SID IN MOVEMENT:
BECOMING A TRANSNATIONAL SCHOLAR

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ABSTRACT
This essay surveys Sid Tarrow's contribution to bringing together the study of European integration, transnational politics, and social movements--initially separate fields but, with the transformation of the European polity and the growth of transnational activism scholars began to explore the interplay. This forms the backdrop for a commentary of Sid Tarrow in movement. We discuss his work with Doug Imig which maps the extent to which social movement action has shifted to target the European Union; his book on transnational activism which examines the ways in which social movements exploit transnational opportunities; and his IO article with Jim Caporaso which examines the capacity of the European Union to provide social regulation that embeds the market.

DRAFT 1.1– COMMENTS WELCOME

In a review of two books written by Charles Tilly, Sid Tarrow (1987: 194) observes that what makes Tilly's work so interesting is its analysis of change as the outcome of "real interests and real conflict" in the process of capitalism and state building. This is a revealing insight into his own contribution. The passion motivating Sid Tarrow's work has been to lay bare the mechanisms that connect large-structure processes—capitalism and state building—with micro-behavior—uprooted locals, disruptive protest and national contention. Two themes run in tandem: a) the macro-micro interplay; b) the dialectic between economic and political structures—à la Polanyi rather than Marx.

Central in Sid's intellectual journey over the past fifteen years is a third theme: contention in the context of an eroding Westphalian state. The Europolity was the target of a handful of mass contentious events—including the Tuna war and the Renault Eurostrike—and Sid observed closely (Tarrow 1995; Imig & Tarrow 2000). But his initial skepticism was palpable: "the social movement 'dog' has not yet 'barked' at the European door" and is unlikely to do so for "a very long time indeed" (1995: 238). Not because social movements are unwilling to demand voice in Brussels, but because the combination of robust national opportunity structures and bias towards institutionalized politics in Brussels discourages social movements from mobilizing at the European level. Were the Tuna war and Eurostrike exceptions rather than harbingers of a new phenomenon? Sid left his options open: "[A] major axis of conflict of the next decade may well pit national political centers, strongly influenced by social movements, against transnational institutions, strongly influenced by lobbies" (Tarrow 1995: 245).

Over the subsequent fifteen years Sid embarked on a characteristically open-minded search—cross-examining facts, revisiting concepts, and developing a conceptual frame to understand transnational contention. "Two scholarly specialisms—European integration and the study of social movements—must come together to help to understand whether and how a European conflict structure is emerging" (Tarrow 1995: 223).

This essay sketches the rapprochement between the study of European integration on the one hand and social movements, protest, and politicization on the other. This is the backdrop for a fascinating intellectual journey—Sid in movement—that has shaped the field of transnational politics.

I. Two solitudes meet: the study of Europe and the study of social movements

Two things needed to happen for the study of European integration and social movements to cross-fertilize. EU scholars had to recognize the European Union as a terrain for "real interests and real conflict." And social movement scholars had to conceive Europe as a political opportunity structure shaping social movements as well as interests groups.

Until the early 1990s, the study of European integration was dominated by a tug of war between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism about whether the impetus for regional integration came from transnational actors or from national governments and whether EU institutions were autonomous or merely government agents. But beyond this disagreement, neofunctionalists and intergovernmentalists agreed that regional integration, like foreign policy, was elite determined. Regional integration was largely insulated from domestic mass politics, and hence shielded from social movements. Aside from the occasional farmers' march

on Brussels,[1] Europe was the province of Eurocrats, national governments, business lobbyists, and perhaps a handful of outnumbered and outgunned union leaders (Streeck & Schmitter 1991).

The elite approach to European integration was justified by three heuristic simplifications: that issues raised by European integration were weakly, if at all, related to domestic political conflict; that European integration was not on the radar screens of the general public; and that, as a consequence, public opinion on Europe was unstructured and superficial (Hooghe & Marks 2009).

These assumptions broke down around the time of the Maastricht Treaty (Caporaso 1996; Hix 1994; Marks et al. 1996; Pierson 1996; Risse 1996; and the contributions in Sbragia ed. 1992). As the Europe Union became more authoritative, it became more contentious (Albert 1992; Crouch & Streeck 1997; Hooghe & Marks 1999; Rhodes & Van Apeldoorn 1997). And social movements, along with political parties and the public began to pay serious attention. A new political front of contestation was opened between those seeking to protect their communities from the disruptive forces of globalization and European integration and those supporting integration (Hooghe & Marks 2009; Kriesi et al. 2006, 2008). For their part, EU scholars began to question assumptions that conceived European integration as international

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[1] One of Liesbet's earliest political memories has her listening to reports about "mass disruptive action" by tens of thousands of farmers in Brussels. At the crack of dawn her father had left the farm, together with every other mobile farmer of his and every neighboring village, to be bused to Brussels to march against Sicco Mansholt's plans. The demonstration turned violent and left one farmer dead, an untold number of participants, riot policemen, and onlookers wounded, and the Avenue Louise transformed into a carpet of shattered glass. Mansholt's plan sought to remove small farmers from the land and to consolidate farming into a larger, more efficient industry. Mansholt, who launched his plan in December 1968, was forced to revise the plan.

relations. And social movement scholars, led by Sid Tarrow, began to question assumptions that conceived social movements as national (Marks & McAdam 1996; Rucht 1993; Tarrow 1995).

A lot of conceptual furniture had to be moved. When in the 1980s researchers enlarged the study of social movements "to the state, to conventional forms of political exchange and to political and policy change" (Tarrow 1988: 422), the state was understood to be the national state. Tarrow's hugely influential conceptualization of political opportunity structure was operationalized to capture *national* political constraints and incentives. Six books on social movements reviewed by Sid Tarrow in the 1996 APSR recorded not one instance of contentious politics beyond the national. The European Union appeared distant, not relevant, not applicable.

But state-centrism was being challenged by research on transnational actors and the conditions under which they influenced international relations (Boli & Thomas 1999; Risse 1999; Keck & Sikkink 1998; O'Brien et al. 2000). While many scholars "were quick to transfer the ideologically attractive category 'social movement' to activities that would be more recognizable as lobbying, communication, and educational and service activity if they were observed at home" (Tarrow 2001: 10), they also motivated social movement researchers to examine contentious politics beyond the national state (della Porta et al. 1999; della Porta, Andretta, Reiter 2005; della Porta & Tarrow 2005).

The concept of political opportunity structure became a powerful, and flexible, tool for understanding transnational as well as national contention. Marks and McAdam (1996, 1999) used a typology of political opportunities to assess the European constraints on labor, regional,

environmental and anti-nuclear movements. Imig and Tarrow (2000) distinguished four types of European protest to examine how the EU opportunity structure affects their incidence.

These developments set the stage for social movement scholars moving into European studies. A first step was to survey the lay of the land: using Reuters media data, Imig and Tarrow documented the incidence of Europrotests—contentious activity targeting EU policies or public office holders—in twelve member states from 1984 to 1998. They found that contentious activity had risen from less than five percent of all protest events in 1992 to more than ten percent by the end of the 1990s (Imig & Tarrow 2000; Imig 2004).

These data provide the backbone for Doug Imig and Sid Tarrow's book *Contentious Europeans* (2001, ch 2 and appendix) along with cleverly paired case studies of farmer, trade union, women, environmental, and immigrant movements. Three empirical questions are posed:

- Is contentious transnational mobilization likely to increase?
- How is the development of transnational movement mobilization linked to the stages and patterns of European integration?
- How will the repertoire of social movements evolve in the multilevel polity?

Imig and Tarrow offer thoughtful answers: 1) transnational mobilization has increased, but it is hampered by weak transnational identities and networks; these impediments vary across sectors in ways that can be related to movement resources and their status in domestic opportunity structures; 2) transnational mobilization has increased in step with deeper EU integration, and economic losers of integration have mobilized the most; 3) multilevel governance in the European Union induces actors to diversify their repertoire across scale and

type of activity: rather than shift to conventional politics, Europrotesters employ both violent-disruptive and conventional methods.

The book serves as a welcome correction in EU studies. EU scholars had developed a tendency to equate politicization with Euroskepticism. But contestation and competition around European issues is not just systemic opposition. Imig and Tarrow report that "[A]lthough opposition to European integration was an important phenomenon, we were more interested in something else: in contentious politics within Europe, on the part of citizens who might support an integrated Europe, oppose it, or have no opinion about its desirability, but whose interests and values led them to focus on Europe as the source of their grievances and to make claims intended to affect its policies or its institutions" (Tarrow 2001: 233.)

Over the next several years, a new generation of scholars equipped with both social movement and EU training set up shop across Europe (several from Cornell). Following the examples of Tarrow, Klandermans, Kriesi, and Rucht they are observing contentious politics and theorizing, testing, and refining our knowledge of transnational activism. The main message of *Contentious Europeans*, that most protests against EU policies are mounted on domestic ground, is broadly confirmed. These studies also "showed the closeness of the conversation between contention and institutional politics," something that had fascinated Sid since his dissertation on Italian communism but proved particularly apposite for EU protest (Tarrow 2006: 13). When environmentalists go to Brussels, they often pack a suit as well as an anorak.

Along the way, two conceptual shifts have occurred. First, the political opportunity structure in Europe is conceived as multilevel. Scale shift has become part of the social movement repertoire. When problems implicate several levels of government but political

opportunities across these governments vary, strategic actors can be expected to exploit the opportunities that are available. "[T]he European Union . . . is at the same time crossterritorial, intergovernmental, and multilevel, which opens opportunities for coalitions of actors and states to formulate common positions and overcome their diversity and dispersion to exploit its political opportunities" (Tarrow 2001: 243-4).[2]

Second, the conceptualization of contention has broadened. The conventional understanding equated contention with disruptive direct action, i.e. "collective challenges by groups with common purposes and solidarity in sustained and mainly contentious interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow 1994: 3-4). Social movement scholars now question whether it makes sense to study non-institutionalized protest separately from institutionalized forms of collective action.[3] Tarrow (1996: 881) reflects: "I prefer to think that a movement is an actor or coalition of actors *. . . not reducible to or comparable to a particular form of action. . . .*[P]erhaps the solution is to focus on the strategic interactions between claims-makers and authorities whenever the claims made threaten some fundamental standing commitment of power holders or other groups, *regardless of the tactics used by claimants*?"[4]

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[2] In the last chapter of *Contentious Europeans* Tarrow turns to early state building to shed light on the political opportunity structure of a composite polity: "European state building was not simply a process of insistent national pressure from above and ultimately futile resistance from local rulers and ordinary people. Out of this triangular structure of relations among nationalizing prince, local rulers, and ordinary people, a variety of alignments and conflict structures developed among actors whose strategies and success varied with the context and the strength of the pressure from their opponents" (Tarrow 2001: 241.)

[3] Such conceptual moves are not without risk. As Tarrow (1996: 881) writes: "Practitioners . . . will have to decide which virtue they want to maximize, an inclusiveness that will combine serial data on protest with other kinds of information, or an exclusiveness that maximizes homogeneity and seriality at the risk of losing important information when movement actors work within institutions."

[4] Emphasis added.

The reconceptualization of contention—the recognition that opportunity structures are multilevel and that contentious activity is multifaceted—are the intellectual cornerstones for Sid's next move: scaling up from Europe to the globe in *The New Transnational Activism* (2005).

II. The processes of transnational activism

In the closing pages of *Contentious Europeans* Sid Tarrow notes that the obstacles to social movement mobilization are always formidable—in any setting, at any scale, at any time (Tarrow 2001:247). Transnational activists in the European Union face similar obstacles to the ones confronting ordinary people in eighteenth century Vendée, local peasants in post-war southern Italy, and anti-globalization activists in Genoa, Seattle, or Berlin. Indeed, what makes early state building, the emerging EU polity, and fledgling international governance similar is that all three engage composite opportunity structures, that is, they offer a wide range of venues. This produces not only obstacles but a repertoire of contentious activities.

How can local communities build coalitions to produce transnational activism? What are the processes through which local discontent and transnational activists connect, and what are the scope conditions for durable contention? *The New Transnational Activism* lays out six processes:

- global framing: using international symbols to frame domestic conflicts

- internalization: using domestic politics to respond to foreign/ international pressures

- diffusion: transferring claims or contention from one country to another

- scale shift: moving contention up or down on the local-to-global opportunity structure

- externalization: projecting domestic claims onto international institutions or foreign actors

- transnational coalition: forging networks of activists from multiple countries around shared claims.

The processes are ordered on a stepladder that takes activists from the domestic to the transnational. This is anything but a smooth ascent. Transnational activism that bridges the local-global divide is rare and rarely durable.

But transnational activism is possible. There is a transnational opportunity structure, "a triangular structure of relations among states, nonstate actors, and international institutions" (Tarrow 2005: 23). And there is a class of entrepreneurs with identities and social networks that equip them to build bridges between the local, national, and global. The entrepreneurs are "rooted cosmopolitans." They are cosmopolitan because they have "multiple belongings, flexible identities" (della Porta 2005). They are rooted because national communities motivate them. Italian, French, or Canadian transnational activists confront similar problems in nationally specific ways.[5]

A deep undercurrent in Sid's life-long study of contentious politics has been to understand how capitalist markets generate their own countermovement with the aid (or obstruction) of the state. No capitalism without discontent; no contention without the state; no state building without contentious activism. Here the undercurrent becomes an open stream, and he seeks to extend the argument to transnational contention. Tarrow draws a direct

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[5] "What is 'rooted' in this conception is that, as cosmopolitans move physically and cognitively outside their origins, they continue to be linked to place, to the social networks that inhabit that space, and to the resources, experiences and opportunities that place provides them with" (Tarrow 2005: 42).

parallel between state building and internationalism, and between nineteenth century

capitalism and twenty-first century global capitalism:

> "Like the movement that Polanyi identified in the Industrial Revolution, globalization
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> creates new social victims and transforms the role of states; and like the expanding
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> national state in the nineteenth century, internationalization constrains and creates
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> opportunities for citizens to engage in collective action . . . Globalization and
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> internationalization are distinct processes that intersect but cannot be reduced to one
>
> another. To be sure, the analogy is imperfect . . . The chief difference is that there is no
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> world government analogous to the role of the nationalizing state in the nineteenth
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> century. The major new element is the extraordinary expansion of the capacity of
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> nonstate actors to organize across borders . . ." (Tarrow 2005: 19).

Tarrow (2005: 19) observes that the key difference between the nineteenth century and

now is the absence of centralized government. In contrast to the nineteenth century when

capitalist forces were regulated by centralizing states, transnational capitalism faces

fragmented authority. There is no focal point for a countermovement. One might conclude

from this, as some have done, that regime competition—and pressure on market regulation—

will be the outcome.

This would be premature: international institutions, villain of anti-globalization protests,

could be a key mechanism for social embedding. International institutions, the third pivot in the

political opportunity structure that Tarrow diagnoses, are double-edged. They can serve not

only "as carriers of threats to ordinary citizens" and "agents of global capitalism," but also as

"an opportunity space within which opponents of global capitalism and other claimants can

mobilize" (Tarrow 2005: 25-26). They are a likely site for rooted cosmopolitans and transnational activists.

III. Polanyi in Brussels

Several examples in *The New Transnational Activism* demonstrate the dual nature of international institutions, but those on gender equality and the environmental movement in the European Union are particularly telling. Tarrow observes that Europe's supranational institutions – Commission, Parliament, Court—have been decisive allies for Europe's transnational activists.

These and other European examples run against the mill of anti-globalization doom—a contrarian groove Sid Tarrow has never hesitated to explore when the facts spoke that way. In *Polanyi in Brussels* (2009), Sid Tarrow joins forces with Jim Caporaso who had been studying the least likely socially minded institution of all: the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

Polanyi in Brussels argues that ECJ decisions have interpreted Treaty language on labor mobility to create limited European-wide social rights on health care and pensions, which had hitherto been exclusively national. The case study is carefully chosen: in contrast to environmental regulation or gender equality, embedding labor mobility in social regulation strikes at the heart of market integration; the regulatory and financial implications for national pensions and health systems are considerable; and the ensuing reduction of mobility costs has the potential to ratchet up crossborder mobility.

This takes issue with those who argue that the EU is an agent for neoliberalism, that the ECJ is biased towards negative market integration, and that national social regimes have been

eroded by European integration (Van Apeldoorn et al. 2008; Cerny 2008; Scharpf 1999).

Instead, Caporaso and Tarrow diagnose that "the movement to free European markets and the countermovement against it are both present in ECJ decision making" (Caporaso & Tarrow 2009: 615). It is a false choice to argue that the ECJ is either neoliberal or social-democratic. It is both; its decisions promote both transnational capitalism and social embedding. There is no conspiracy, no grand plan, but actors with "real interests and real conflict" operating in a given structure of political opportunity. Caporaso and Tarrow examine two decades of European jurisprudence to show that the social embedding of the market impels the Court into social legislation.

In 1995, Sid diagnosed Europe as an inauspicious site for transnational activism. In 2009, he detects social embedding—social regulation at the supranational level—in the European Court of Justice. In his effort to lay bare the mechanisms that connect large-scale processes—capitalism and polity building—with micro-behavior on the part of uprooted locals, Sid Tarrow has followed the evidence into the European Court of Justice. In so doing, he has sought to understand regime change, whether this involves unconventional protest or not.

One finds resistance to neoliberal capitalism in unexpected places. Caporaso and Tarrow focus on the way in which the ECJ has embedded social regulation in market deepening. However, don't count social movements out. "Like the countermovement that Polanyi pointed to, and its successor after World War II, the struggle over embedded liberalism will continue . . .[It] will produce a new cycle of contention between the movement for free markets and the countermovement to embed those markets in a legitimate social purpose" (Caporaso & Tarrow 2009: 615-616).

IV. Conclusion

Sid Tarrow has closely observed social movements, activists, and their struggles. As the structure of political opportunity has changed, Sid has been drawn to new puzzles. How do social movements adapt to Europe? How does internationalism affect the mobilization of local discontent? How do locals uprooted by globalization overcome the obstacles of identity formation, social networking, and political opportunity to form durable coalitions of contention and demands for social embedding? How does the conflict between capitalism and polity building play out?

These questions have led Sid to connect social movements, comparative politics, international relations, and transnational politics. "If the world has changed, social scientists must be prepared to understand it" (Tarrow 2005: xii).

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