

Rooted Cosmopolitans and Transnational Activists¹

Sidney Tarrow

Prepared for a special issue of the

Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

¹ A more complete version of this article will appear at Chapter Three of the author's *The New Transnational Activism*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Are globalization and internationalization producing a shift from national to postnational citizens? Will these processes turn the thousands of people who currently operate across borders into “rootless cosmopolitans” or will they remain citizens of national states who occasionally participate in international protest events as “transnational tourists”? In this paper I will argue for a third thesis: that it is *rooted* cosmopolitans who grow out of local settings and draw on domestic resources who are the main actors in transnational contention. The special characteristic of these activists is not their *cognitive* cosmopolitanism, but their *relational* links to their own societies, to other countries, and to international institutions. (Rosenau et al, forthcoming: ch. 1). It is not a new wave of international sentiments -- which is not, in any case, evident from public opinion polls (Jung 2004) – nor is it economic globalization, but the increasingly intertwined networks of a complex international society, that has produced this increase in rooted cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism is not new, but it has been accelerated by increasing connections across borders and by the increased capacities of citizens to mobilize both within and outside of their societies. It has usually been defined as a cognitive characteristic. In this article, I will put forward a relational definition of that phenomenon. I will apply the model to some aspects of the new transnational

activism and its supports in new forms of communication, international networking, and international institutions. I illustrate the approach with findings on labor activists, “no-globals,” and immigrant activism – mainly in North America -- to both show how transnational activism has developed and to explore its ambivalent nature.

For all the recent flurry of interest in globalization, foreign travel, knowledge of universal languages, and transnational networking go much further back than the end of the twentieth century. In her study of *The Merchant of Prato*, Iris Origo charted the transnational networks of Francesco di Marco Datini from fifteenth century Florence. Datini had business contacts around the Mediterranean, but he recruited his assistants from friends and family and was able to use his local connections to fight tax increases at home (1957). Datini was not an isolated example; long before the internet and cheap airline travel facilitated it, trade, exile, immigration, and humanitarian intervention were all sources of what I will call “rooted cosmopolitanism” (Tarrow 2005: ch. 3).

But transnational activism builds on resources and opportunities that are particular to our era: the availability of rapid forms of personal communication and cheap international air travel; wider access to higher education and widely diffused knowledge of what is fast becoming an international language – English; expertise and mobilizing skills gleaned from domestic activism; and the

visible evidence that decisions that affect peoples' lives are being made in international venues. Aware of these changes, philosophers, social thinkers and others in the 1990s launched a debate on cosmopolitanism.

The Philosophers' Debate

Cosmopolitan, *a.* 1. belonging to all parts of the world; not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants; 2. Having the characteristics which arise from, or are suited to, a range over many different countries; free from national limitations or attachments (OED 1999);

Rootless, *a.* Without roots; destitute of roots (OED 1999);

Rootless cosmopolitan ("bezrodny kosmopolit") was a Russian euphemism during Joseph Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign of 1948-1953, which culminated in the "exposure" of the "Doctors' plot".¹

Stalin's and others' exploitation of the term "cosmopolitans" to denigrate Jews and foreigners gave it a shady pedigree. But it was given a fresh look with philosopher Jeremy Waldron's article "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative" in 1992.² In this article, Waldron praised cosmopolitans as individuals who do not take their cultural identities to be defined by any bounded subset of the cultural resources available in the world (p. 108). David Held vaunted the cosmopolitan in the same spirit in his *Democracy and the Global Order* (1995). Sociologist Yasemin Soysal wrote in a similar vein in her book on "postnational

citizenship” where she argued that universal rules are emerging to govern the status of immigrants (1994).

Martha Nussbaum brought the discussion on cosmopolitanism to the United States with her essay on “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” in 1996. Like her European colleagues, Nussbaum defined the term cognitively, making the argument that world citizenship should become the focus of civic education (1996: 11). Soon after, culture studies founder Stuart Hall saw cosmopolitanism as “the ability to stand outside of having one’s life written and scripted by any one community” (2002:26), while sociologist Craig Calhoun saw it as part of the advance of global democracy (2002: 90). Anthropologist Ulf Hannerz also defined cosmopolitanism cognitively when he wrote that:

...interspersed among the most committed nationals, in patterns not always equally transparent, are a growing number of people of more varying experiences and connections. Some of them may wish to redefine the nation....others again are in the nation but not part of it. They may be the real cosmopolitans, or they may indeed owe a stronger allegiance to some other kind of imagined international community...There may be divided commitments, ambiguities, and conflicting resonances as well (1996:90).

Cognitive and Relational Cosmopolitanism

The cosmopolitan debate subsided as Europeans became more concerned with plugging the holes in their borders against illegal immigration, and as Americans -- especially after September 11, 2001 -- became more suspicious of foreigners in general. Among mass publics and elites, empirical studies in both Western Europe and the United States began to show a hardening of patriotic sentiments. We see this in extreme form in the xenophobic movements and parties that gained ground in Western Europe in the 1990s (Rydgren 2004). But we also see it in the stubborn resistance of citizens of the EU to regard themselves as citizens of broader collectivities than their localities or nations (Jung 2004).

There is a second reason for the decline in the debate about cosmopolitanism: in its focus on cosmopolitan *attitudes*, the debate failed to place cosmopolitans in their social and political contexts. From Waldron's 1992 article onward, cosmopolitanism was framed as a purely *cognitive* concept, thus detaching it from individuals' position in their own or in international society. For example, from a story in the *International Herald Tribune*, Hannerz told of market women from Nigeria who boarded London-bound planes wearing loose-fitting gowns under which they would hang dried fish to sell to their countrymen in Britain. "On the return trip," he points out, "they carry similarly concealed bundles of frozen fish sticks, dried milk, and baby clothes, all of which are in great demand in Lagos." "Is this cosmopolitanism?" asks Hannerz, and answers his question in the negative,

because these market women continue to *think of themselves* as locals (1990: 238; 1996: 102-3, italics added). This is an exquisitely cognitive definition.

My point is not that market women are cosmopolitans because they travel, or that cosmopolitanism has no cognitive elements, but that cosmopolitan identities, like other identities, are the product of social relations. As James G. March and Johan P. Olson write;

The emergence, development, and spread of understandings, identities, interests, and institutions are shaped by interaction and involvement in political activities. Interdependence, interaction, and communication lead to shared experiences and hence to share meaning, to a convergence of expectations and policies, and to the development of common institutions” (1999:319).

We cannot understand the growth of cosmopolitan identities in our time unless we understand their relational roots.

This move from a purely cognitive towards a relational concept of cosmopolitanism was on the margins of the philosophers’ debate of the 1990s. In a second article, Waldron, whose 1992 article had triggered the earlier debate, shifted to a more relational view. In 1996 he wrote; “we should not assume that thoughts about one’s culture...loom very large in one’s own involvement in the cultural life of one’s community. What one does in a community is simply speak or marry or

dance or worship. *One participates in a form of life*" (2000: 233-4, italics added). Waldron's new view was closer to the view of cosmopolitanism put forward by Robert Merton decades earlier. In his classical essay on types of influentials, Merton had written of locals and cosmopolitans that

The difference in basic orientation [i.e., cognition] is bound up with a variety of other differences: (1) in the structures of social relations in which each type is implicated; (2) in the roads they have traveled to their present positions in the influence-structure; (3) in the utilization of their present status for the exercise of interpersonal influence; and (4) in their communications behavior (1957:394-5).

It is through peoples' relations to significant others that cosmopolitan attitudes are shaped, and this takes us to the concept of "rooted" cosmopolitanism.

Rooted Cosmopolitans

It was Mitchell Cohen, writing in *Dissent* in 1992, who first used the term "rooted cosmopolitanism." Reacting against both marxism's "abstract proletarian internationalism" and the blinkered parochialism of advocates of "difference" in the United States, Cohen called for "the fashioning of a dialectical concept of *rooted* cosmopolitanism, which accepts a multiplicity of roots and branches and that rests on the legitimacy of plural loyalties, of standing in many circles, but with common ground" (p. 480, 483). Philosopher Bruce Ackerman soon followed with an article

about American politics (1994: 535). Ghanaian Kwame Anthony Appiah wrote that “The favorite slander of the narrow nationalist against us cosmopolitans is that we are rootless. What my father believed in, however, was a rooted cosmopolitanism, or, if you like, a cosmopolitan patriotism” (1996:22).

What is “rooted” in the concept of rooted cosmopolitanism is that, as individuals move cognitively and physically outside their spatial 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. In the business world, in international organizations and institutions, in the “epistemic communities” that link professionals around the world, and in transgovernmental networks we find more and more individuals whose primary ties are domestic but who are part of a complex international society (Tarrow 2005:ch. 2). Some are normatively invested in international regimes and practices; others take advantage of them for primarily self-interested motives; but most rely on domestic resources and opportunities to launch their transnational activities and return home afterwards. This is the pattern we will find among most transnational activists.

Transnational Activists

Transnational activists I define as

individuals and groups who mobilize domestic and international resources and opportunities to advance claims on behalf of external actors, against external opponents, or in favor of goals they hold in common with transnational allies.

The unusual character of the contemporary period is not that it has detached individuals from their own societies but that it has produced a stratum of people who, in their lives and their activities, are able to combine the resources and opportunities of their societies into transnational networks through what Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink call “activism beyond borders” (1998). These include: immigrants who are involved regularly in transnational political activities, but not all immigrants (Portes 2000:265); labor activists from the South who forge ties with foreign unionists and NGOs, but not all workers (Anner et al. 2004; Waterman 2001); ecologists who gravitate around international institutions and organizations but not all ecologists (Rorschneider and Dalton 2002); and members of transnational advocacy networks who link domestic activists to international institutions, but not all activists (Keck and Sikkink 1998). It has also produced “the dark side” of transnational relations: clandestine cells of militants who attack citizens and institutions in the name of religion; drug dealers; traders in human beings.

In this context, only three additional comments are necessary: First, transnational activists do not usually begin their careers at the international level.

As numerous studies show, they emerge from domestic political or social activities and only a small percentage ever become full-time international advocates or activists. Second, they are better educated than most of their compatriots, better connected, speak more languages, and travel more often. Third, most soon return to their domestic activities, perhaps transformed by their experiences, but perhaps not. Like domestic activists, they are in a position to take advantage of politically-relevant resources and opportunities. What makes them different than their domestic counterparts is their ability to shift between levels and take advantage of the expanded nodes of opportunity of a complex international society.

A Growing Phenomenon

Although the data are still scattered and fragmentary, there appears to have been a tremendous growth in the numbers of transnationally-oriented activists over the last few decades. There are few statistics on the numbers of participants in internationally-based protests. In the nature of protest campaigns, it is not even clear what these figures would tell us. Anecdotal evidence suggests that their numbers mushroomed in the late 1990s and the early years of the new century. We do possess solid data on the number of transnationally-organized advocacy groups listed in the Yearbook of International Associations (YIA). Within that broad population, Jackie Smith's studies have identified a subset of groups that were

founded to promote some form of social or political change. The population of these transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) “expanded at a tremendous rate over recent decades from fewer than 100 organizations in the 1950s to more than 1,000 today” (Smith and Wiest 2004).

This rise in transnational activism has been geographically uneven, indicating the continued importance of domestic structures as a springboard for activism. Smith and Wiest found that through the turn of the new century, participation in TSMOs varied dramatically between the industrial countries of the North and the less-developed countries of the South. Western Europeans were active in more than 80% of these groups, and citizens of the U.S. and Canada participated in nearly 70% of them. On the other hand, although participation from the global South grew during the 1980s and 90s, the developing world is still less present in the transnational social movement sector (Smith and Wiest p. 3). In the new century, there is still a net advantage for the richer, more well-connected citizens of the North, where resources are more plentiful and the core of international institutions are found.

The sectors of activity in which these transnational organizations are active have almost all expanded over the last half-century, but at an uneven rate. Smith’s findings, reproduced in Table 1, provide a good summary. Human rights TSMOs increased in number from 41 in the 1973 YIA to 247 in 2000; environmental groups

grew from 17 to 126 in the same period; peace groups from 21 to 98; while groups dedicated to self determination and ethnic unity grew much more slowly (Smith 2004:16). The biggest percentage increases were found in development/empowerment" groups (which increased from 4% to 10% of the total over the three decades), and multi-issue groups, which increased from 7 % to 15% over the same year period. A related trend was the rapid growth of groups organizing around a broad "global justice/peace/environmental" agenda, which grew from 4 % of the total in 1973 to 11 % in 2000 (Ibid.).

(Table One about here)

Insiders and Outsiders

The growing population of advocacy groups and the activists who empower them is not homogeneous; some activists are "norms entrepreneurs" who attempt to diffuse deeply-held beliefs to countries around the world (Keck and Sikkink 1998); others work at the international level on behalf of social categories like workers, women, indigenous peoples or peasants. While some aim their activities at international institutions, others engage in service activities within the societies of the South on behalf of international NGOs, and still others mediate between these levels. Cross-cutting these forms and trajectories of activism are two main

types: some activists are classical “insiders”, gravitating to international institutions and taking part in highly-institutionalized service and advocacy activities; while others (and their numbers seem to be increasing) are social movement “outsiders” who challenge these institutions and organizations. Two examples will help us both to get a better picture of “insiders” and “outsiders” and to begin to understand their relationship to each other.

Working Transnationals

In his sweeping analysis of “counter-hegemonic globalization,” Peter Evans points out that organized labor has “not been seen as a promising candidate for becoming a transnational social movement” (2005: 14). In contrast with the traditional pessimism, Evans summarizes three important ways in which unionists are participating in transnational politics: by seeking basic rights, social contracts, and democratic governance (pp. 15-21). Some of these labor activists have become permanently active internationally, but others continue to operate on native ground on behalf of workers from elsewhere and in the name of global worker solidarity.

Working transnationalism shows the capacity of quite ordinary people to move back and forth between the local and the translocal, and amongst a variety of (not-necessarily compatible) identities. Nathan Lillie found such a group when he studied the “Flag of Convenience” campaign of the International Transport

Workers' Federation (ITF)³ FOCs are ships that sail under the registries of countries like Liberia that specialize in turning a blind eye to the labor conditions of their seamen. FOC practices are the most effective way of causing a "race to the bottom" in employment conditions. But "through coordinated bargaining and industrial action," Lillie writes, "the ITF has stopped this race to the bottom, raising wages and improving conditions for a significant proportion of the seafaring workforce." (2003:1).

The ITF uses a variety of strategies in its campaign, but the most interesting here is the use of a network of local union "inspectors" who have "transnationalized" the FOC campaign network ...by tying rank-and-file port workers and local union officials directly into a global strategy to enforce a uniform global minimum wage scale on FOC vessels." The network provides the ITF with the organizational capabilities needed to resolve the practical difficulties of enforcing a standard minimum wage on the global level, providing the Confederation with in-port resources on which many ITF affiliates now depend (2003:115). ITF inspectors work in the most institutionalized sector of national social movements – the trade union movement – but they contribute to transnational activism.

Local "No-Globals"

What could be further in either spirit or tactics from the sturdy port inspectors of the ITF than the new generation of global justice activists whose protests have been gathering force since the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999? Yet here too, we find both transnational coordination and a deeply local rooting of transnational activism. Although Seattle was widely trumpeted as an incident in the struggle of the “South” against the “North,” in fact most of the protesters came from the American or Canadian Northwest and by far the largest proportion were unionists seeking protection for their jobs (Lichbach 2003). When Gillian Murphy and Margaret Levi traced the coalition that planned the Seattle protests, they found that the core of the participant cadre was drawn from among activists who had worked together in domestic protests in the United States (Levi and Murphy 2004).

Evidence from Western Europe collected by Donatella della Porta and her collaborators also shows a domestic rooting of the activists they interviewed during the 2001 Genoa W-7 protest, the 2002 European Social Forum, and the February 15th 2003 anti-Iraq War protest. Summarizing this evidence, della Porta and Mario Diani found a widespread rooting of these participants in the traditional sectors of Italian activism: a trade union background was reported by between nineteen and forty percent of them; political party alignment was claimed by roughly one-third; religious activism by between eighteen and thirty-

one percent; volunteerism by between thirty and forty-one percent; and student activism by between forty and fifty-two percent.⁴ These transnational activists came largely from familiar sectors of domestic politics and associations.

These two vignettes do not indicate either that labor and global justice activists are transnational tourists out for a brief international excursion or unrooted citizens of the world. Both are rooted in domestic forms of activism and will likely return to them. They may become participants in enduring transnational coalitions and movement organizations or they may not; their “global identities” may be costumes put on during occasional external forays or may become permanent parts of their identities (della Porta 2004). But we are witnessing to an increasing degree the formation of a broad spectrum of activists who face both inward and outward and combine domestic and transnational activism and advocacy.

Transnational Immigrant Communities

How has our more densely internationalized world affected the most familiar form of transnational activism -- immigrants? Like transnational activists in general, immigrant activists live in two worlds – in their case, the world of their adopted countries and the world of their homelands. This has always been the case and, in describing them, we can draw on a century of evidence about a

truly global phenomenon. But we also observe a dramatic expansion in immigrant transnationalism, from the traditional practice of the sending of remittances to home countries to participation in electoral politics to diasporic nationalism. And in the relationship of the latter to the more traditional forms of immigrant politics we see the ambivalences and contradictions in transnational activism.

Back to History

In 1906, in language that was strikingly similar to what we hear from advocates of postnational citizenship today, Gino Speranza, an Italian official charged with the protection of this country's immigrants abroad wrote the following: "The old barriers are everywhere breaking down. We may even bring ourselves to the point of recognizing foreign 'colonies' in our midst, on our own soil, as entitled to partake in the parliamentary life of their mother country" ([1906] 1974:310).⁵

Speranza's hope for the recognition of foreign "colonies" in America was dashed by the First World War and by the restrictive immigration legislation that followed, but it reminds us that immigrant transnationalism is not new. Like representatives of Mexican immigrants today, Speranza wanted the Italo-American "colony" in America to be represented in Italy's Parliament; between Italian ports and New York and Buenos Aires there was constant back-and-forth

traffic – as there is today between North American cities and the Caribbean; and immigrant remittances were responsible for enriching many southern Italian families and communities. Immigrant transnationalism is nothing new.

But a host of factors make the connections among immigrants and their home countries more frequent and more integrated today. First of all, there was an epochal change in the state system between the beginning of the First World War and the mid-1920s. Where the bulk of pre-World War One immigrants came from the subject states of the great European empires – Hapsburg, Prussian, Romanov – after that war and the Versailles treaty that followed, nearly everyone had least an imagined nation-state. Hence, migration had a radically new color to it. The League of Nations was a politically impoverished institution, but its title reflected this new reality quite accurately. Henceforth, immigrants would think of themselves in their new homes in connection to states that reflected their national origins, and not in terms of empires to which they had been subjected.⁶

The post-World War Two world added a host of new nation-states to those that were created after 1918 and did away with whatever vestiges of the imperial world had survived the war. In this process of state-creation and state-legitimation, the United Nations played a key role. To citizens of the South whose national borders were often lines on a map that was drawn by imperialists

indifferent to tribe, ethnic group, or nation, UN certification gave national identity a real – as opposed to a purely imposed – meaning.

Technological change, cheap air fares, and simplified electronic communication have been trumpeted as evidence of a new global village, but these are the surface manifestations of new forms of economic and political integration. These include segmented production networks, diasporic investment in home country enterprises, an internationalization of mass consumption, if not of actual levels of consumption (Sklair 2001), and, for course, mass migration. If the number of migrants does not match the mass migration of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the ties between home country and country of adoption are more likely to remain close; in many countries this includes dual nationality and home-country voting by immigrant communities (Foner 2001; Graham 2001). Where Speranza's Italian immigrants may have returned rarely to Naples or Catania – and often stayed there -- their successors from Santo Domingo or Mumbai can hop on a plane to see to their business interests at home or monitor their childrens' upbringing by telephone (Foner, pp. 42-3).

David Kyle (1999) describes the effects of these structural changes on a traditional clothing production area in highland Ecuador. Since its occupation by Spain, the region of Otavalo has specialized in the production and marketing of

clothing. Now increased international trade and cheaper and easier international mobility have transformed it. As Alejandro Portes summarizes Kyle's thesis,

During the last quarter of a century or so, Otavalans have taken to traveling abroad to market their colorful wares in major cities of Europe and North America. By so doing, they have also brought home a wealth of novelties from the advanced countries, including newcomers to their town (Portes 2000:260).

In the streets of Otavalo, it is not uncommon to meet the European wives of transnational traders attired in traditional indigenous dress (Ibid.).

These transnational travelers are what we can call "nesting pigeons" because, though staying in one place, they pyramid the resources and opportunities they find at either end of migration chains. But others are what I call "birds of passage" whose residence in the diaspora serves as cover or ammunition for foreign forays. Both are "rooted" cosmopolitans, in the sense that their activism depends on links to both their home countries and their diaspora enclaves; but while "nesting pigeons" direct their efforts at the improvement of their home communities, "birds of passage" use the resources of receiving societies to subvert their home governments or aim their challenges at abstractions like "Western secularism" or concrete targets like the World Trade Center.

Nesting Pigeons

Transnational systems of exchange offer nesting pigeons incentives and resources to become politically active with their home countries as their targets. For example, In Los Angeles, Alejandro Portes and his collaborators interviewed a Mr. Gonzalez, president of the local civic committee of a small town in El Salvador. When asked why he intended to stay in Los Angeles in the face of discrimination and nativism, Gonzalez replied:

I really live in El Salvador, not in LA. When we have the regular *fiestas* to collect funds for La Esperanza, I am the leader and I am treated with respect. When I go back home to inspect the works paid with our contributions I am as important as the mayor (Portes 1999:466).

How widespread is this pattern of transnational activism within immigrant communities, and what are its political implications? Since much of the evidence we have is ethnographic, it is difficult to generalize from it. But one source of systematic information does exist: a comparative study of the causes and consequences of the emergence of transnational communities among Columbian, Dominican and Salvadoran immigrants in the United States in the 1990s.⁷ Looking at “both electoral and nonelectoral activities aimed at influencing conditions in the home country...on a regular basis,” Luis Guarnizo and his collaborators report from this study that less than one-sixth of the three

immigrant groups they studied are “core” transnational activists, while another one-sixth engage in such activities on an occasional basis (2003:1225).

Are these proportions significant or trivial? Seen as a percentage of the enormous immigrant populations of New York, Los Angeles, Toronto or London, they may seem derisory. But in the light of the shrinking proportion of civic involvement in these societies, they are impressive. Particularly in the United States, where participation in national elections has been steadily shrinking and citizens increasingly avoid involvement in politics, that one-sixth of struggling Columbians, Dominicans and Salvadorans regularly engage in homeland-directed political activities, and an additional sixth do so from time to time, seems highly significant.

Who are these activists? The authors’ findings help us to both recognize the stability of immigrant transnationalism and to delimit its boundaries:

- First, home country context correlates closely with immigrant transnational activism in predictable ways. Coming from an unstable and violent country, Columbian immigrants are least likely to take part in their home country politics, while Salvadorans and Dominicans, coming from more stable political backgrounds, are more likely to do so (ibid. p. 1232).

- Second, the size of individuals' networks and their expectation that they will one day return to their homelands is significantly associated with political transnationalism (Ibid.).
- Third, they report, "core transnationals are overwhelmingly married males, with high school or college education, and more, rather than less length of U.S. residence" (1238).

If we can generalize from these findings, it is not the least educated, the more marginal, or the most recent arrivals who are prone to become "nesting pigeons"; on the contrary, it is those who are most solidly rooted in their receiving societies. If this is the case, then not only the political context of their countries of origin, but the opportunities and incentives of their places of arrival condition the nature and possibilities of transnational activism (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004).

For example, New York's fragmented and ethnically-organized local politics offers far more opportunities and fewer constraints to Dominican immigrants in that city than, say, Los Angeles' more concentrated system does for Mexicans.⁸ The Netherlands' carefully-constructed opportunities for Turkish activists to form local associations contrasts dramatically with the institutionalized reluctance of French officialdom to recognize the legitimacy of multiculturalism. Once "rooted" in a new and differentiated political

environment, immigrant activism both at home and abroad is conditioned by the domestic structures and political cultures of that environment.

The forms of exchange that immigrants engage in with their homelands are still mainly traditional: sending remittances for public works projects. But immigrants increasingly support candidates for local office at home, lobby local governments to allocate resources to their communities, and engage in more collective forms of politics in their countries of origin. For example, there is evidence that Mexican community organizations in the United States are beginning to unite at the [Mexican] state level (R. Smith 2003). This is producing powerful regional pressure groups, based on immigrants' resources from north of the border, that are capable of negotiating with Mexican state governments on behalf of their home towns.

Transnational activists engage in more contentious forms of politics as well. When Mixtec leaders were arrested in Oaxaca, *Radio Bilingue* in Fresno, California, put pressure on the Mexican government. "If something happens in Oaxaca," declared a local organizer; "we can put protesters in front of the consulates in Fresno, Los Angeles, Madera" (Portes 1999: 474). Since the passage of NAFTA (The North American Free Trade Association) solidarity groups in Texas and California work to help workers in Mexican factories to fight exploitation, better poor health conditions, and organize workers in the

maquilladora factories (Williams 2003:532-6). And in Western Europe there is growing evidence that immigrant organizations are organizing to use their local resources to intervene in the politics of their home countries.⁹

But there is a gap between “core transnationals” – the one-third who are regularly involved in political contacts with their home countries – and the rest of the immigrant population who are only occasionally involved in these practices. Core transnationals tend to engage in routine or contained immigrant politics, much of it oriented to improving the lives of their co-nationals who remained at home; peripheral transnationals are less routinely involved.

What explains the gap? Guarnizo and his collaborators speculate that the differences are due to sensitivity to contextual conditions. “While core transnationals stay involved in their home country politics via electoral or non-electoral means, others become active only at special junctures such as highly contested elections or national disasters” (2003:1238). Other conditions trigger diasporic nationalism among groups as diverse as Islamist radicals, Croatian nationalists, and supporters of Tamil independence. This takes us to the fundamental ambiguity in immigrant transnationalism: between the ameliorative activities of “nested pigeons” and the destructive potential of what we can call “birds of passage.”

Birds of Passage

In the 1990s, Benedict Anderson wrote worriedly of “long-distance nationalism” (1998). By this term, Anderson referred to immigrant nationalists who mobilize resources from the diaspora to undermine their home governments. He observed that such activists – for example, Croatians in Canada, the Irish in Boston, Kurds in Germany -- could cheaply, easily, and without major risk to themselves incite and support violence in their countries of origin. Anderson could not have predicted the horrors that would be inflicted upon the world by the birds of passage who turned two airliners into flying bombs on September 11, 2001; but the phenomenon of long-distance religious militancy is similar to long-distance nationalism.

Systematic evidence lends support to Anderson’s fears. When Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler collected quantitative data on potential sources of the civil wars that have torn up communities across the world in the last few decades, they found no correlation with the proportion of the population living abroad – measured partially from the size of their immigrant communities in the United States. But they did find a robust correlation between diaspora size in the U.S. and “repeat conflicts” in the immigrants’ home countries (2003: 2). Of course, the lethal character of diaspora nationalism does not depend on its geographic spread or on the number of immigrants living abroad. Like terrorism, with which it is often confused, diasporic nationalism is the exasperated recourse of small

minorities for whom peaceful protest or mass organization are either impossible or have failed (della Porta and Tarrow 1986; Sambanis and Zinn 2003).

One source of long-distance nationalism is the odd dyslexia among many diaspora nationalists between the reality of the countries they have left and their vision of the “true” homelands they cherish. Zlatko Skrbis’s work on Croatian communities in Australia for example, shows that the view of their homeland among Antipodian Croatians is at least fifty years out of date (Skrbis 1999). The same time warp, remarks Anderson, “is just as true of many American Irish, Armenians, Chinese, etc. To an amazing extent, they block out the real Ireland, Armenia and China of the present.”¹⁰

Historical memories can distort identification with the homeland in a progressive, as well as in a reactionary direction: liberal American Jews continue to support Israel unconditionally, both because they fear its increasingly-unlikely destruction but because they mistake the expanding capitalist giant of today for the kibbutz society of fifty years ago. The source of much of diaspora nationalism is identification with societies that no longer exist.

Cosmopolitan Contradictions

In their radical goals and actions, the religious zealots and diaspora nationalists who are responsible for many of the horrors of the new century are a world apart from the benign world of “nesting pigeons” who send remittances

back to their families, invest in local enterprises, and attempt to influence elections in their home towns. But they are connected to their home countries by many of the same mechanisms. As Anderson writes;

The Moroccan construction worker in Amsterdam can every night listen to Rabat's broadcasting services and has no difficulty in buying pirated cassettes of his country's favourite singers. The illegal alien, *Yakuza*-sponsored, Thai bartender in a Tokyo suburb shows his Thai comrades Karaoke videotapes just made in Bangkok. The Filipina maid in Hong Kong phones her sister in Manila, and sends money in the twinkling of an electronic eye to her mother in Cebu. The successful Indian student in Vancouver can keep in daily e-mail touch with her former Delhi classmates. (1998:68).

Needless to say, it is mistaken to assume either that all immigrant transnationals are potential long-distance nationalists or that all forms of long-distance nationalism are violent. But it is striking that just as immigrant "nesting pigeons" use their ties to their home communities to foster development and keep family ties alive, "birds of passage" can cheaply, safely, and, in a self-satisfying way, "play national hero on the other side of the world" (Anderson, p. 74).

The more aggressive forms of immigrant activism have impacts on both sending and receiving countries. On the one hand, the presence of long distance activists feeds the xenophobic nationalism of a Le Pen in France or a Bossi in Italy. Resentful *français de souche* who see young Arab women wearing the veil do not recognize it as a statement of female independence but as an unwillingness to give up the link to an unknown “other” across the Mediterranean. When middle class *Milanesi* living in an imagined *Padania* see Albanians or Moroccans sweeping the streets or washing dishes in the neighborhood pizzeria, they may be reminded of their own unregretted past in the poverty of Caltanissetta or Matera. And when well-established second-generation American immigrant groups whose parents adapted eagerly to their receiving societies, observe the self-conscious multiculturalism of recent immigrants it can seem a threat to their own assimilation.

Nativist xenophobia and diaspora extremism feed on one another. Immigrant activists who sense their rejection by the indigenous population draw back from hope of assimilation, thus fulfilling the prophecy of their antagonists that they do not wish to fit in. In turn, rejection feeds the immigrant community divide between those who feel themselves assimilated and those who retreat into a long-distance identity. We are witnessing this phenomenon in France and

England as a younger generation of Islamic immigrants embraces a more radical form of Islam than their parents’.

It is in the weak and unauthoritative states of the South that we see the less visible effects of diasporic extremism. Some of the plans behind the dismantling of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya, which triggered the greatest South Indian bloodshed since partition, came from Indians living overseas; the most fanatical adherents of an independent Khalistan live in Melbourne and Chicago; “Tamilnet” links Tamil communities in Toronto, London and elsewhere to the violent struggles of the Tigers of Sri Lanka; and Croats living in Germany, Australia and North America played “a malign role” in financing and arming Franjo Tudjman’s breakaway state and pushing Germany and Austria to recognize it (Anderson 1998: 73-4).

Between nesting pigeons and birds of passage there are great differences, but there are also similarities and connections. The killers of the World Trade Center lived unobserved in the Muslim community of Hamburg in the guise of nesting pigeons while awaiting the moment to fly; in the liberal societies of the West, financial support for Croatian nationalism, Hindu xenophobia, and Islamist fundamentalism is nearly impossible to distinguish from well-meaning support for home-country charitable and educational works; the Tamil Tigers were enabled to engaged in protracted insurgency against the Sri Lankan

government in part through the support of the Tamil diaspora. In the complex international environment of the early twenty-first century, the the activities of birds of passage are easily disguised in the those of the nesting pigeons among whom they roost.

This does not mean that the hysterical witch-hunt that was launched against the Muslim communities of the United States after September 11, 2001 is justified. Or that the veil of the Muslim schoolgirl in France is as dangerous to Republican secularism as the weapon of the suicide bomber. But it does suggest that transnational immigrant activism is multifaceted; that it often involves people with little self-conscious political intent as unconscious supporters; and that the complex internationalism of the world today no longer makes it possible to distinguish sharply between locals and cosmopolitans – at least where transnational activism is concerned.

Conclusions

“Rooted cosmopolitans” are a broad stratum of individuals and groups found among many types of social activists today. Supported by technological change, economic integration, and cultural connections, the phenomenon expresses itself most dramatically in the ease with which young people participate in demonstrations outside their own borders. But when the demonstrations die down, more significant but less easy to measure are the

lessons they bring back to their own societies and the routine ties they have developed across borders. While we still lack good evidence of transnational activism's magnitude or its rate of growth, we can already see its importance in the growth of international NGOs; in the large number of Italian activists who traveled to Chiapas, to Porto Alegre and to Mumbai; and in the spread of a capillary network of local social forums throughout Italy and the rest of Europe. These grew up in the void created when the traditional Lefts crumbled at the start of the 1990s; but like the churches built by the early Christians on the ruins of destroyed temples, they may be the bases for a new cosmopolitan activism.

Some may wonder whether the revival of great power hegemony in the years since September 11, 2001 is not destroying the foundations for the new transnational activism. It has certainly eroded the cognitive disposition of many to believe in a benevolent international future (Tarrow 2005:ch. 11). But if, as I have argued, cosmopolitanism is relational – rather than simply cognitive – then the interlarded networks of a complex international system will continue to produce rooted cosmopolitans. They may be forced to retreat into their domestic roots when repression bites and public opinion turns against them – as many have in the United States -- but they will retain the capacity to rebuild their relations across borders when hegemonism founders, as it surely must.

Sources

- Ackerman, B. (1994). "Rooted Cosmopolitanism." Ethics 104: 516-35.
- Al-Ali, N. and K. Koser, Eds. (2002). New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home. New York, Routledge.
- Anderson, B. (1998). The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World. New York, Verso.
- Anner, M. et al. (2004). The Industrial Determinants of Transnational Solidarity: Global Interunion Politics in Three Sectors. Transatlantic Social Dialogue, Second Joint Meeting on "Union Renewel in International Economy", Brussels.
- Appiah, K. A. (1996). Cosmopolitan Patriots. For Love of Country. J. Cohen. Boston, Beacon Press: 21-29.
- Calhoun, C. (2002). The Class Consciousness of Frequent Travellers: Towards a Critique of Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism. Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice. S. Vertovec and R. Cohen. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 86-109.
- Cohen, M. (1992). "Rooted Cosmopolitanism." Dissent(Fall): 478-83.
- Collier, P. and A. Hoeffler (2003). Greed and Grievance in Civil War. Centre for the Study of African Economies. Oxford, Oxford University.
- della Porta, D. (2004). "Multiple Belongings, Flexible Identities, and the Construction of 'Another Politics': Between the European Social Forum and Local Social Fora". Transnational Protest and Global Activism. D. della Porta and S. Tarrow. Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield: Chapter 8.
- Della Porta, D. and M. Diani. (2004). "'Contro la guerra senza se ne ma': The Protests Against the Iraki War." In Vincent della Sala and Sergio Fabbrini, eds., *Italian Politics Yearbook 2003*. Providence, RI, Berghahn Books.
- della Porta, D. and S. Tarrow (1986). "Unwanted Children: Political Violence and the Cycle of Protest in Italy." European Journal of Political Research 14: 607-632.
- della Porta, D. and L. Mosca, eds. (2003). Globalizzazione e movimenti sociali. Rome, Manifestolibri.
- della Porta, D. and S. Tarrow, eds. (2004). Transnational Protest and Global Activism. Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Evans, P. (2005). Counter-Hegemonic Globalization: Transnational Social Movements in the Contemporary Global Political Economy. Handbook of

- Political Sociology. T. Janoski, A. Hicks and M. Schwartz. New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Foner, N. (2001). Transnationalization Then and Now: New York Immigrants Today and at the Turn of the Twentieth Century. Migration, Transnationalization and Race in a Changing New York. H. R. Cordero-Guzmán, R. C. Smith and R. Grosfoguel. Philadelphia, Temple University Press: 35-57.
- Graham, P. M. (2001). Political Incorporation and Re-Incorporation: Simultaneity in the Dominican Migrant Experience. Migration, Transnationalization and Race in a Changing New York. H. R. Cordero-Guzmán, R. C. Smith and R. Grosfoguel. Philadelphia, Temple University Press: 87-108.
- Guarnizo, L. E., A. Portes, et al. (2003). "From Assimilation to Transnationalism: Determinants of Transnational Political Action among Contemporary Migrants." American Journal of Sociology **108**: 1211-1248.
- Hall, S. (2002). Political Belonging in a World of Multiple Identities. Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice. S. Vertovec and R. Cohen. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 25-31.
- Hannerz, U. (1990). "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture." Theory, Culture and Society **7**: 237-251.
- Hannerz, U. (1996). Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places. London, Routledge.
- Held, D. (1995). Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Hollinger, D. (2002). Not Universalists, Not Pluralists: The New Cosmopolitans Find Their Own Way. Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice. S. Vertovec and R. Cohen. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 227-239.
- Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks. 2002. Multi-Level Governance in European Politics. Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Jung, Jai Kwan. 2004. "Globalization and Global Identities: An Over-time and Cross-National Comparison from the World Values Survey in 1981- 2001." Cornell University, Government.
- Keck, M. and K. Sikkink (1998). Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.
- Kyle, D. (1999). "The Otavalo Trade Diaspora: Social Capital and Transnational Entrepreneurship." Ethnic and Racial Studies **22**: 422-446.
- Levi, M. and G. Murphy (2004). Coalitions of Contention: The Case of the WTO Protests in Seattle. International Sociological Association Meetings, Brisbane, Australia.

- Lichbach, Mark Irving. 2003. "Global Order and Local Resistance: Structure, Culture, and Rationality in the Battle of Seattle." Unpublished paper, University of Maryland, Political Science Department.
- Lillie, N. (2003). A Global Union for Global Workers: The International Transport Workers' Federation and the Representation of Seafarers on Flag of Convenience Shipping. NY State School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Ithaca, Cornell University.
- March, J. G. and J. Olson (1999). The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders. Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics. P. J. Katzenstein, R. Keohane and S. Krasner. Cambridge, MIT Press: 303- 330.
- Merton, R. K. (1957). Social Theory and Social Structure. Glencoe, IL, The Free Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1996). Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism. For Love of Country. J. Cohen. Boston, Beacon Press: 4-17.
- Origo, I. (1957). The Merchant of Prato, Francisco di Marco Datini, 1335-1410. New York, Knopf.
- Østergaard-Nielsen, E. K. (2001). "Transnational Political Practices and the Receiving State: Turks and Kurds in Germany and the Netherlands." Global Networks 1: 261-282.
- Portes, A. (1999). "Conclusion: Towards a New World-The Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities." Ethnic and Racial Studies 22: 463-477.
- Portes, A. (2000). Globalization from Below: The Rise of Transnational Communities. The Ends of Globalization: Bringing Society Back In. D. Kalb, M. van der Land, R. Staring, B. van Steenbergen and N. Wilterdink. Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield: 253-270.
- Rosenau, James N., David C. Earnest, Yale H. Ferguson and Ole R. Holsti. Forthcoming. *On the Cutting Edge of Globalization: An Inquiry into American Elites*. Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Rydgren, J. (2004). "Right-Wing Populist Parties in Denmark." West European Politics 27: 474-502.
- Sambaris, N. and A. Zinn (2003). The Escalation of Self-Determination Movements: From Protest to Violence. Department of Political Science. New Haven, Yale University.
- Sklair, L. (2001). The Transnational Capitalist Class. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Skrbis, Z. (1999). Long Distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands and Identities. Brookfield, Ashgate Publishing.
- Smith, Jackie. 2004b. "Exploring Connections between Global Integration and Political Mobilization." *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 10: 255-285.

- Smith, J., D. Wiest, et al. (2004). *Uneven Globalization: Understanding Variable Participation in Transnational Social Movement Organizations*. Department of Sociology, SUNY Stony Brook.
- Smith, R. R. (2003). "Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process: Transnationalization, the State and the Extra-Territorial Conduct of Mexican Politics." International Migration Review **37**: 297-343.
- Speranza, G. C. (1974 [1906]). Political Representation of Italo-American Colonies in the Italian Parliament. The Italians: Social Backgrounds of an American Group. F. Cordasco and E. Bucchioni. Clifton, NJ, Augustus M. Kelley.
- Tarrow, S. (2005). The New Transnational Activism. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Vertovec, S. and R. Cohen, Eds. (2002). Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Waldinger, R. and D. Fitzgerald (2004). "Transnationalism in Question." American Journal of Sociology **109**: 1171- 1195.
- Waldron, J. (1992). "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative." University of Michigan Law Review **25**: 5-14.
- Waldron, J. (2000). "What is Cosmopolitan?" The Journal of Political Philosophy **7**: 227-243.
- Waterman, P. (2001). Internationalists in the Americas: Agitators, Agents and Communicators. Tercer Congreso Internacional de Latinoamericanistas en Europa, Amsterdam.
- Williams, H. (2003). "Of Labor Tragedy and Legal Farce: The Han Young Factory Struggle in Tijuana, Mexico." Social Science History **27**(4): 525-550.

Size and Geographic Dispersion of Transnational Social Movement Organizations

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of TSMOs</i>		<i>Number of Countries</i>
	<i># Orgs.</i>	<i>% Change</i>	<i>Mean (std. dev.)</i>
1973	183	—	33.89 (23.17)
1983	348	90%	31.02 (26.03)
1993	711	104%	33.13 (29.55)
2000 (observed)	959	35%	34.39 (32.46)
2003 (estimate)	1011	42%	

Sources: Jackie Smith, “Exploring Connections Between Global Integration and Political Mobilization” *Journal of World-Systems Research*. Vol. 10, Winter 2004, pg. 14. Kathryn Sikkink and Jackie Smith, “Infrastructures for Change: Transnational Organizations, 1953- 1993” *Restructuring World Politics: The Power of Transnational Agency and Norms*. 2002, pg. 24- 44.

Notes

¹ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wik/Rootless_cosmopolitan.

² A good introduction to this will be found in Vertovec and Cohen, eds., 2002, and especially in Hollinger's chapter in that book.

³ I am grateful to Nathan Lillie for permission to quote from his 2003 PhD Thesis in the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

⁴ These data were kindly provided by Donatella della Porta from her and Mario Diani's forthcoming article, "*Contro la guerra senza se ne ma: Le proteste contro la guerra in Irak*". Other reports from della Porta's research program on the European global justice and peace movements can be found in della Porta and Mosca, eds., 2003; and della Porta 2004.

⁵ I am grateful to Nancy Foner for calling this quotation to my attention and for her sensitive reflections on the old and the new immigrant transnationalism in her "Transnationalism Then and Now" (2001). Note that Speranza used the term "colony" in the sense of immigrant communities, not that of colonized societies by foreign states.

⁶ I am grateful to Benedict Anderson for reminding me of this difference – obvious only after he had pointed it out to me.

⁷ The three-country study was directed by Alejandro Portes and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo. Between 1996 and 2000, they and their collaborators carried out three

phases of data collection in Columbia, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador. For each of the three target populations, data collection was carried out in two North American settlement cities and in the country of origin, using the same set of survey instruments and sampling designs in both cases. For the products of the project to date, see the website of the Center for Migration and Development at Princeton at <http://cmd.princeton.edu/papers.html>.

⁸ I am grateful to Roger Waldinger for reminding me of this point in a personal communication.

⁹ I make no effort here to survey the enormous literature on immigrant politics and communities in Europe. Perhaps the best-studied case is that of the Kurds. For good introductions to migrant transnationalism outside the United States, see Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001 and the papers collected in Al-Ali and Koser 2002.

¹⁰ In a private communication commenting on an earlier version of this paper.