

Protest Beyond Borders

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS IN EUROPE SINCE 1945



Edited by **Hara Kouki** and **Eduardo Romanos**

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in Europe since 1945

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Protest Beyond Borders

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Protest movements have been recognized as significant contributors to processes of political participation and transformations of culture and value systems, as well as to the development of both a national and transnational civil society.

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Protest Beyond Borders: Contentious Politics in Europe since 1945

Edited by Hara Kouki and Eduardo Romanos

Preface

*Kathrin Fahlenbrach, Martin Klimke,
and Joachim Scharloth*

In recent years, the transnational dimension of protest movements has received attention from a wide audience outside of as well as within academic circles. However, the diverse historical roots of many of today's transnational activist networks or NGOs are still surprisingly unexplored by the research community. Although the turbulent social movements of 1960/70s are increasingly viewed as social and cultural responses to emerging patterns of an economic, technological, and political globalization, their European dimension has only been marginally analyzed.

This is all the more surprising given the fact that protest movements in Europe after the Second World War have increasingly acted within a transnational public sphere, particularly since the 1960s. On the one hand, their political, social, and cultural goals reflected international political developments (e.g., in their opposition to military intervention or their protest against global economic developments). On the other hand, national protest movements have strategically used transnational mass media effectively to mobilize and to address both a domestic and an international public, which they additionally tried to influence by creating alternative media networks. Yet, there seems to be a lack of international comparison that could not only systematically describe the similarities and differences between the single national movements, but also evaluate how they contributed to the evolution of a (trans-)national civil society in Europe. Especially during the Cold War, the (albeit difficult) diffusion of Western media, cultural items, and practices into Eastern Europe was an important interface across the ideological divide. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw bloc system, the various political, social, and cultural developments then provided vastly new possibilities for the evolution of a European public sphere.

To overcome this research deficit, an international research network on "European Protest Movements Since 1945" was established in 2006 with the support of the European Commission. By now, it boasts more than 250 affiliates from more than 30 countries and numerous disciplines, and it has established a permanent platform that fosters cross-disciplinary dialogue and exchange on the phenomena of dissent and social protest across the world. As is reflected in its publications, online guides, and conferences and workshops, one of the main areas of concentration of this network has been the impact that European protest movements had, not only in paving the way for a substantial change of the do-

mestic systems, but also how they influenced the emergence of a (trans-)national civil society and the transformation of the public sphere after the Second World War.

Drawing on a conference at the Martin-Luther-University in Halle, Germany, this volume documents one of the first results of this network and its academic endeavor. The selected papers assembled in this book develop inspiring new perspectives on the transnational dimension of European protest movements today as well as on their transnational roots in recent history. The fact that many of the contributors approach the subject from various disciplinary backgrounds embodies the spirit of our research network, which is to advance the international and interdisciplinary dialogue on social movements. We firmly believe that only by bringing together different sociological, historical, cultural, and media perspectives on social movements, that the internal dynamics and external interactions of protest movements, whether domestic or transnational, can be adequately analyzed. This volume and its contributors are an important step in this direction.

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Transnational Approaches to Contentious Politics

An Introduction

Hara Kouki and Eduardo Romanos

Emerging from an international workshop, this volume examines a variety of different aspects of social mobilization since 1945, while the contributors constitute an equally heterogeneous group of young political scientists and historians, anthropologists, as well as researchers on social movement and the media. Their research poses numerous questions covering a broad range of issues across time and space, looking retrospectively at global interactions during the Cold War, as well as looking forward at reconfigurations of protest politics in the twenty-first century, both in Western and Eastern Europe. Blurring chronological and geographical boundaries of study and merging strictly defined methods and disciplines, this volume, however, runs the risk of being nothing more than a list of fragmented and loosely arranged points and, as such, part of a burgeoning literature on the diversification of realities that has emerged as a result of the growing interconnectedness of the world in which we live. Are we, then, about to confirm once more the multiplicity of possible approaches on what is the living reality of our globalizing and globalized times?

All of the chapters, each in its very own different way, testify indeed to the tension between the local, national, and global that has become all the more ubiquitous in recent decades. In an effort to understand the changing constellations of contemporary Europe, the volume's contributors examine historical aspects of social and political movements or future perspectives of protest, while, at the same time, they look at social mobilization across countries in the East and West—it is precisely in this multiplicity and fluidity in terms of space and time that a common thread may be located in their research. No matter how diverse the focus and the methodology of each, they ultimately speak to one another. All seem to depart from the assumption that categories of analysis are not automatically attached to a specific territory or a particular time span. Within this context, scholars rely on contemporary theoretical analyses when revisiting collective action in communist countries or when attempting to integrate new historical studies on the Cold War into the exploration of contemporary activism in Europe. What seems to link the diverse contributions that follow, then, is that protest movements are examined from a *transnational* perspective and with

the aid of *framing* processes. In this way, different instances of mobilization manage somehow to be creatively juxtaposed with one another.

David Snow and Robert Benford define a “frame” as “an interpretive schemata that signifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action in one’s present or past environment.”¹ First used in sociology in 1974 by Erving Goffman in order to make sense of the communicative acts of everyday interaction,² frames soon jumped into the study of social movements, where they have become one of the larger dominant areas of research (along with the study of political opportunities and organization resources). Framing refers here to the processes of cognition and interpretation intervening in social mobilization; acting as what surrounds (and marks out) a picture, frames focus attention to what is and what is not relevant for actors by defining what is going on in a situation in order to encourage protest and to involve people in mobilization.³ Frame analysis, however, far from constitutes an exclusive methodological tool for sociologists and political scientists; indeed, it is employed by scholars from a broad array of disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, as this volume demonstrates.

The concept of ‘transnationalism’ represents another good example of interdisciplinary exchange (or, perhaps, interdisciplinary contamination and eventual generalization). Although earlier coined in international economics to describe flows of capital and labor across national borders, it became popular in the 1980s, when, in the field of international relations, the term was applied to grasp the increasing importance of non-state actors, in particular NGOs and multinational corporations, in the international arena. Since then, the use of ‘transnationalism’ or ‘transnational’ has mushroomed amazingly, being today at the crossroads of both academic research and public debates,⁴ on the lips of scholars, political activists, journalists, and politicians. It is therefore not unusual to hear about transnational migration phenomena, transnational social spaces, transnational citizenship, and also transnational protest and social movements. The latter are best seen as networks of actors organized at local, national, and international levels, who mobilize people across national boundaries around a shared aim, very often toward the promotion of a global change.⁵ Recent scholarship has finally come to describe transnationalism not only as the study of processes and relationships that have developed across or beyond the nation-state, but, furthermore, as a “gaze that begins with a world without borders.”⁶

At this point, though, we do not intend either to reproduce the discussion on these definitions or to use them in order to denote a normative agenda for the book. Both of these terms imply a certain interactionist approach toward the study of social movements and, as such, they seem to provide us with an entry point into the particularity of this volume. To begin with, then, the individual entries of this volume travel across time and space in diverse ways, but, at the

same time, they all approach social mobilization as an active and open-ended process.

Transnational Dimensions of Protest in Cold War Europe

The book is divided into four parts; the first section reveals ways in which protest activities in Europe were interconnected during the Cold War period. Even if the contentious politics of the 1960s and 1970s were the catalyst that led to the resurgence of social movement studies and to the development of new theories, historians have only very recently started to apply such approaches to the investigation of the protest activities that manifested themselves during those years. This kind of research leads to the merging of current movement theorems and analytical tools, such as *cross-national diffusion*⁷ and *frame coding*, with the exploration of social structures and national traditions through time. It forms, hence, part of an attempt to explain the history of social interactions, of networks, ideas, and processes that merge and travel within or beyond the political borders of postwar Europe. It also forms part of an attempt to make sense, through a transnational narrative, of the contemporary world, not as a static and solid system, but something that at times comes together and at others moves apart. It is within this context that the first three chapters examine largely unexplored instances of protest activities and networks that developed in Europe from the end of the Second World War to the 1970s. Importantly enough, they all take into account the activists' relationship to worldwide realities, while also bringing into play Eastern European and Soviet perspectives.

In his chapter, Andrew Oppenheimer focuses on expressions of solidarity among West German protesters during the years 1945 until 1974. This piece of social movement history accounts, on the one hand, for the relationship of German pacifism with other national and international contexts, such as Cold War tactics, global anti-nuclear mobilization, Third World liberation movements, as well as Protestant and broader Christian currents; on the other hand, Oppenheimer also adopts a discourse-analytic approach in order to deal with the internal dynamics of expressions of peace and solidarity as developed within activist communities. In his analysis, these two perspectives are interwoven. The threat posed by nuclear weapons destabilized existing domestic pacifist arguments and simultaneously provided a new, supranational language in which pacifists could frame their claims, tactics, and motivations. Globally oriented expressions of anti-nuclear solidarity emerged, shaped by contemporary political events as well as available worldviews in West Germany, while also linking West German protesters with other mobilizations around the world during the 1960s. Oppenheimer analyzes the non-linear processes of rupture, formulation, adoption, and

reproduction of mobilizing frames from a deeply informed historical perspective; his analysis being also sensitive to contingencies and ambivalences.

Celia Donert's contribution tackles the issue of historical struggles and movements of minorities in Europe by introducing a little-known chapter in the history of one of the most important protests of 1960s international mobilization: the "Gypsy" question in Czechoslovakia as developed in and around Prague in the spring of 1968. The struggle of Roma activists for recognition through transnational mobilization efforts are directly linked with general aspects of communist ideology, with changes in Czechoslovak socialism, as well as with the expanded social ferment of the 1960s. Developments at the international level altered the relationship between the activists and the power-holders: the minorities who lacked a territorial state interpreted the postwar international law on human rights as an opening in the structure of political opportunities through which they could defend their interests and, thus, they framed their protests accordingly; at the same time, this new reality was seen by states as a direct threat to the principle of sovereignty. Based on a great variety of previously unexplored archival material, the chapter examines how this diffusion of images, ideas, and networks shaped the movement by bringing to light both aspects of a shared, collective Roma identity, as well as tensions and differences between the various local communities. Donert delves into the particularities of the case study while paying great attention to the broader social, political, and intellectual contexts, thus integrating into the analysis broader interconnected phenomena, for instance, the way in which the broad issue of self-determination within multinational states was theorized at that time.

Similarly concerned with the new international human rights order is the final entry of this first section, which examines the campaign against the political abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union. The chapter focuses on the campaign for the release of the Ukrainian dissident Leonid Plyushch from a psychiatric hospital, which was mounted in 1975/1976 in both blocs by individual activists and nongovernmental groups, such as Amnesty International. Moreover, the author examines the discussions that were taking place in the West throughout the 1970s and 1980s concerning the motivations of the Soviet psychiatrists involved in the abuse; psychiatrists, journalists, and activists were debating the universality of those local and particular cases of mistreatment. Through the examination of these instances of mobilization in both the Western and the Eastern bloc and through the media, Hara Kouki follows the emergence of the human rights vocabulary in postwar Europe as a novel frame for citizens to communicate on issues of state repression and dissent at a transnational level and beyond Cold War politics. The contemporary human rights movement, thus, is not presented as the eventual triumph of a universal good; on the contrary, the author attempts to understand how it has been formed across countries and through instances of convergence as well as divergence, while producing its own narratives and ways of understanding the world.

Contentious Politics in a New Era of Transnationalism

The underlying idea of growing interconnectedness fashioning the above-mentioned texts is already an integral part of the second section, which deals with aspects of mobilization in contemporary Europe. Technical advances as well as “related economic, cultural and political developments have contributed to an intensification of both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole.”⁸ Globalization is difficult to define, but it is vaguely perceived as a constant process of the reconfiguration of the conditions of social life, as well as of the schemata necessary for its analysis. This global politics is shaped by relationships and struggles between states, non-state actors, international associations, and individuals across the world. And, in this sense, the social movements that take the form of transnational collective action reflect this kind of evolution and, thus, are the focus of much current writing and discussion. Forming part of this literature, the chapters in this section look at illustrative episodes of mobilization in contemporary Europe, as shaped both in relation to transnational contexts and within specific local communities. What is important is that all of the three contributions study globalization as an open-ended transformation full of heterogeneities and contradictions that have yet to be resolved.

Aron Buzogány’s chapter represents a bridge, in many ways, between the study of current social movements and the historical essays that precede it. Buzogány persuasively draws a complex and dynamic picture of state–society relations in the new EU member states by examining the non-state actors, namely, the environmental and the Roma rights movement activism in Hungary and Romania in the pre- and post-accession periods. His approach is multileveled, and he looks at how the process of European integration altered at once the political and legal opportunities as well as the constraints for mobilization at the national level, the resources on which collective action is founded, and the processes of the attribution of meaning and motivation (*framing*) that facilitates the activation of protest mobilization in the new setting. Through this case study, Buzogány highlights the significant changes brought by the constitution of supranational authorities in the construction of domestic actors, providing protest movements with a new interlocutor and new goals. His chapter also draws a map of some long-term effects that Europeanization can generate, such as the professionalization, differentiation, and projectification of societal actors in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the next chapter, Simon Tenue surveys the anti-G8 coalitions in Germany. The research is built on participant observation conducted during the mobilization against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm in June 2007 and on an analysis of printed and online material produced during and after the protest event. Tenue departs from the conviction that the transnational Global Justice Movement is a network of inherently differentiated networks. In order to grasp, thus, this plurality in the strategies and actions chosen by the movement groups

and in their ideas for social change, he puts forward an interactionist perspective on ideology. The author, then, moves on to locate the underlying link between different actors, so as to reconstruct a coherent picture of a heterogeneous reality by applying the notion of communication repertoires, which enriches substantially our understanding of the symbolic construction of collective action. What is at stake, once again, is the cognitive level, here in the form of intra-movement differences, shaped by local traditions and particular historical references, and affecting strategic choices.

In the last chapter of this section, Johanna Niesyto follows up on the issue of communication of transnational collective action, with an investigation of the impact of new electronic technologies. The text focuses on anti-corporate European campaigns and explores the ways in which the internet is used in global justice contention. Defined as socio-technical networks, two of these campaigns are analyzed with the aid of framing concepts and the contextual dimensions introduced by Manuel Castells (the social, the technical, and the geographical contexts). The result is an ambitious comparison that reconstructs the master frames, the frame bridging, and the transnational dimensions of the campaigns, viewed as instances of mesomobilization. Bringing to the fore the dynamic interactions between the local, national, and European levels, Niesyto reveals the multiplicity of actors, issues, forms of organization, and tactics that are constantly emerging in the new era of transnational protest.

Broadening Theoretical Approaches

Until now, we have touched upon several aspects of transnational mobilization as revealed both in unknown episodes of the Cold War era and in currently unfolding forms of protest. But interconnectedness changes not only the relations between and beyond nation-states and societies in the past, present, and future, but also the inner quality of the social interaction and political culture itself. Globalization affects the ways we interpret the local when viewed within the global and, as a result, leads to a redefining of the categories and analytical tools we use to explain the world around us. When social interaction is examined as part of complex and open networks across territory and time and not as integrated within the defined and rational world of a nation-state, then social movement research cannot but adjust and combine theoretical perspectives. The endless effort of updating the lenses and tools aiming to grasp the changing, complex dimensions and new dynamics of the post-1945 transnational civil society often collides with persistent “black boxes” in which the various dominant approaches have shown sustained disagreement, as, for instance, the “missing” link still to be found between structure and agency,⁹ or the “dizzying array of empirical findings” regarding the relationship between repression and mobilization.¹⁰ The three contributions that follow testify to these and other emerging

research challenges to social movement theory; while focusing on micro and local levels of protest, they bring into play broader processes of contention and, in this way, demonstrate that a revisiting of dissent analysis in new terms is something unavoidable.

In his chapter, Lorenzo Bosi examines the development of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement from the 1960s to 1972. Combining aspects of the political opportunity structure and the master frames approach, he persuasively argues for the need to look at collective action beyond the confines of unconventional political behavior, and situates it instead within a complex but real network of power relations over time. This interactionist approach adopted by Bosi leads him to study how mobilization in Northern Ireland gradually acquired an ethnonationalist character, which he does by looking both at broader historical and political settings and within the internal dynamics of the movement itself. Departing from a variety of qualitative sources, he traces the evolution of the competitions among different organizations and groups within the movement, the process in which the mobilizing message that aligns with the dominant representation of the political environment succeeds. In doing so, Bosi injects a clear and dynamic element of agency into previous scholarly understandings of the Northern Ireland movement, but also in the study of social movements in general.

In the following chapter, Eduardo Romanos proceeds to the analysis of Spanish anarchism from 1939 to the 1950s within a similar contextual perspective. After the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), the once-powerful Spanish movement suffered a strong decline. An extended version within the literature on the anti-Franco opposition talks about the anarchists' inability to adapt to the highly repressive domestic context and the changing international scenario as a main cause of this decline. Challenging this motionless picture by means of new archive material, Romanos first surveys the evolution of the ideological positions of its participants and then surveys how they were influenced by international political and intellectual postwar environments. Toward the end, the author moves on to a reconsideration of the interplay between repression and mobilization, putting forward a theoretical perspective grounded in both frame-coding and identity-building processes. Through this case study, he discusses the problems that the political opportunity approach presents in the understanding of the emergence of sustained collective action in highly repressive settings, and he advocates the formulation of a multi-factor hypothesis, which includes strong subjective variables.

This section comes to an end with Dominik Lachenmeier's contribution, which treats a wholly different subject: the current (re)organization of communication strategies of European trade unions. The chapter concentrates on a comparative study of Swiss, German, and Austrian trade unions, and looks at reforms in their external and internal environments brought about by the mass media and by processes of transnationalization and Europeanization, as well as