it was within and around governments that interest groups mobilised, fought out, and reconciled their claims. Was it unreasonable, I asked myself, to hypothesise that the behaviours Truman saw inside the governmental process could be found among *outsiders* as well? And that insiders and outsiders might interact through similar processes? Connecting institutional and non-institutional politics and uncovering the processes that drive their relations are the questions I have wondered about

ever since. However, I did not get there either right away, or by following a straight line. Like a hiker crossing a stream on a sequence of slippery stones, my itinerary went from Berkeley to southern Italy to Provence, back to Italy's national contentious politics and to European and transnational politics. If I ask the readers of *EPS* to follow me along this series of missteps, it is because it reflects the changes in our field and not because it traces the trajectory of one political scientist.

### FROM GOVERNMENT TO CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

A look around me in 1960s America might have convinced me that Truman's insight could be extended beyond the halls of the American Congress. The civil rights movement was succeeding, in large part

because it combined action in institutional and non-institutional arenas. The late 1960s brought protesters into objective coalitions with the congressional opposition against the Vietnam war. The new women's movement was connecting presidential commissions with grassroots feminism. However, social movement scholars at the time worked within the so-called 'collective behaviour' approach – in which contentious politics was seen only *against* and *outside of* institutions; in the super-charged atmosphere of the 1960s, no one would have seen David Truman's *Governmental Process* as a source of inspiration for the study of social movements.

## TWO ITALIAN COMMUNISMS

Neither did I. However, when I went to Italy to write my dissertation in 1963, I found that the lines between the institutional and the non-institutional spheres were being crossed all the time. In *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy* (Tarrow, 1967a), I tried to understand how the different structural conditions of North and South impacted on the organisational, the ideological, and the electoral behaviour of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and its relations with the southern peasantry. That paired comparison would give me the leverage, I hoped, to see how institutional and non-institutional politics varied in different political cultures.<sup>2</sup>

The southern peasant movement had broken out in the context of the land hunger and political chaos of the immediate post-war period. With little political experience after two decades of authoritarian rule, and with little capacity for mobilisation, it came to depend on the PCI. However, that party, born in the factories of the more advanced North, worked to restrain the peasants' robust energies and insert it in Palmiro Togliatti's (1956) moderate *Via italiana al socialismo*. This left the field open to the govern-

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ing Christian Democrats, who responded to the struggle for the land by passing a tepid agrarian reform and, through a combination of reform and repression, co-opted the peasantry into an elaborate system of patronage that helped to lead to its demobilisation (chapter 12).

The story I quickly constructed out of these materials went something like this. The South was a backward and disorganised region – what Gramsci (1963), in a just-republished essay, called 'a great social disaggregation'. The party that swept down from the North met the peasants' 'spontaneity' with organisation; in doing so, it imposed a (northern) organisational model on a (southern) environment to which it was not well suited, displacing the radical energy of the peasants with a parliamentary strategy shaped around the party's needs in its heartland in the Centre-North.

On reflection, this understanding of the interaction of peasants and communists was too determinist. After all, the Communists were not *obliged* by the underdeveloped conditions of the South to adopt a strategy that would weaken the

peasants – think of Mao’s strategy in China! They *chose* the moderate line that led them to suppress the peasants’ energies for reasons that had less to do with structural factors than with the party’s national strategy. That strategy was eminently suited to the post-war *pax Americana* under which Italy found itself and to the social forces the Communists met in northern Italy – industrial workers and farm workers in commercial agriculture. However, in the South, it reached out to the small landholders, the middle class, and the intellectuals of the region, producing a movement that was co-opted, constrained, and ultimately demobilised (1967a: chapter 13).

As a still photograph of the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, this was not a bad portrayal of the Communists’ dilemma in the South; it conjoined real differences in social structure with the differential impact of the party’s national strategy, producing a robust labour party in the North and a poorly articulated mass movement in the South. Figure 1 summarised my argument in terms of the interaction of party strategy and levels of development in Italy’s two major regions (Tarrow, 1967b).

*Peasant Communism* was well received in Italy and in Anglo-American comparative politics scholarship, but like the structuralist paradigm that dominated 1960s scholarship in the US at the time, its typological logic was static. In a language I would only come to adopt later with my two sociologist collaborators (McAdam *et al.*, 2001), *Peasant Communism* put all the action into the boxes of the typology in Figure 1 and gave

little attention to the mechanisms and processes that connected the actors. Had I looked for what was making the story move, I would have seen:

- the *social appropriation* of the organisational structure of the party by the peasant movement;
- the party acting as a *broker* between the peasants and the Christian-Democratic-led government;
- a *radical flank effect*, through which the peasants’ direct action on the ground benefited the more-moderate Communists, who achieved a land reform from a government anxious to stifle dissent;
- *scale shift* from the bloodied fields of the *Mezzogiorno* to the more institutionalised political arena in Rome (Tarrow and McAdam, 2005).

Generous readers may say that finding a name for our discoveries only after they have grown cold is no sin, but this would miss the point. Had I specified the causal pathways that my structural typology suggested, I might have told a story that did not reduce to the goal displacement of the peasantry by a nationalising party. And by specifying the relationships that bound the actors to one another, I might have seen more clearly the parallels between the PCI’s dilemma in the South and other examples of rural contention. In Southeast Asia, my Yale colleague, Harry Benda (1956, 1966), saw communism in very similar terms, while Ruth McVey (1965, 1970), whom I met years later, was finding similar social sources of the PKI. Dynamic mechanisms and processes – and not static structures –

		Party Strategy	
		Leninist	Non-Leninist
Societal Type	Developed Society	Sect	Mass Labour Party
	Developing Society	Vanguard Party	Mass Movement

**Figure 1** Structural/strategic typology from *Peasant Communism in Southern Italy*. Source: Tarrow (1967b).

are the best tools with which to uncover portable truths that can link different episodes of contention (McAdam *et al.*, 2001: chapter 2).

## FROM SOCIAL TO STATE STRUCTURALISM

My second book, *Between Center and Periphery* (1977), like *Peasant Communism*, combined structural and strategic perspectives too. However, where the first specified structure through the different social configurations of northern and southern Italy, the second specified it as the different administrative structures of Italy and France. And where *Peasant Communism* specified political strategy as the Communists' national line, *Between Center and Periphery* specified it as the strategies that local elites used to gain resources from the centre.

The 1970s were a period of rediscovery of the state, especially on the part of disillusioned progressives whose 1960s structuralism had led to dead ends. Guided by the simple idea that two Latin states could be compared just as easily as two parts of the same country, and by the desire of my Francophile spouse to spend a year in France, my next research effort took me to Provence. There I expected to find peasants resembling those I had met in the hardscrabble fields of southern Italy and communists like the militants who went south to construct the PCI in that benighted region. Nothing could have been further from those images than the politics I found in the village of Maussane-les-Alpilles in the year following May 1968.<sup>3</sup> The farmers I met there (the fact that they called themselves 'agriculteurs' and not 'paysans' should have told me something) had set their faces against the French left, and for the most logical of reasons: the national paralysis of May had made it impossible for them to sell their *primeurs* in the high-priced markets of Paris. As for the local

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Communist party, it was only with difficulty that I could find a PCF *section*, and there I met with a level of suspicion I had never encountered in southern Italy.

However, comparison is built not only on similarities. The startling differences between the local elites I met in Provence and those I had interviewed in Italy led me to a puzzle: what were the effects of territorial structures of power on local elites? When I asked a Communist mayor: 'How long, M. le Maire, have you been involved in politics', and he responded with a sweeping, 'Moi, je ne fais pas de politique!', I at first thought he was taking me for a fool. However, when the same declaration was repeated across the political spectrum, I began to take it more seriously. Here was a region of the country that had historically been part of *la France rouge*; what could it mean when local officials from left to right denied being in politics? Could such a thing have happened in Italy? Or even in more industrial parts of France?

That constituted an empirical question and one that I thought I could answer with the techniques of paired comparison I had learned in Italy. From 1969 through 1975, with a team of young French and Italian interviewers, I tried to find out whether my impressions from Provence were specific to mayors in that region, general to France, or typical of small-town politicians in centralised political systems. What I found in the 250 interviews we collected from four regions of each country showed that the country variable was

dominant: almost *all* the French mayors we interviewed shared the apolitical discourse of my respondents in Provence; almost *none* of the Italians did, regardless of their regional political cultures, the sizes of their cities or their political affiliations.

How could this difference be explained? My interpretation turned on the structural differences in the two systems of centre–local relations and on the strategies that connected local politicians to the central states of each country. Small-town mayors in France gained the resources they needed through their contacts within the formal structures of authority: from the Interior Ministry down through the provincial prefects and cantonal sub-prefects, they sought approval for subsidies to finance their projects. In contrast, in a centre–local system like Italy’s, local officials used their ties through party and parliamentary officials to gain the resources they wanted. The ‘apolitical’ representations I had found in the mayors of Provence were neither a ploy to fool a gullible foreigner nor a deep-seated *apolitisme*; it was a structurally conditioned political strategy designed to gain leverage in a territorial system that rewarded apolitical good behaviour and punished activism. In contrast, in a centre–local system like the Italian one, in which the formal structure barely disguised – and indeed embodied – partisan politics, local officials gained their resources through party-political connections.

Quantitative comparisons of local elites’ political representations did not offer the red meat to the intellectual left that *Peasant Communism* had done. However, from researching and writing *Between Center and Periphery*, I learned the virtues and limits of paired comparison:

- *virtues*: by comparing political behaviour in two centralised administrative systems, I gained leverage with which

to silhouette the variations that produced different outcomes;

- *limitations*: the comparisons in *Between Center and Periphery* suffered from the same static structuralism as *Peasant Communism*.

How would my French findings be affected by the changes in the Fifth Republic once General de Gaulle passed from the scene? And how would the Italian system of centre–local relations be affected by the impending regional reform?<sup>4</sup> *Structure + strategy = outcomes* was a good start for making static comparisons, but it left unexplored how political change occurs. However, we can learn even from our own dead ends: the lesson I took away from my engagement with the nuts and bolts of local politics in France and Italy was that similar pathways can produce different outcomes depending on the initial conditions of each path and on the combination of mechanisms and processes through which the pathway operates. The French Communist mayor who summarily dismissed my question about how long he had been in politics set me off on a voyage of discovery that led me to ask questions about the political processes of these two countries that would eventually lead to an expansion of Truman’s ‘governmental’ approach into the realm of contentious politics. That voyage took me back across the border to Italy.

## **FINDING DEMOCRACY AMID DISORDER**

The subject of my third book was the cycle of protest of the late 1960s and early 1970s – Italy’s *maggio strisciante* (stretched-out May).<sup>5</sup> However, by now, social movement studies offered more help than they had done in the previous decades. While I had been beavering away at French and Italian local politics, my friends Frances Fox Piven and Richard

Cloward (1977), in their classic study, *Poor People's Movements*, were connecting protest firmly to American institutions. At the same time, Charles Tilly (1964), who had cut his teeth on the French Revolution began his text, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), with a 'polity model' that linked challengers to members of the polity. Not long after, Doug McAdam (1982[1999]) revisited the civil rights movement through the optic of what he called 'a political process' perspective. In my third book, *Democracy and Disorder: Protest and Politics in Italy, 1965-1974* (1989), I drew on these inspirations to examine nearly a decade of contentious politics in Italy with a new conceptual tool.

## THE STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES

In *Democracy and Disorder*, my guiding star was a concept that Tilly presaged in his 1978 book, and that Piven and Cloward and McAdam had separately developed more fully: *the structure of political opportunities*.<sup>6</sup> By that concept I came to mean features of regimes and institutions (for example, splits in the ruling class, political alignments, the presence or absence of influential allies, the threat or lack of repression, and changes in any of these) that facilitate or inhibit a political actor's collective action (McAdam, 1996; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978; McAdam *et al.*, 1996). This was a new and more flexible concept of structure than I had employed in my first two books. In *Democracy and Disorder*, instead of seeing the Italian protest cycle of the late 1960s and early 1970s as the inevitable outcome of Italy's structural deficiencies or of its state structure, I now saw it as the result of a changing balance of opportunity and threat. Employing a methodology that Tilly (1995) had pioneered in his work on contention in British history, and using newspaper information on almost 5000

'protest events' from the Italian press, I examined the relations between protest and politics at different stages of the Italian protest cycle and compared its workings for different social and political actors.

Three facts about that protest cycle emerged from the original event analysis and constituted an interesting puzzle, especially when compared to the contemporary French May:

- *first*, the Italian *maggio* started earlier, lasted longer, caused more mayhem, and brought about more death and destruction than the French May;
- *second*, while the French May had the indirect effect of ending the Gaullist decade of relatively tight central control, Italy's more volatile and longer period of disorder left the Christian Democratic party in power until it was unseated by the political earthquake of the 1990s;
- *third*, although nobody would mistake the hurly-burly of Italian democracy for the stability and regular alternation in power of Anglo-American democracy, Italy's protest cycle left the country with a more vigorous democratic life than the stunted cold war system of the 1950s and early 1960s.

Contemplating the Italian cycle of protest as a whole did not provide answers to this puzzle. Only by disaggregating it into component parts and putting it together again could I hope to reconcile the high level of protest with the lack of partisan change and the slow, halting, contradictory move to a consolidated democracy. That operation could have been done in many ways, but I chose to break down the events I had collected in two ways: first, by looking separately at three sectors of contention – students, workers, and Catholic dissidents; second, by comparing what I called 'conventional,' 'confrontational,' and 'violent' protest events.

The sectoral analysis showed that, in all three sectors, mobilisation had begun *within* institutions, seldom strayed very far from a contentious conversation with institutions, and, for the most part, resulted in modest institutional change. For example, the wildcat strikes that peaked in 1969 ended in their institutionalisation in the *consigli dei delegati* ('delegates' councils') that the trade unions created to regain control in the factories. However, it was the breakdown of protest events into types that showed the closeness of the conversation between contention and institutional politics. The dynamic of the protest cycle can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that the largest share of the protest events I coded from the Italian press consisted of 'conventional' events, while 'confrontational' events peaked early and soon ended. Organised violence peaked only towards the end of the cycle, when the mass of the protesters had gone back to work or to school. No one would argue that contentious politics in Italy was the same as institutional politics; but the linkages between the two during the cycle of protest were far more interesting than each one on its own.

shift from structural to process-oriented analysis. For how, I asked, had the exuberant protests of 1968–1969 led to the largely conventional wave of strikes and demonstrations that followed and which came to dominate the period? And how had these led into the lethal years of organised terrorism towards the end of the cycle? Pooling my data with those of a young Italian collaborator, Donatella della Porta, who was to do the best work on Italian terrorism (1995), we traced the pathways from peaceful protest to terrorism through two contradictory yet mutually dependent processes – *escalation* and *institutionalisation*, leading to *polarisation* and, thence, to the demobilisation of the cycle.

In an article in the *European Journal of Political Research* (della Porta and Tarrow, 1986), the argument we developed went like this: Masses of ordinary people whose claims feed into cycles of protest are soon discouraged by the boredom, repression, and desire for a routine life that eventually affects most protesters. Those who lead them respond to this decline in demand and enthusiasm in one of two ways:

## DEDUCING PROCESSES FROM STRUCTURES

It was my experience with systematic protest event analysis that led me to a

- by *institutionalisation*: the substitution of the routines of organised politics for the disorder of life in the streets, buttressed by mass organisations and purposive incentives;

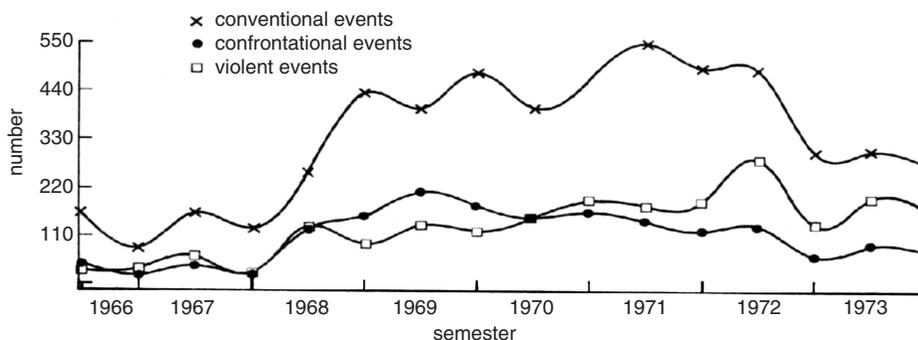


Figure 2 Conventional, confrontational and violent protest events: Italy, 1966–1973. Source: Tarrow (1989).

- or by *escalation*: the substitution of more extreme goals and more robust tactics for more moderate ones in order to maintain the interest of their supporters and attract new ones.

These two processes, we reasoned, are exacerbated by a third: *repression*, which accelerates the demobilisation of those with a low level of involvement, and isolates those whose involvement is most intense. The result is

- *polarisation*: increasing ideological distance between the wings of a once-unified movement sector, divisions between its leaders, and – in extreme cases – terrorism.

Without fully grasping the ontological shift we were making, della Porta and I were beginning to examine the processes and mechanisms that constitute the dynamics of contentious waves and lead to their transformation. We were using mechanism-and-process concepts to explain the least understood (and for activists, the most depressing) property of protest cycles: that most of them end in demobilisation. Ironically, I was returning to the two key concepts of my first book – mobilisation and demobilisation – but shorn of their structural determinism (1967a: chapters 11 and 13).

## THE POWERS IN MOVEMENTS

I only realised how far I had moved beyond the structuralist ontology of *Peasant Communism* when I tried to synthesise what I had learned about contentious politics over the preceding thirty years. When 1989 shattered many certainties about contentious politics, there was hardly a useful text in English on contentious politics. My friend Charles Tilly had written his *From Mobilization to Revolution* in far-off 1978. Neil Smelser's ambitious *Theory of Collective Behavior*

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(1963) had been left behind by theoretical developments in the field. The multi-authored work edited by McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (1996), was still in the future and della Porta and Diani's popular text was only published in 1999. I had no idea of writing a text in 1989, but in the absence of competition, *Power in Movement* (1998) began to pass for one – at least in North America and, to a lesser extent, in the United Kingdom.

Unlike most American works on social movements, *Power in Movement* was deliberately comparative. American students who used it learned for the first time, for example, that the modern social movement was not invented in their country, but in the heart of the empire it had revolted against (Tilly, 1995). Few would have thought (and many still do not realise) that the American Revolution was part of a trans-Atlantic movement that reached its culmination in the French Revolution. The book also drew together the by-now familiar concept of political opportunity structure with the resource mobilisation perspective that Mayer Zald and John McCarthy had pioneered in the 1970s (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; McCarthy and Zald, 1987) and drew on the growing interest in 'framing' developed in the 1980s (Snow *et al.*, 1986). And it paid particular attention to Tilly's concern with how people make claims, how claim-making performances have changed over the last two centuries, and how they have congealed in what he

called 'repertoires of contention' (Tilly 1978, 1986, 1995).

If *Power in Movement* became a popular text, it was probably because it synthesised a lot of the work on social movements and other forms of contention that had been written over the previous decades. However, it left me with a few nagging questions: first, what were these other forms of contention like, and how did they relate to 'social movements'? Second, were recent changes in politics, such as the 'normalisation of protest', creating what David S. Meyer and I (Meyer and Tarrow, 1999) called 'the social movement society'? Third, how could the cardinal concepts of the book – 'political opportunity structures', mobilising structures, frames and repertoires – be put into motion – a question that had been asked in a collective volume of the late 1980s (Klandermans *et al.*, 1988)? My next scholarly effort attempted to address these questions.

## WHAT'S UP, DOC?

The meeting on 'structure, identity, and power,' held in Amsterdam in June 1995, attracted the elite of European and American scholarship on historical collective action, and led to a valuable conference volume (Hanagan *et al.*, 1998). During an interval in the meeting, Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and I met to exchange complaints about the almost total absence of a common vocabulary and explicit comparison among episodes of contention and between contention in the West and the rest of the world. That gripe session led to a plan for joint action to study collective action in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. Inspired by McAdam's deft hand and with help from the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and the Mellon Foundation, we hatched a three-year plan that involved six faculty members plus fifteen

graduate students from around the US.<sup>7</sup> We also ventured beyond our own culture areas in Western Europe and the United States to carry out a programme of vigorous, rigorously controlled comparison of major contentious episodes.

By contentious politics, we came to mean episodic, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realised, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants. These went well beyond the familiar category of 'social movements,' to include almost everything that scholars ordinarily call revolution, rebellion, social movement, industrial conflict, war, ethno-religious mobilisation, and related terms. Across that range, we tried to ferret out causal analogies among mechanisms and processes that operated similarly despite occurring in very different settings – searching for the 'portable truths' that had eluded me in *Peasant Communism*.

Our initial decision meant, first, that we would need to broaden what has come to be called 'the classical social movement paradigm' to embrace the study of all sorts of contention. Second, in doing so, we would need to examine contention in parts of the world far beyond Western Europe. Third, we would need to develop a vocabulary that would enable us to compare many forms of contention in many parts of the world without squeezing them into a single great mold. The result was *Dynamics of Contention* (2001; henceforth DOC). For that book, we assembled analytical narratives of eighteen contentious episodes from a wide variety of places and periods since 1800. These included three 'touchstone' cases: the US civil rights movement, the Italian protest cycle of the 1960s, and the French Revolution of 1789–1994. To these we added four more Western European and American cases, as well as eleven others from around the world.

The point of these narratives was neither to provide comprehensive explanations of the events in question nor to subsume them under some general model of contention, but experimentally to identify recurrent mechanisms and processes within them that would help to explain critical features of those episodes. In the long run, we hoped our work would contribute to closer examination of such mechanisms and processes in an even wider variety of times and places. Nothing could have been further from the rather narrow empirical and conceptual compass of the 'social movement' tradition in the United States, which focused largely on reformist groups in that country.

Like many dreams, this one has not visibly succeeded, although a few specialists outside the social movement canon and many of our students seem to have been inspired by it. What it did for me – for good or for ill – was to leave the residues of my original structuralist persuasion on my curriculum vitae and convince me that the way to approach the puzzle raised by David Truman all those years ago was to look for common mechanisms and processes that bridge contentious and conventional politics. One place to look was at the so-called 'global justice movement' that has been linking domestic activists to international institutions since the mid-1990s.

## HAVE DOC; WILL TRAVEL

In the mid-1990s, my friend Doug Imig, with the face of innocence I have come to fear, suggested that a new method of automated coding of on-line press releases might solve a problem that had dogged students of European collective action for years: how to collect sufficient time-series and cross-sectional data to permit analysis of how the European Union was affecting the targets and the repertoires of European collective action.

*'A key question, yet one that is seldom asked in studies of 'global' social movements, is: 'how do social movement coalitions formed domestically scale upward into trans-national networks?'*

Intrigued by this technological fix, Imig and I (Imig and Tarrow, 2001) collected event data for a fourteen-year period of EU history from the twelve countries that had been members of the Union since 1984, when Reuter's European wire service went on line. The collective book that resulted, *Contentious Europeans* (2001), was a nice pendant for *Power in Movement*, for it showed that the political process approach that had animated that book with respect to national politics worked well for politics beyond borders.

However, our study of European contention did not bring aid and comfort to the growing cottage industry of 'global social movement' enthusiasts, since most of the contentious politics against EU policies was mounted on domestic ground (chapter 2). It did, however, raise the question of whether, in a world being transformed by globalisation, the study of trans-national contention might help fuse the separate scholarly worlds of international relations and comparative politics. My friends Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) had made a foray into this territory with their path-breaking *Activists Beyond Borders*. However, they had largely focused on bilateral relations between foreign NGO networks and domestic activists in the Third World. I wanted to try to understand wider vari-

eties of processes that seemed to be linking domestic, trans-national, and international politics at the turn of the century. So just as Imig and I had taken my approach from domestic to European politics in *Contentious Europeans*, I applied it to trans-national contention in general in what I came to call *The New Transnational Activism* (Tarrow, 2005).<sup>8</sup> It will be up to eventual readers to decide if I have succeeded, so I will cite only one process that bridges earlier work on domestic social movements with my newer interest in trans-national contention – the process that McAdam, Tilly and I called, in DOC, ‘scale shift’ (chapter 10).

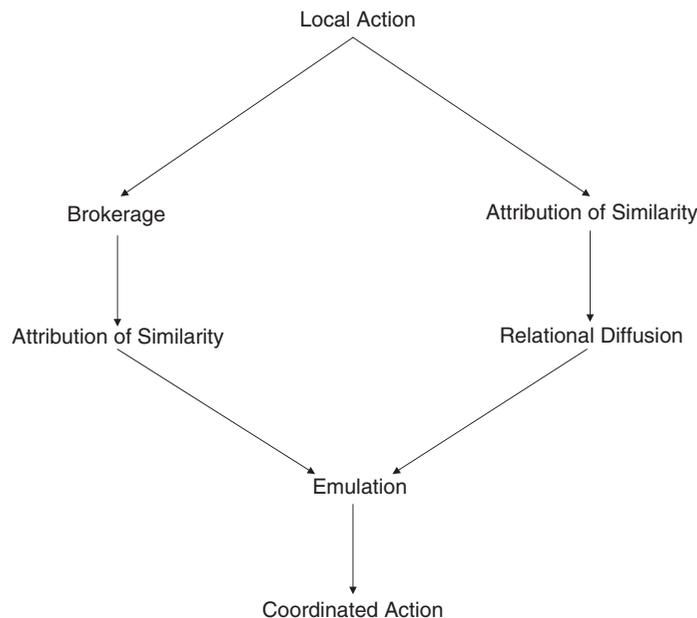
### SCALING UP FROM EUROPE

A key question, yet one that is seldom asked in studies of ‘global’ social movements, is ‘how do social movement coalitions formed domestically scale upward into trans-national networks?’ For many observers, ‘globalisation’ automatically produces ‘resistance’ – a repetition, if

there ever was one, of the structuralism I had abandoned in the 1980s. When we look for the mechanisms responsible for trans-national protest campaigns, a key factor is what, in DOC, we called ‘scale shift’ – a concept that McAdam had derived from his work on the 1960s civil rights movement (McAdam, 1982[1999]). The mechanisms we adduced from that case provided the initial scaffolding on which other episodes of contention could be hung.

We specified scale shift in DOC through a variety of complementary and alternative mechanisms. As we saw it, local contention scales upward through:

- *diffusion or brokerage*: two alternative routes – the first based on impersonal communication, the second on actors who bring together otherwise distinct groups – to the formation of coalitions;
- *attribution of similarity*: the mutual identification of actors in different sites as sufficiently similar to justify common action; and



**Figure 3** Scale shift: alternative routes. Source: della Porta and Tarrow (2005: 128).

- *emulation*: collective action modelled on the actions of others in more or less parallel situations.

We saw these four mechanisms concatenating in the two alternative routes to higher-level collective action sketched in Figure 3.

What difference did each pathway make for trans-national contention? Diffusion, we reasoned, is more common than brokerage, because it relies on pre-existing ties and homologies; but brokerage is more consequential in its impact, because it is more likely to bring together previously unconnected groups and produce sustained network ties among them. If a global social movement is ever built, it will not be through automatic resistance to globalisation, but through processes like a shift in scale from the local to the national to the global level (Tarrow and McAdam, 2005).

## SCALING DOWN TO ITALY

Scale shift not only moves upward, but downward. Following the spectacular success of the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre and Mumbai after the turn of the century, thousands of European activists returned home to form regional, national, and local social forums. Many of these 'rooted cosmopolitans' were being formed in my old stomping ground, Italy (Tarrow 2005: ch 7). Empirical examination showed that many more local social forums were created in the North of that country than in the South. Three decades after I wrote *Peasant Communism*, the political opportunities that permitted the social forum to be implanted in Italy followed roughly the same geographic logic that had taken me to southern Italy. As the saying goes: 'What comes around goes around.'



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### Notes

1 Parts of this article appeared in Tarrow (2003) under the same title.

2 I was inspired by two devoted teachers who both later became colleagues and friends: Joseph LaPalombara, who taught me much of what I know about how to understand Italian politics, and David Apter, who urged me to think about Italy in comparative terms.

- 3 My Yale colleague, Roger Masters, bore some responsibility for this study by introducing me to Maussane, where each of us spent productive sabbatical years.
- 4 It took twenty years of enormous effort for my friend Putnam to answer that question, in *Making Democracy Work* (1993).
- 5 More than most, that study depended on the collaboration of friends and colleagues. Aris Accornero and Ida Regalia were precious sources of information on the workers' movement, while Luigi Bobbio and Adriano Sofri drew on their experiences in the student and extra-parliamentary movements to help me understand the evolution of the extreme left between 1967 and 1973.
- 6 The language of political opportunity structure first entered the social movement canon from Peter Eisinger's (1973) article on urban protest movements in the United States.
- 7 The Mellon-Sawyer project also produced two collective volumes: Aminzade *et al* (2001) and Goldstone (ed.) (2003).
- 8 I thank the National Science Foundation and the Ford Foundation for the support that has allowed me and a group of Cornell PhD students to investigate these questions over the past five years, and especially Lisa Jordan who, unaccountably, had confidence that a scholar from Ithaca, New York could teach us something about the world of global civil society she has worked in both as an advocate and as a Foundation executive. Also see della Porta and Tarrow, eds, (2005).

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