

Globalization from Below: Transnational Activists and Protest Networks. By Donatella della Porta, Massimiliano Andretta, Lorenzo Mosca, and Herbert Reiter. Minneapolis, Minnesota.: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. Pp. xiv+300. \$25.00 (paper); \$75.00 (cloth). ISBN: 0-8166-4643-0

Published in *Contemporary Sociology* 36(2):191-192.

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Categories: 9, 12, 7 Word Count: 950

Globalization from Below is a book scholars of global social movements have long awaited. Despite the sharp increase in attention to this subject, the literature is characterized mainly by single case-studies or by theoretical treatments with limited empirical grounding. This lacuna is understandable, given the challenges of finding appropriate data sources as well as the very daunting data collection tasks. Della Porta and her colleagues have assembled a wealth of new empirical evidence without letting the numbers hide the fun in this vibrant social movement, such as the water-gun toting activists symbolically “liquidating the IMF.”

Globalization from Below seeks to explain how the contemporary global justice movement has emerged and developed in Europe over the past half-decade or so. It also looks to connect this “movement of movements” with past activism. While some readers may have wanted a more decisive theoretical statement, I believe the authors do a great

service by describing the general contours of the movement and by identifying some key themes around which scholarly attention should focus. The principal data sources are surveys and focus groups the authors conducted with participants in two major European sites of global activism, the Genoa Social Forum and the European Social Forum in Tuscany. In addition, they analyzed web sites of some of the principal organizations and develop detailed comparative analyses of three distinct networks within the movement, including ATTAC (a transnational SMO working to restructure global economic governance), a more informal, decentralized, network of eco-pacifists, and the anti-capitalist social centers which included the “white overalls” and “ya basta” direct action groups. They also incorporated Eurobarometer data to compare activist viewpoints with the general population. The analysis of these data is organized around three major arguments: First, that contemporary activism has taken on a somewhat novel networking form that conveys the notion of a “movement of movements,” second that movement actions can be associated with shifts in collective identities—even if some national differences remain, and that this movement can be seen as part of a long-term, and interactive struggle for more democratic political institutions that has roots in the past despite the novelty of its global scope.

The choice of the social forums as research sites grows from the important recognition that these forums represent important spaces or “staging grounds” through which global activism can develop. The regional forums these authors observed are linked to a World Social Forum “process” that encourages activists to develop a global imaginary connecting their local (as well as national and regional) experiences and actions with a

global movement. And while new technologies such as the Internet enhance opportunities for transnational activism, these authors and others have found that organizers still need the more intimate forms of communication and exchange that physical gatherings provide. Thus, the Genoa forum was described as a "school" in applying the consensus process to transnational groups of people. Democracy will, it seems, always require some real-time meetings, endless or otherwise. The implicit recognition, however, that important movement work takes place mainly at these global meetings rather than at sites of protest is, I think, an important one for movement scholars to keep in mind.

The empirical evidence supports the author's claims that what we're seeing is best described as a "movement of movements." Participants in the Tuscany and Genoa meetings tended to be members of other organizations, even if they did not attend the Forums as part of an organization. Nearly two thirds of respondents, for instance, belonged to political movements of various kinds, while over half reported being a member of a non-governmental organization (NGO). Also, more than 40 percent were members of political parties and unions. The survey and focus group evidence led the authors to conclude that "the movement of movements is not a mere coalition among organizations, but a social movement in the strict sense, in which identities are interwoven at both meso-(intergroup) and micro- (inter-participant) levels" (p. 49).

The most intriguing finding from the analysis of framing in the book is that the differences in activists' motivations are best explained by their organizational affiliations,

not by national identities. Thus, network ties matter for how activists define themselves and their political work. Also, the authors find that distinct networks played important roles in bridging groups with diverse identities and strategic frames, shedding light on how this movement of movements has emerged. They found that a major activity of organizers was to engage in an ongoing process of negotiating and re-negotiating collective identities. Activists showed flexibility in how they viewed themselves and the issues on which they worked. What they were steadfast in, however, was a commitment to decision making processes that could help manage the networks' heterogeneity.

Globalization from Below also provides readers with food for thought in regard to the connections between globalization and social movements. For instance, della Porta's expertise on protest policing is brought to an analysis of how policing strategies have changed in response to contemporary global justice activism. The ways global neoliberal policies shape states' responses and condition the national level opportunities for activism are also examined, suggesting that the neoliberal era has produced more exclusive national polities in Europe, encouraging the emergence of transnational protest. A chapter I found particularly useful and engaging is one that addresses the relationships between global justice movements and traditional political parties. This seems to be an area of rapid change, and we need more comparative and cross-national research exploring how political parties are responding to pressures from both globalization and social movements. I highly recommend *Globalization from Below* to students and scholars of globalization, social movements, and political change, and I look forward to the new research this study will, no doubt, inspire.