

Chapter 1: Transnational society, transnational politics

I/ Follow-up: Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (2015)

What do you know about the authors?

Charles Tilly (1929-2008)

Sidney Tarrow (born 1938)

What is contentious politics, how do you understand it?

Contentious politics

“People struggling with each other over which political program will prevail.”

“**Contentious politics** involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors’ interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics.”

Contention: “making claims that bear on someone else’s interests.”

Contention always brings together subjects, objects and claims.

Ex. A (subject) wants B (subject) to do sthg (object) = claim.

Collective action: “coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs.”

The bulk of collective action takes place outside contentious politics (in this classroom for ex.).

Politics: “interactions with agents of government”.

Most of politics involves little or no contention.

Ex.: showing your passport to immigration officers.

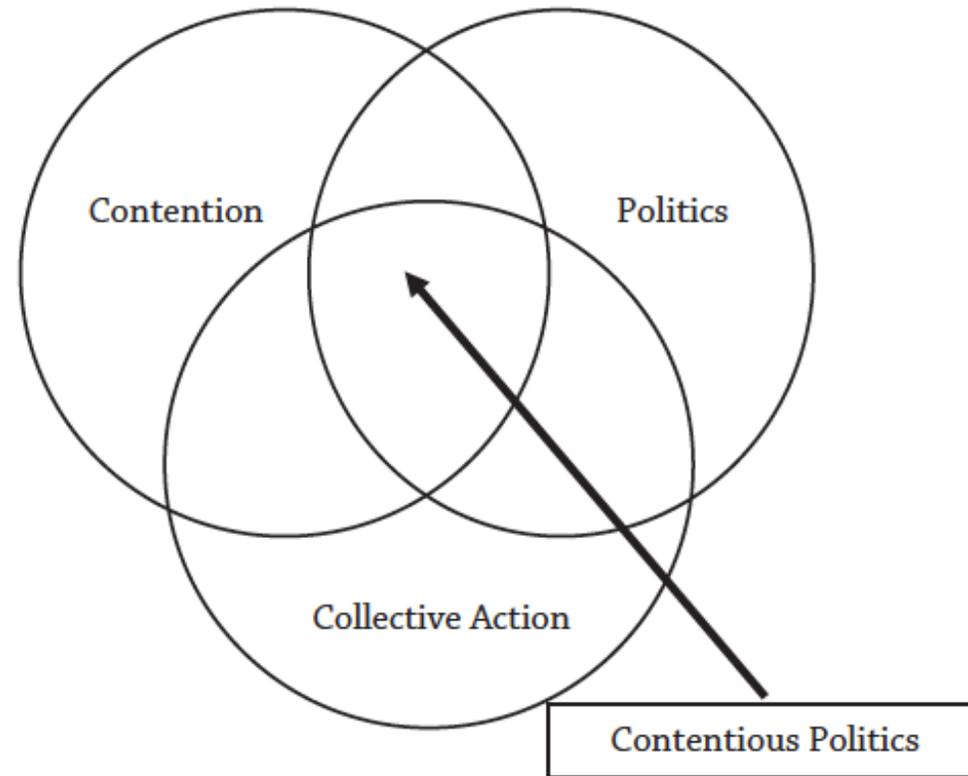


Figure 1.2:
Components of Contentious Politics

Governments make rules governing contention + people get accustomed to “**repertoires**” of collective action).

⇒ **Routinization.**

Contentious repertoires/repertoires of collective action (Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow)

Arrays of contentious performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors.

Metaphors of jazz, theater or language to show how much the notion owes to the idea of a **pre-existing structure of means of action constraining the choice of agents**, but also what it implies in terms of the margin of freedom left to the invention of contestants.

The prevailing patterns of **repression** are one of the factors that explain the constitution and evolution of the repertoire available to a given population, alongside other factors such as the standards of law and justice it shares, its daily routines, its internal organization, or the accumulated experience of collective action.

Tilly: **modification of the repertoires over time.**

⇒ As a result of macro-historical factors such as the emergence of the centralized nation-state, the development of capitalism and the evolution of forms of communication.

The choice of modes of action by movements is **a choice made under constraint**, in particular of past experience and of resources available to the contestants.

Cohen (Robin) et Rai (Shirin) (eds), *Global Social Movements*, Londres, Athlone Press, 2000.

<i>1650–1850</i>	<i>1850–1980</i>	<i>1980–2000+</i>
<i>Parochial and patronized</i>	<i>National and autonomous</i>	<i>Transnational and solidaristic</i>
Food riots	Strikes	Band Aid concerts
Destruction of toll gates	Electoral rallies	Telethons
Machine sabotage	Public meetings	Earth/Women’s summits
Expulsions of tax officials	Insurrections	International consumer boycotts

Table 1.3 *Three types of repertoire (with sample actions), after Tilly*

Old and new repertoires coexist and vary in space, and the ‘third repertoire’, if it exists, does not seem to be linked solely to the phenomenon of transnationalization.

Meyer & Tarrow *Social Movement Society* (1988).

⇒ Thesis of the routinization of contention.

Wrong: 21st century:

⇒ More intensive protests, more disruptive and more violent.

⇒ Governments not becoming better accustomed to dealing with protest (more aggressive forms of policing and surveillance).

Examples:

- [Demonstration against WTO summit in Seattle](#) (November 1999).
- Genoa G-8 Conference (July 2001).

Contentious politics is not the same thing as social movements.

Social movement = “a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities.”

Social movement = historical (not universal) category.

Role of digital activism replacing social movements?

Most forms of contentious politics are not social movements.

Contentious performances: “relatively familiar and standardized ways in which one set of political actors makes collective claims on some other set of political actors.”

Contentious repertoires: “arrays of performance that are currently known and available within some set of political actors.”

Contentious campaigns: “combinations of performances that focus on a particular policy and usually disassemble when that policy is implemented or overturned.”

Such campaigns involve “movements”, but also interest groups, political parties, media, interested onlookers, state agents.

Example: ?

II/ Transnational politics

Transnational vs international.

“Transnational” = links, relations, between non-state actors.

Nye, Joseph S., and Robert O. Keohane. “Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction.” *International Organization*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1971, pp. 329–49.

“Transnational relations = contacts, coalitions and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments.”

Examples of transnational phenomena: “multinational business enterprises and revolutionary movements; trade unions and scientific networks; international air transport cartels and communication activities in outer space.”

Transnational relations AND interstate system as centrally important to the understanding of contemporary world politics.

=> Nye and Keohane were reacting against the “realist” paradigm in international relations (emphasis on states as the only important actors in international politics).

Initially, scholars of transnational politics focused on economic relations (multinational corporations).

However, ‘much of transnational organizing deals with political and humanitarian issues such as refugees, violence against women and children, and human rights – and not economics per se.’

(Sidney Tarrow, ‘Transnational politics: Contention and Institutions in International Politics’, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2001).

Link with contentious politics: social movements not confined to nation-states:

- Transnational **stakes** cf. anti/alter globalism; climate change.
- Transnational **NGOs** (including Churches!), etc.

Not a new phenomenon: movements against slavery, workers' movements in the 19th century, etc.

-> Springtime of the Peoples/Springtime of Nations (Revolutions of 1848).

-> International Workingmen's Association ("First International"), 1864.

Transnational mobilisations can be: **simultaneous or coordinated action in various states** (May Day celebrations), processes of **imitation** and **transformation** of a movement's strategies due to mobilizations abroad (decolonization, collapse of Eastern regimes...), the **transfer** of resources, the construction and consolidation of **organizations** with an international dimension, the physical **commitment** to a cause far away or the struggle against practices (of States, peoples or companies) that are far away and questionable (child labour...).

This activism can also bring together non-governmental and administrative actors in the framework of sectoral **alliances** within international organizations.

Donatella Della Porta and Sidney Tarrow (eds), *Transnational Protest & Global Activism*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Identify main reasons for the development of transnational movements and activism:

- **Shift in the locus of institutional power**, from the national to the supranational and the regional levels: World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, ...; European Union, North American Free Trade Agreement, ...
- **Transnational coalitions of NGOs** in areas such as Human rights, environment and peace.
- **Shift in the axis of power from politics to market** (neoliberalism): increase of the power of multinational corporations.

Della Porta and Tarrow (2005, p. 2-3) distinguish between 3 processes of transnationalization:

1/ **Diffusion:** spread of movement ideas, practices, and frames from one country to another (ex. diffusion of practices of mobilizations, such as sit-ins or black blocks).

2/ **Domestication:** the playing out on domestic territory of conflicts that have their origin externally (ex.: mobilizations of European farmers against national governments).

3/ **Externalization:** the challenge to supranational institutions to intervene in domestic problems or conflicts (ex.: mobilizations directly targeting EU institutions, the UN, ...).

In practice, the processes can be intertwined.

Transnational Collective Action = coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions.

But transnational mobilizations are not limited to these organizations, they also include **trade unions, foundations, religious organizations** (the Catholic Church, Sunni Islam, or Pentecostal Churches), contributing strongly to the consolidation of **networks** and **identifications** of transnational collective action.

Not all organizations that contribute to transnational social movements are transnational structures.

Tarrow, ('Transnational politics' 2001) criticizes the transfer of the category 'social movement' to activities that would be more recognizable as lobbying, communication, and educational and service activity if they were observed at home.

Distinguish:

- social movements;
- NGOs (INGOs);
- Transnational networks.

Social movements

European social movements operating in Brussels are often EU-subsidized lobbies (ETUC).

Identify social movements not by their goals, “which they share with many non-social movements”, but by the kind of actions in which they routinely engage, i.e., **contentious politics**.

within social networks and engaged in contentious, sustained interaction. This produces a definition of transnational social movements as

socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interaction with powerholders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor.

International Nongovernmental Organizations

I propose a definition of INGO that is broad enough to include a wide range of organizations but also distinguish them from social movements. International nongovernmental organizations are organizations that operate independently of governments, are composed of members from two or more countries, and are organized to advance their members' international goals and provide services to citizens of other states through routine transactions with states, private actors, and international institutions.

Starting from this definition, the main distinction between INGOs and social movements becomes primarily behavioral. Although both may have social change goals, transnational social movements engage in sustained contentious interaction with states, multinational actors, or international institutions, whereas INGOs engage in routine transactions with the same kinds of actors and provide services to citizens of other states. This clear analytical distinction between the categories

Transnational Activist Networks

Outside their service activities, in which they are normally independent, INGOs frequently operate in temporary or long-term alliances with other actors (state and nonstate, transnational and domestic) to advance their policy goals. This has added

to the energy to the study of transnational political activist networks. As Keck & Sikkink define it (1998:2), “A transnational advocacy network includes those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services.” Such networks “are most prevalent in issue

Transnational advocacy networks are not alternatives to social movements or INGOs; on the contrary, they can contain them—in the loose way that networks contain anything—as well as containing governmental agents in either their official or unofficial capacities. They are the informal and shifting structures through which NGO members, social movement activists, government officials, and agents of international institutions can interact and help resource-poor domestic actors to gain leverage in their own societies. In Keck & Sikkink’s model, resource-rich NGOs—working through their own states, international institutions, or both—try to activate a transnational network to put pressure on a target state. Keck &

Tarrow, **3 cautions**:

- states remain dominant in most areas of policy;
- globalization has been around for at least a century (transnational organizations and contention appeared well before globalization);
- social movements, transnational networks and NGOs are not the only agents operating transnationally.

International institutions are not the antipode of transnational contention: they offer resources, opportunities, and incentives for actors in transnational politics.

International institutions as “**coral reef**” helping to form horizontal connections among activists with similar claims across boundaries.

Paradox: international institutions, created by states, can be the arenas in which transnational contention is most likely to form against states.

tional conflict. We see a highly developed version of this process in the case of the European Commission, which actively subsidizes citizen lobbies in Brussels and—on some occasions—encourages them to lobby their own governments and legitimize European projects (Imig & Tarrow 2001a,b).

III/ European social movements

Donatella Della Porta, “Progressive Social Movements and the Creation of European Public Spheres”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2002.

// with De Swaan: challenges to the construction of European public sphere, cf. low level of attention paid to EU in national media and failure to construct proper European outlets.

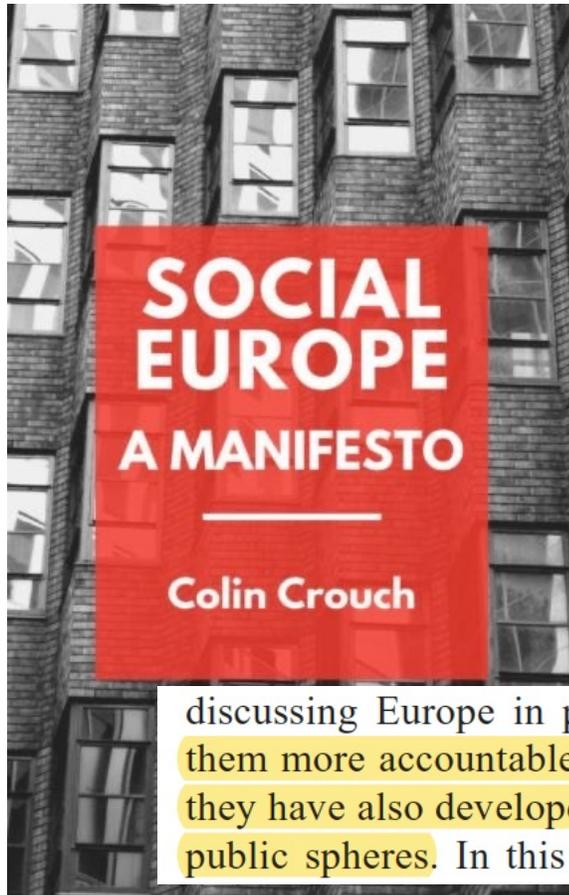
⇒ Challenge of building a European demos.

⇒ But this challenge exists at national level too:

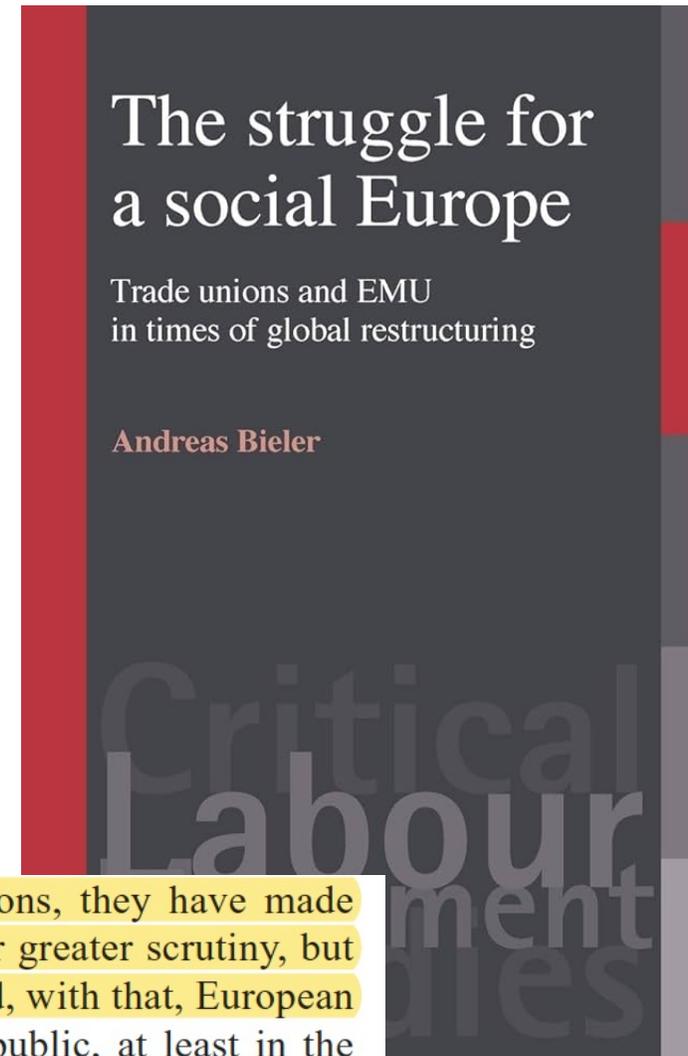
When discussing the construction of a European public sphere it is important to consider that even at the national level the idea of a public sphere has always been fictitious, in relation to both of the meanings referred to above. Firstly, the national media systems of member states have always been fragmented, not only on a territorial but also on an ideological level (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Secondly, Habermas’s (1989) conceptualization of a bourgeois public sphere (with an independent public discussing public issues in public) refers to a normative ideal that was never achieved in what Robert Dahl (1971) dubbed the ‘really existing democracy’. Rather, the media system has become more and more commercialized, fragmented, and elitist. While never really meeting standards of high discursive quality, the mass media have (at all territorial levels) undergone a decline, even with regard to the mere respect for professional standards in news production (Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018).

Role of progressive social movements (labour movement) in constructing a European public sphere: targeting EU through supranational protests, developing visions of another Europe (just and democratic).

See: <https://www.socialeurope.eu/>.



discussing Europe in public. By contesting European institutions, they have made them more accountable, at least in the sense that they are under greater scrutiny, but they have also developed collective identities at an EU level and, with that, European public spheres. In this fashion they have created a European public, at least in the



Example of externalization (cf. previous section) and of a European labour movement: Renault Vilvoorde (1997).

Decision of Renault (French car producer) to close one of its plants in Vilvoorde (Belgium).

Triggers the first “eurostrike”.

Transnational solidarity with workers’ protests in France and Spain.

Targets the EU to pressure Renault and their own governments.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYsrjj0p4MU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ry-5FdRz7Dg>

Example of transnationalization: Global Justice Movement and European Social Forum (early 2000s).

Contestation of international summits with counter summits.

Bernard Cassen (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, founder of ATTAC), history of the **World Social Forum**:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUwelQswa20&t=212s>

Annual meeting of civil society organizations, against neoliberal globalization, imagining alternative ways (alter-globalism).

A “**counter-Davos**” (World Economic Forum), first held in Brazil (Porto Alegre).

Manifestation of a global civil society. NGOs and social movement seeking global solidarity.



European Social Forum (ESF): “Europeanization from below”.

⇒ Critique of neoliberalism (‘Europe of the Banks’), the lack of democratic accountability of EU institutions, in a context (political opportunity structure) where the social-democratic left is the dominant political force in EU member states at the time (L. Jospin, G. Schröder, T. Blair, ...).

First ESF, Florence, November 2002:

3 main themes of the Forum:

- ‘Globalization and neo-liberalism’;
- ‘War and Peace’;
- ‘Rights – Citizenship – Democracy’.

One of the largest demonstration against war in Iraq (500 000 protesters according to police estimates).

See “Red Florence”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-GA81I-L4s>

Andreas Bieler & Adam David Morton, “Another Europe is Possible? Labour and Social Movements at the European Social Forum”, *Globalizations*, 2004.

Challenge of the possibilities of cooperation between established trade unions; new, radical unions; and social movements, in the formation of a strategy against neoliberal restructuring (process of European integration since the mid-1980s).

- Established trade unions (ETUC) as an obstacle to the formation of a counter-neoliberal strategy?

Distant from social movements, “social partnership” approach (tripartism, corporatism).

(Hobsbawm, 1987, p. 95). According to Antonio Gramsci (1978, p. 76), **‘the trade union is nothing other than a commercial company, of a purely capitalistic type, which aims to secure . . . the maximum price for the commodity labour, and to establish a monopoly over this commodity in the national and international fields’**. In other words, traditional trade unions take on a more determined rather than determining character, as ‘slaves’ to capital, whose *raison d’être* only makes sense within capitalist institutions (Gramsci, 1977, pp. 103–108, 190–96, 265, 332).

Many of the most important unions were absent from the ESF: IG Metall, Ver.di (service sector union, Germany).

- Tensions within the labour movement between established trade unions and new, radical unions (Sud, 1988; COBAS, 1987).

Historically, the new, radical European unions emerged as a reaction to, or even a split from, the established trade unions in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to discontent over the accommodationist position of mainstream unions vis-à-vis neoliberal restructuring. COBAS was estab-

Participatory democratic internal structure of new unions.

Self-management. Rejection of tripartism with employers and the state, at both national and EU level.

New trade unions such as SUD and COBAS point at the intrinsic link between economic and political struggle, while established trade unions concentrate on labour rights (collective bargaining in tripartite institutions).

consequences of neoliberal restructuring can be countered. This goes back to established trade unions' initial support for the internal market project in the late 1980s, based on the hope that the resulting economic union would also lead to a social union and, thus, a Europe different from Anglo-American capitalism (van Apeldoorn, 2002, pp. 78–80).



- Differences between established and new unions have an impact on their position vis-à-vis cooperation with social movements.

New trade unions define their struggle in a wider sense and are almost by definition more open to interaction with social movements.

They argue that neoliberal exploitation goes beyond the work place (fairer distribution of wealth):

forms (Foweraker, 1995, p. 40). Hence these groups do not only raise demands related to the workplace, they also ask for the right to work, to accommodation and to health alongside raising ecological concerns. They demand decent unemployment benefits as well as rights for 'illegal' immigrants, the so-called *sans-papiers*. For example, SUD éducation argues that

Unsurprisingly, the G-10 and FSU were at the forefront of supporting French national protests by unemployed groups in December 1997 and January 1998 (Eironline, 1998). Hence a G-10 representative at the ESF clearly demanded that the movement of the unemployed had to be included in the trade union struggle (Session II). Another G-10 representative pointed out that such links

Social movements are not homogeneous actors either: some (ATTAC) focus on lobbying and on the reform of global capitalism, instead of its transformation; differences in terms of life-style ethos, repertoires of action, ...

Parallels to the division between established and new trade unions.

See Lilian Mathieu, “The space of social movements”, *Social Movement Studies*, 2021.

I define the space of social movements as a universe of practice and meaning that is relatively autonomous from other social microcosms (such as, among others, the political, trade union, media, religious or academic fields), and within which mobilizations (and the organizations and activists that lead them) are linked by various relations of interdependence.³ In other words, I postulate that social movements develop within

elsewhere, and under what forms. The second difficulty is closely related to the former: the theoretical framework faces difficulties to analyze movements – such as the alter-globalization movement – that exceed the national borders. Theories of social differentiation have implicitly taken the nation state as their level of analysis but one needs to think about the possibility of transnational microcosms.

Challenges: a less favourable political opportunity structure since the late 2000s?

Donatella Della Porta, “Progressive Social Movements and the Creation of European Public Spheres”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2002.

Turning to the multilevel political opportunities, the trend towards transnationalization has undoubtedly slowed down, faced with increasing competition between nation-states and the growing perception of power inequality at the EU level (Della Porta, 2020c). The upward scale shift that took place at the beginning of the millennium had come in the wake of a certain level of opening up of opportunities in the EU, pushing social movements to combine multilevel protests. While critical of existing policies and

of social movement demands (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: ch. 8). The financial crisis in particular, with the increasing power of the least democratically accountable institutions (such as the European Central Bank or Eco-Fin), is seen as a critical juncture that shifted EU institutions all the more close to business and further away from citizens. In addition,

Political opportunity structure (Charles Tilly, Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow)

Features of regimes and institutions (e.g., splits in the ruling class) that facilitate or inhibit a political actor's collective action.

⇒ Widening of the perspective, initially centered on organizations of social movement, mobilization of the resources.

The fate of a protesting action owes, **independently of the mobilizing capacity of the group**, to the state and to the conjunctural evolutions of the political system, which make it, according to the circumstances, more or less vulnerable, or receptive, to the contestation.

Tarrow & Tilly, *Contentious politics* (p. 240):

Political opportunity structure includes **six properties of a regime**:

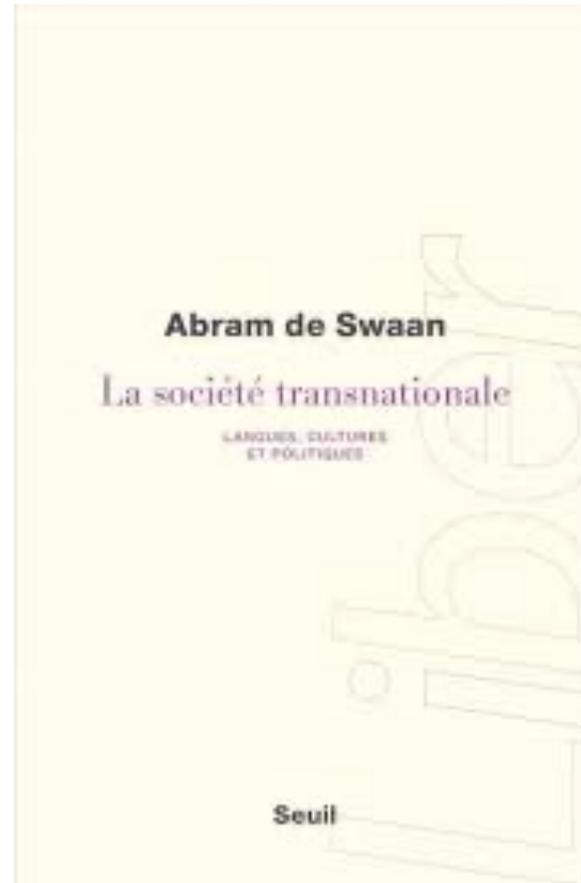
1. The multiplicity of independent centers of power within it.
2. Its openness to new actors.
3. The instability of current political alignments.
4. The availability of influential allies or supporters for challengers.
5. The extent to which the regime represses or facilitates collective claim making.
6. Changes in any of the above.

Diachronic approach (McAdam, *Freedom Summer*).

Synchronic approach: Kriesi (Hanspeter), Koopmans (Ruud), Duyvendak (Jan Willem) et Giugni (Marco G.), *New Social Movements in Western Europe*, London, UCL, 1995.

‘What makes the concept interesting is the shift away from individual motivation and competence towards the broader social context in which they operate’ (cf. De Swaan).

IV/ Follow-up: De Swaan, Abram: “The European void. The democratic deficit as a cultural deficiency”, in *The European Union and the Public Sphere*, 2007



‘The institutions of the EU, elected directly or indirectly, have failed to capture the imagination of the electorate.’

No European public space (it is transnational and anglophone, elitist).

// Georgakakis.

‘European democracy’ invoked since the Maastricht treaty (European citizenship), but EU is mainly a bureaucratic and legal field, oriented towards the production of public policies (*Field of Eurocracy*).

It relies on elements of undirect democracy (Council) and elements of direct democracy (European Parliament).

=> It is far from a federal government.

European democracy is weakly embedded in European societies (few mobilizations and debates on European issues).

‘Europeans do not speak the same language and hence do not understand each other well enough to differ or agree.’

Opinions shaped within national frameworks: ‘What is passionately debated in one country is often not even an issue in adjacent countries where a different agenda prevails.’

In the meantime, and in the absence of a single European public space, there are myriads of European niches, each providing a distinct meeting place for participants from all member states with shared interests. And the more circumscribed the agenda, the more smoothly the all-European exchange proceeds: experts, technicians and specialists have no trouble finding one another, nor do entrepreneurs from the same branch, believers from the same church, athletes from the same sport or scientists from the same discipline find it hard to congregate and communicate.

=> Specialised networks that are separated at the national level, too.

Formation of national public spaces // formation of the nation-state.

Cf. Norbert Elias (*The Civilizing Process*, 1939), Benedict Anderson (*Imagined communities*, 1983).

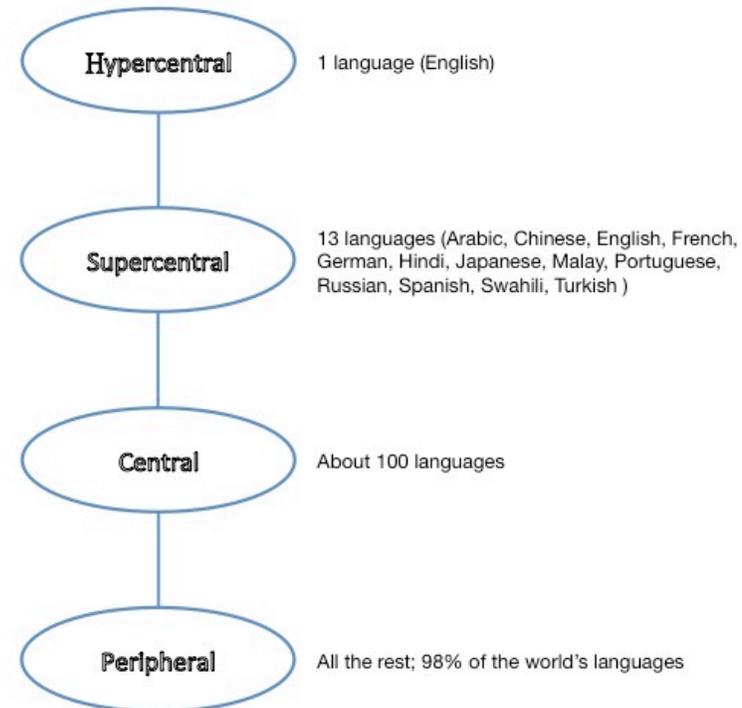
‘In each country, the various regional languages were gradually pushed aside by the language of the court and the capital city, which set the tone for the entire society.’

European constellation of languages.

‘Language differences delimit the scope of attention and delineate networks of affinity among intellectuals.’
(not only intellectuals...)

De Swaan,

Global language system



English as the dominant language of EU institutions.

In the meantime, from the 1960s on, secondary education had been rapidly expanding throughout Europe. Quite independently, the member states realized sweeping reforms of their secondary school systems. In the process, most of them reduced the number of compulsory foreign languages taught but kept English, either making it compulsory or leaving the choice to the students, who tended to opt for English anyway, since it seems to hold the best job prospects and radiates the glory of global mass culture. Due to the expansion of secondary education, there are now more citizens in the Union who speak French, German, Spanish or Italian as a foreign language than ever before, but many more, still, have learned English: almost 90 per cent of all high-school students in the Union. French scores half this percentage, German a quarter and Spanish one eighth.

=> English as vehicular language of Europe.

worldwide mass media. As long as each state continues to support its own language in schools and courts, in national politics and administration, English, even though widely used, does not represent an acute threat. A condition of 'diglossia' prevails in all these countries: a rather precarious equilibrium between the domestic language and English, in which each one predominates in a different series of domains.

'Within the prevailing **cultural opportunity structure**, English is the paramount medium of international exchange.' (i.e., the 'constellation of universities, newspapers, reviews and foundations granting subsidies or awards').

=> 'Désangliciser l'anglais'?

'De-anglicize' the institutional means of communication and distribution.

English is not the problem; it is the solution. The problem is that British and American organisations control the distribution and exchange of cultural expression and scientific findings. That is what makes it hard for authors, artists and scientists in one European country to get access to the public in another country, unless they have first been selected by an editor, publisher or distributor in New York or London.

Conclusion of chap. 1

Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (2005):

‘In today’s world, **we can no more draw a sharp line between domestic and international politics** than we can understand national politics in the United States apart from its local roots.’

‘**Transnational activism is transformative**: it may be turning thousands today from occasional participants in international protests into rooted cosmopolitans. That transformation could become the hinge between a world of states and one in which **stateness is no more than one identity among many**: local, national, and transnational.’

A final provocative thought: If the process of transnationalization described above is robust, then a global civil society will result not from domestic groups moving outward from their societies and replacing government with governance, but from the activities of state-created international institutions, stimulated by transnational activists, reflecting on domestic contention, institutions, and identities. And if that is the case, then the distinction between international relations and domestic politics will really need to be challenged.