

POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL THEORY

Series Editor: Diane E. Davis

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POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL THEORY VOLUME 17

POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL THEORY

EDITED BY

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2005



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First edition 2005

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 0-7623-1190-8

ISSN: 0198-8719 (Series)

© The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).
Printed in The Netherlands.

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THINKING LOCALLY, ACTING GLOBALLY? WHAT THE SEATTLE WTO PROTESTS TELL US ABOUT THE GLOBAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Gillian H. Murphy and Steven Pfaff

ABSTRACT

The "Battle in Seattle" has been credited with giving birth to a new, more radical phase in transnational social movement organizing; yet evidence suggests it may be misleading to speak of "global" social movements. In Seattle in 1999, the contribution of transnational movement organizations was quite modest compared with that of conventional, nationally based interest groups that focused on local resource mobilization and ideational preparation. This suggests that the basis of the new "global" social movements may be the well-established process of resource mobilization by which organized interest groups provide support for local activist communities.

INTRODUCTION

From November 30 through December 3, 1999, Seattle was gripped by powerful protests that targeted the Third Ministerial Conference of the

Political Power and Social Theory
 Political Power and Social Theory, Volume 17, 151–176
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 ISSN: 0198-8719/doi:10.1016/S0198-8719(04)17005-1

World Trade Organization (WTO), a multilateral organization created for the regulation of tariffs and trade. In particular, the events of November 30, the opening day of the ministerial, captured the imagination of activists and scholars around the world. On what activists dubbed "N30," tens of thousands of protesters flooded the streets of downtown Seattle, preventing the bulk of the WTO delegates from reaching the opening session of the talks and bringing business to a standstill. When riot police struck back with batons, pepper spray, tear gas, and armored vehicles, the protests in Seattle presented a picture of urban unrest rarely seen in the U.S. since the Vietnam War era. Undermined by pre-existing conflicts among the member states, unresolved procedural issues, and failing consensus among the most advanced industrial nations, the WTO failed to set an agenda for the next round of international trade liberalization. If politics within the organization frustrated the WTO's neo-liberal agenda, then the protest outside turned frustration into fiasco.

Since the 1980s, meetings of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and economic summits by government and business officials have become appealing targets for protest, and activists have built a distinctive protest repertoire. Activists and intellectuals alike have proclaimed the arrival of a "global civil society" (Schechter, 1999) in which transnational social movements (TSMOs) and transnational non-governmental organization (TNGOs) are extending democratic values globally and policing rogue states and corporations. In the place of discrete, divided, and occasional opposition to economic globalization, advocates of a global justice movement endorse a "globalization from below" to unite progressive forces around the world (Brecher & Costello, 1998; Moody, 1997; Mazur, 2000). Networks of activists have lifted IGOs such as the WTO from obscurity to high visibility, drawing (largely unwelcome) public scrutiny.

Riding the crest of a new wave of protests against high profile IGOs, the unexpected result of the "Battle in Seattle" was to change the way that politicians, policy-makers and citizens view the process of globalization. As Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2002, p. 3) observed, "The protests at the Seattle meetings of the World Trade Organization in 1999 were a shock. Since then, the movement has grown stronger and the fury has spread. Virtually every major meeting of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization is now the scene of conflict and turmoil." It is especially noteworthy that the city of Seattle was the origin point of this new wave of protest. Before N30, the "high-tech," "Pacific Rim gateway" city was described in op-ed pages of *The Washington Post* as a "leading apostle" of transnational trade whose denizens regarded

globalization not as a threat but as a "marketing opportunity" (July 6, 1997). Just after the protests, by contrast, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial decried the betrayal of the neo-liberal agenda and lamented that, thanks to Seattle, "the WTO will fast become the institution of choice for every activist agenda on the globe" (December 2, 1999).

Certainly, it is also true that among activists Seattle has been credited with triggering a wave of strident protest and giving birth to a new, more radical phase in transnational social movement organizing. Immediately following the protests, a flood of journalistic and activist assessment appeared, much of it lauding the "rambunctious, anarchic, internationalist" "spirit of Seattle" as the cutting edge of a nascent global justice movement (see, e.g., Bosman, 1999; Guillod & Allen, 2000; Finnegan, 2000; Zerbowski, 2000; Kahn, 2000; McClure, 2000; St. Clair, 1999; Cockburn & St. Clair, 2001; Global Exchange, 2000).

Yet what is striking to us is that, in addition to the transnational movement activism that brought attention of the world to Seattle, and the highly visible street theater and non-violent civil disobedience tactics that blocked intersections (alongside, of course, the infrequent if much reported window-smashing and vandalism), how much quite conventional movement organization and tactics explain the success of the campaign. A rally on N30 sponsored by the AFL-CIO – an organization often condemned for its putative conservatism by many activists – drew up to 30,000 labor union members and their supporters to Seattle, while a conference for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held parallel to the ministerial involved a host of interest groups from the environmental, public health and human rights fields. Moreover, following N30, strident protest continued through the rest of the week that often had little to do with the WTO. Many ad hoc events were organized with a distinctly local cast as community activists protested police brutality and staged demonstrations against the authorities' creation of "protest-free" zones in much of the central business district.

What brought all these forces together for a week in Seattle? The WTO's mandate, decision-making procedures, and specific rulings were regarded as a threat by both transnational and domestic movements and interest groups. The decision to hold the WTO ministerial in Seattle thus provided an opportunity to register this broadly based opposition. For months prior to the ministerial, a consortium of labor, environmental, trade, human rights, and other movement organizations worked to mobilize their constituencies to protest the WTO and frame its policies and practices as undemocratic, anti-environmental, and anti-labor. They staged public meetings, training sessions, debates with WTO officials, and a host of other events, so that by late

November tens of thousands of activists were prepared to take to the streets and to do battle with the WTO.

All of this indicates an easily overlooked feature of the new anti-globalization protest. Large-scale mobilization generally depends on the vitality of local activist communities bolstered by conventional interest groups in large-scale protest campaigns. The N30 protest was well-attended because pre-existing activist communities were mobilized in step with movement organizations that had large regional constituencies negatively affected by global trade liberalization. Many of the issues raised during the week of the WTOs' ministerial were matters of concern because of their resonance for a range of *domestic* issues including the situation of American organized labor, threats to hard-won environmental legislation, and the implications for U.S. sovereignty.

So why do domestic social movement organizations and interest groups target international organizations whose bases of operations lie elsewhere? How and why do diverse constituencies unite in common campaigns? The challenge for social scientists is to move beyond celebrating the spirit of Seattle to an empirical analysis of the campaign that made the campaign possible. Analysis of the structure of mobilization and its principal agents is therefore essential and has clear relevance for the contemporary global justice movement. Accordingly, in this paper we consider recent theories about transnational social movements in light of our study of the structure of the Seattle events, and our interviews with some of the key campaign organizers to focus on crucial aspects of global political activism: Organization, ideational preparation, and constituent mobilization.

We find that much of what has been heralded as a new phase in social movement organizing has been overstated. We contend that the basis of collective action in social movements remains primarily local, and that the key to large-scale transnational action is appealing to domestic interests. In the case of the WTO protests in Seattle, we demonstrate how strategic issue framing and ideational preparation facilitated cooperation among diverse *local* activist communities supported by *national* interest groups that provided the resources for mass mobilization around global justice issues.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND GLOBALIZATION

How and why do social movement entrepreneurs target the largely abstract and extra-local processes captured under the rubric of globalization? How does such a diverse assortment of social movement actors mobilize around

issues associated with globalization? There is mounting evidence that suggests that a transnational political opportunity structure is taking shape and that a new class of transnational movements is specifically targeting them. Social theorists contend that transnational economic, political, and cultural integration can be expected to have an impact on contentious politics because of increasing irrelevance of national political arenas in deciding the fates of local communities. This shift of scale from the national to the transnational stimulates the formation of citizen movements across the globe prepared to act in opposition to new cross-national regulatory mechanisms and IGOs (see, e.g., Castells, 1995; Bourdieu, 1998, 2001; Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999; Giddens, 1990). In short, as the boundaries of political and social life are being stretched between and beyond nation states, a *transnational* movement society can be expected to take shape (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998; Tarrow, 1996).

Expanding on political process and resource mobilization models in social movement research, the consensus in the field is that research ought to extend to emergent global political structures which give rise to their own opportunity structures, organizational forms, discourses, and political practices (see, e.g., Tarrow, 1998, 2002; Smith, 2001; Smith, Chatfield, & Pagnucco, 1997; Della Porta & Kriesi, 1999; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Rucht, 1999; Kriesberg, 1997; Lewis, 2000; McCarthy, 1997; Snow & Benford, 1999). This is evident in the remarkable growth in the number of *transnational* NGOs and social movement organizations (SMOs) in recent decades. Based on international organization registers, Smith (1997) and Keck and Sikkink (1998) documented more than 600 TSMOs (about 40% of which were human rights and environmental groups) active in 1993, nearly two-thirds of which were formed after 1970. These groups tended to be heavily networked with other NGOs (Smith, 1994; Smith, 1997).

On an expanding scale, network structures of this kind have the possibility of exploiting "weak" inter-organizational ties in the diffusion of information, ideology, strategies, and tactical repertoires across various sectors of the movement. Advocates of a new transnational movement society may overlook, however, that while the weak organizational ties characteristic of TSMOs are efficient in the diffusion of information these ties are less reliable as motivators of collective action. Indeed, in the study of collective action, mobilization is generally thought to rely upon strong social ties arising out of highly salient social identities and interests (Tilly, 1978; Calhoun, 1982; Gould, 1995; Kitts, 2000). These commitment-producing social structures are, as a rule, based on spatial proximity and frequent, face-to-face exchanges. Yet TSMOs are typically small organizations of

movement entrepreneurs, or coalitional structures, rather than membership-based organizations. If large-scale transnational movement mobilization is to occur, then it will likely succeed to the extent that it can piggy-back on the locally based communities that generate commitment and the membership-based SMOs and NGOs that can provide the resources required to sustain campaigns.

Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that "transnational advocacy networks" are the core of the new transnational social movement field. The primary purpose of these structures is less member mobilization than creating alternative channels of communication and reframing international and domestic issues. These movement networks strategically disseminate information to keep domestic and international institutions accountable, and they exercise leverage against states and intergovernmental organizations. Much of what they advocate may have a "boomerang" quality, bouncing issues from the transnational arena back into *domestic* social contexts where activists can reframe debates, extend norms, and reshape political alliances.

At first glance this seems an odd strategy for many established SMOs, NGOs, and other interest groups given their usual focus on lobbying, monitoring government, and promoting public awareness of constituent interests within the national states that have jurisdiction over their constituents (Minkoff, 1995; Gamson, 1990). Yet, transnational campaigns can in some instances "amplify the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, pp. 12-13). Thus, what can be easily overlooked in the discussion of transnational social movements is that rather than disappearing with globalization, it may well be that *local* sources of organization and mobilization actually *gain* in importance. A paradox of the global justice movement is that if it is going to succeed in mobilizing popular pressure against transnational targets, it requires extensive domestic support that looser, transnational advocacy networks cannot provide.

These reflections raise some basic questions about the relationship between transnational processes and actors, and collective action. In an era of transnational political opportunities, how does local activism link back up to transnational campaigns? Why would SMOs and NGOs with overwhelmingly local and national concerns expend resources as part of a global campaign directed at a remote target? Why would a city like Seattle, portrayed as an emblem of the prosperity brought by economic globalization, be such a receptive host?

THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN THE ORGANIZATION AND MOBILIZATION OF THE SEATTLE CAMPAIGN

As a first step in understanding the transnational dimensions of the Seattle campaign and transnational mobilization in general, we turn first to case studies of three domestic SMOs prominent in the Seattle campaign. These case studies, focusing on groups that varied considerably in their degree of organizational formalization, sophistication, issue focus, and political goals, were developed in part from first-person narratives and press accounts of mobilization and protest events, and also from open-ended interviews with organizational representatives and participant-observation during the preparation and conduct of the protests.¹

Our second step is to evaluate the structure of the mobilization in Seattle in order to understand the role of organization and framing. The structure of the mobilization is illuminated by original data describing all publicly announced movement-related events in the Seattle area during the period leading up to and including the week of the WTO ministerial. After assessing case studies and the event data we return to general questions raised by existing theory of TSMOs. We will not offer another narrative of the Seattle events; a detailed picture of the Seattle events can be drawn from several excellent overviews and critical summaries (see, e.g., Smith, 2001; Levi & Olson, 2000; Wahl, 2000; Epstein, 2000) and from valuable documentary collections (WTO History Project, Guilloid & Allen, 2000). We concentrate on what the empirical evidence we assembled tells us about how social movements and contentious politics may be changing shape in response to a shifting locus of political and economic power and expanding networks of communication (Ayers, 1999; Epstein, 2000; Levi & Olson, 2000; Wahl, 2000).

The most comprehensive effort to evaluate the Seattle protests so far has been provided by Jackie Smith (2001) who offers an overview of the protest participants and the tactics they employed. Smith pays special attention to new transnational linkages between movement organizations, and constituencies and innovations in protest repertoires and movement frames. Her study usefully categorizes a host of formal organizations and more loosely structured groups that took part in the campaign (*Ibid.*, p. 7). Smith puts considerable emphasis on the novelty of the Seattle events, pointing to adaptations and extensions of existing protest forms, new communication and framing tactics, and extensive electronic activism (*Ibid.*, p. 11).

Our analysis of the Seattle protests follows a different strategy and leads to a somewhat different perspective. The three organizations we study are

the organized labor movement (including the AFL-CIO, the King County Labor Council, and the trade unions), the loose collection of activists organized within the Direct Action Network (DAN), and the public interest group. People for Fair Trade/Network Opposed to the WTO (PFT). In our analysis of campaign events during the protests and in the weeks preceding them, these three mobilizing groups were the most prominent, organizing about one third of all the public events in our sample. Moreover, these three groups nicely suggest the broad spectrum of organizations and activists that composed the Seattle protests, ranging from highly formalized, NGOs (such as the AFL-CIO), loosely structured SMOs (such as DAN), and interest groups (such as PFT). To our surprise, we found that although the constituencies of these organizations were not identical, areas of overlap in issue framing, personnel, and strategy provided opportunities for crosscutting organizational ties and the exchange of information and resources across the campaign.

Organized Labor

The single most important actor in the Seattle campaign was organized labor. Indeed, during the period around the Seattle WTO ministerial, organized labor emerged as the chief standard-bearer of anti-globalization protest (Levi & Olson, 2000). In addition to the public visibility and clout that labor brought to the campaign, unions mobilized tens of thousands of members, their families, their supporters, and sympathizers and brought them to Seattle on N30.

Its prominence in a strident protest campaign might seem an unusual position for the U.S. labor movement, but it reflected a shift in strategy toward greater confrontation with the trade policies of the U.S. government. Opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and presidential "fast-track" authority in trade were a key moments in the late 1990s that shifted organized labor in support of transnational trade campaigns (Stillerman, 2003; Shoch, 2000; Mazur, 2000). The resulting "Greenie-Sweeny" coalition that included the labor movement, environmentalists, and citizen advocacy groups reflected a renewed interest in grassroots activism and global justice issues among labor leaders seeking a new strategy to exert union influence (Epstein, 2000).

In some ways this new position reflected narrowed political opportunities. Confronting falling union membership, the shifting basis of the economy away from manufacturing, a Democratic administration that championed

economic globalization, and uncertain Congressional support for labor's interests, organized labor responded by adopting an "inside-outside" strategy – lobbying lawmakers and taking labor's case to the streets – in an effort to pressure the U.S. government to take trade positions more favorable to unions.² To put it in Keck and Sikkink's (1998) terms, organized labor hoped that by focusing public attention on transnational labor issues through protest they would "boomerang" back into the domestic polity and around the numerous obstacles to pursuing labor's political agenda.

The change of direction also reflected grassroots pressure from among the union ranks. Industrial union leaders condemned the WTO's policies for undercutting local sovereignty, facilitating the export of jobs, damaging U.S. wage levels and imperiling living standards. For example, Brian McWilliams, the West Coast Longshore (ILWU) workers leader, warned the national AFL-CIO leadership that failure to stage a major show of force in Seattle would be an unforgivable "lost opportunity."³ In all, representatives of about 200 labor unions condemned the WTO and called for a labor rights clause to be added to its charter that clearly endorsed worker's rights.

Organized labor framed its opposition to the WTO not in terms of traditional economic protectionism, but rather invoked a "new internationalism" in labor politics (Mazur, 2000). The key demand of this internationalism was that the labor standards established by International Labor Organization – itself lacking enforcement power – be adopted and enforced by the WTO (Olson, 2000). Yet the embrace of the rhetoric of "new internationalism" reflected less solidarity with a transnational labor movement than an effort to appeal broadly across a variety of American industrial sectors and avoid criticism on grounds of protectionism or political nativism. Labor leaders eschewed more radical calls to abolish the WTO prominent in the Seattle campaign emphasizing instead "rules for – not resistance to – globalization" in an effort to widen public support.

Organized labor's direct commitment to the campaign opened up considerable resources for SMOs in the Seattle area that would have been irreplaceable. Thirty AFL-CIO staffers were deployed to Seattle to assist local unions in a mobilization drive and the federation alone spent close to \$1 million (U.S.) on mobilizing opposition to the WTO, with the King County Labor Council (KCLC) and area unions expending additional resources.⁴ Labor purchased mass media advertisements in local markets and produced and distributed vast numbers of placards, buttons and other materials. In both the United States and in British Columbia, unions sent out field organizers to arrange an "I'm coming to Seattle" campaign. The

AFL-CIO and its affiliates organized transportation for thousands of West Coast members by charter bus and by rail.

Labor's participation in the campaign thus proved crucial for protest mobilization on N30 and in the days that followed. In addition to drawing considerable press attention to its lobbying efforts, the AFL-CIO-sponsored march and rally in Seattle drew somewhere between 30 and 40,000 people. Toward the end of the labor march, which had been diverted from the areas made impassable by other protesters, thousands of marchers ignored the instructions of union officials and joined DAN and other radical protest groups in blockading downtown Seattle. Later in the week, local labor leaders led by the KCLC defended non-violent demonstrators from a no-protest zone and ongoing police harassment and negotiated an end to standoff between protesters and police outside the downtown Labor Temple.

The Direct Action Network

Seattle's DAN reveals how locally organized activist communities can exploit opportunities and resources opened by the sponsorship of well-funded national organizations. But this relationship was symbiotic: In the anti-WTO campaign, local activists provided a way for established NGOs to contribute to a high-visibility campaign involving confrontational protests without risking their own political capital. In fact, DAN and other grassroots movement groups provided much of the disruptive, confrontational protest that garnered so much attention during the Seattle WTO protests. DAN did not require organizational or ideological conformity of its members, insisting only that activists refrain from physical and verbal provocation, carry no weapons, avoid intoxicants during the action, and destroy no property. DAN played a role unavailable to mainstream labor, environmental and human rights groups while benefiting – more often indirectly but sometimes directly – from their considerable organizational and financial resources.

DAN was initiated by a group of West Coast activists to supply protesters with training and other resources for direct action in Seattle and beyond. Drawing on an established repertoire of non-violent direct action that grew out of the environmental and peace and disarmament movements (see, e.g., Epstein, 1991), DAN adopted a non-hierarchical structure that was very appealing to the left-libertarian activists that had prior experience in the environmental movement. A key feature of its organization was the use of

affinity groups. Activists were taught by organizers to form their own organizing groups of 5–20 people to decide upon and implement direct action. Though pledged to non-violent principles, participants in these small groups were empowered to make their own decisions on matters such as protest tactics, level of willingness to risk arrest, and whether they would adopt jail solidarity (no member accepts release from detention until all are released). Affinity groups, in turn, were organized into clusters committed to particular objectives, such as blocking an intersection near the convention center or serving as a “flying group” to respond to pressure points in the blockade of the ministerial or other opportunities for non-violent disruption. The affinity groups, in turn, were coordinated at DAN “Spokescouncil” meetings to which each cluster sent a representative empowered to speak for that set of affinity groups. Global Exchange's Kevin Danaher, one of the figures instrumental in creating DAN, aptly described this model of organization as “lots of lieutenants, no generals” (Finnegan, 2000, p. 45).

This loosely structured organization allowed members to innovate freely, react with flexibility during the protests, and communicate openly with one another. The affinity group model with its emphasis on spontaneity and consensus was well suited to the anarchist and egalitarian elements within the global justice movement that ordinarily avoid working with conventional political parties and interest groups. As one activist explained:

...our model of power was decentralized, and leadership invested in the group as a whole. People were empowered to make their own decisions, and the centralized structures were for coordination, not control. As a result, we had great flexibility and resilience, and many people were inspired to perform acts of course they could have never been ordered to do... DAN organizers set a tone that valued autonomy and freedom over conformity, and stressed coordination rather than pressure to conform.⁵

More grandly, some DAN activists claimed that their style of organization was a model for the decentralized, egalitarian planet they hoped to create through their resistance to corporate capitalism and political elitism. In the place of highly institutionalized forms of protest, DAN offered a lively and colorful package of music, oversized satirical puppets and inventive signs and slogans. DAN made good use of electronic resources, enabling activists to communicate and coordinate long before arriving in Seattle. Websites and listservs rapidly distributed tactical information, electronic versions of flyers, stickers, artwork, and educational materials.

DAN excelled in coordinating diverse categories of activists with varying levels of movement experience, training and preparation. Thousands were provided with a three-hour course on non-violent ideology and tactics. Groups of activists willing to be arrested during non-violent civil resistance

were identified and trained in jail solidarity tactics. In short, DAN became a clearinghouse of information that fostered the unhindered diffusion of information and tactics across the campaign. One participant explained, "The convergence offered the thousands of activists from around the planet an opportunity to network and collaborate with one another... The total energy of solidarity transformed the week into a semi-religious experience of inspiration."⁶

In its own framing of the anti-WTO campaign, DAN stressed radical opposition to global corporate power, portraying a host of environmental, social, and economic injustices as directly related to the globalization of capitalism. DAN activists decried the WTO as a cabal of illegitimate bureaucrats in pay of transnational corporations and ruling elites intent only on maximizing profits, privatizing resources, and securing worldwide domination. Free trade was decried as a strategy for concentrating power and wealth, undermining democracy and local sovereignty, and crippling popular resistance. Economic liberalism was nothing more than an ideological fig leaf for poverty and ecological destruction. DAN claimed that because the Western corporations had achieved worldwide hegemony, resistance was taking on a transnational character. In this battle, DAN called on activists to take part in an "historic opportunity to halt corporate globalization" right in the streets of Seattle.

People for Fair Trade/Network Opposed to the WTO

The PFT organization was initiated by Public Citizen, the political action and consumer affairs group founded by Ralph Nader. Public Citizen had been involved in the Citizen's Trade Campaign (CTC), a national coalition of labor, environmental, consumer affairs, religious, and other groups concerned with human rights and trade liberalization issues formed to oppose ratification of the NAFTA. The CTC had considerable support from the AFL-CIO and industrial unions, and in the months immediately preceding the announcement of the Seattle WTO ministerial, CTC scored an important victory in defeating "Fast Track" trade negotiating authority in the 105th Congress (Shoch, 2000).

When the WTO announced that it would hold its next ministerial conference in Seattle in early 1999, Mike Dolan, Deputy Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, began to reach out to fellow CTC members. Previously, much of the work done by the CTC involved legislative lobbying and public information. In Seattle, the CTC players became involved in

direct action when in the late summer of 1999, Dolan established an office under the PFT banner to coordinate activist mobilization. PFT's primary goal reinforced its alliance with labor, aiming to maximize the turnout for the AFL-CIO sponsored march and rally on November 30, 1999. But, crucially, PFT provided support to local activists by providing funding, printing informational materials, running a speaker's bureau, coordinating outreach to Seattle community organizations, and providing support to student groups on the various university and college campuses in the Seattle area. PFT also used its expertise to provide local activists with important services such as negotiating assembly permits with city officials, and posting an online calendar of related local events.

The PFT's part in the campaign was thus to try to combine the sophistication of a national public interest group with the dynamism of local activist networks. Indeed, PFT played a significant part in channeling resources from institutionalized NGOs and SMOs to local activists. As Dolan recounted,

I had to maintain really good relations with the AFL-CIO, the Sierra Club, the more moderate NGOs that weren't comfortable with the message of the Direct Action Network to shut down and to completely oppose the institution of the WTO. They were still forming their message. They didn't know exactly what they wanted to say yet. The AFL-CIO was working on materials. The Sierra Club was working on materials. They hadn't decided what their message was. DAN's message was very straightforward. Very simple. Shut it down. It's an illegitimate institution, shut it down. So, what I did was "on the QT" [discrete], I gave money to DAN. Ultimately around \$6,000.⁷

In this very direct way, PFT provided a bridge between NGOs as suppliers of resources and locally based activist groups. Having no local membership of its own, PFT drew on organized public information events at neighborhood association meetings across Seattle beginning in September that familiarized citizens with global trade issues and the WTO's agenda well in advance of N30.

For PFT organizers, ideological consensus on trade issues was less important than matters of practical coordination. A wide array of local activist groups that were wary of the alleged moderation of mainstream public interest groups nonetheless directly and indirectly benefited from PFT financial and logistic support. In its framing literature, most notably its widely distributed *Citizen's Guide to the WTO*, PFT provided the consistent message that an elitist WTO sacrificed democracy at home and abroad for the sake of corporate profit and would overturn hard-won environmental, labor, and consumer protection policies. It demanded fair trade relations between countries, protection of labor and human rights, and democratic

accountability in all multilateral agreements and trade organizations. This broad critique linked to nearly every sector of the campaign and was meant to appeal to mainstream audiences.

Inevitably, PFT's relations with Seattle-area activists and citizens groups were not without friction. Some activists accused Dolan of using resources to dominate the campaign's agenda. Some deplored the PFT as the work of an institutionalized, Washington D.C. political machine. As Dolan recounted, "It's so funny. I mean, back in DC, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, we're the axe-swinging radicals. I come out here and I am reviled as a reformist. I'm a liberal."⁸ In the end, the message that PFT broadcast and its evident sympathy for local activists was enough to secure pragmatic cooperation. The critique of the WTO was broad enough to resonate widely across different social movement sectors and constituencies and the WTO was a big enough target that SMOs across the ideological spectrum found ample reason to cooperate in opposing it.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SEATTLE WTO PROTEST CAMPAIGN: EVALUATING EVENT DATA

Our discussion of the principal groups in the anti-WTO campaign in Seattle, DAN, PFT, and organized labor, shows that groups with very different interests, organizational forms, and tactical repertoires were able to act in concert as part of an effective protest campaign. It appears as if the campaign's success was born of local organizing funded by established actors. In addition to providing the core of the campaign, these groups engaged in carefully targeted issue-framing designed to bridge diverse constituencies and align movement messages (Snow & Benford, 1992). They created broad consensus about the issues that were at stake, despite discord surrounding tactics and goals. Clearly, the WTO, a temporarily accessible and influential foe, provided the necessary unifying element. But, beyond these three groups, is there evidence that the broader campaign had the coherence we observe. Do we find common patterns of organizing and issue focus across the campaign?

To answer these questions, we assembled summary data to describe the Seattle campaign more generally. Our social movement event dataset is assembled from a timeline of events constructed by the WTO History Project at the University of Washington (<http://www.wtohistory.org>) and supplemented with reporting of protest events that appeared in the *Seattle*

Times during the period from October 10 to December 5, 1999. The WTO History Project's timeline was constructed by reviewing its extensive public archive of materials and coding all WTO-related events sponsored by SMOs, NGOs, and public interest groups. We think that we have captured nearly all publicly announced organized events in connection with the events in Seattle, including many that were organized in response to events on N30. Unfortunately, our data does not indicate the size of the various events and might fail to include some events, particularly those sponsored by small groups or organized spontaneously. Our purpose, however, is not to assess the relative impact of one or another incident or organization, but rather to capture the structure of the WTO protest campaign and the primacy of issue foci within that campaign.

The result of our efforts is a dataset including 553 unique events, 37% of which occurred before November 30, and the remainder between November 30 and December 5, 1999. We coded these events by date, the type of event, its issue focus, and sponsoring organization. Our coding scheme included five main categories of events – informational or educational, training, organizational meetings, fundraising events, and demonstration or protests – a level of detail that captures 92% of all events. The remaining events consist primarily of press conferences, parties and receptions, welcoming ceremonies, and the like (Table 1).

Our data reveal that the clear focus of the mobilization effort, which began in August and continued throughout Ministerial Week, was public education. Informational and educational events comprise about 45% of all events, the largest single category, with an even greater concentration (47%) during Ministerial Week, when much of the mass media's attention was focused on confrontational street protest. The fact that the number of information and educational events far outstrips the number of protests even

Table 1. Distribution of Campaign Events by Type.

Campaign Event Type	Frequency	%
Information/education/debates	249	45
Planning meetings	70	13
Training	99	18
Demonstration/protest	22	4
Fundraising	68	12
Other	45	8
Total	553	100

Table 2. Distribution of Campaign Events over time.

Weeks before Ministerial	Frequency	%
0	191	34.5
1	132	23.9
2	39	7.1
3	39	7.1
4	25	4.5
5	23	4.2
6	19	3.4
7	30	5.4
8	12	2.2
8 +	43	7.8
Total	553	100

during the height of protest is a stark correction to the impression we might receive if we relied only on television news or newspaper headlines to gain an impression of the campaign (Table 2).

Planning work by the diverse organizations and constituencies that comprised the Seattle campaign accounted for about 13% of all movement-related events in our data set, composed primarily of activities like committee meetings and member coordination. The relatively modest share of fundraising events (12%) may reflect the fact that the Seattle campaign was well funded by national organizations and political interest groups, allowing organizers to focus on planning, mobilization, and ideational preparation.

The data support the information that we have about the priorities of the three key groups that we studied in detail. These groups apparently saw themselves as engaged chiefly in public education concerning the threats posed by globalization or directly by the WTO in an effort to weaken public support for U.S. trade policies and raise awareness of transnational social justice issues.

Accordingly, a large portion of the campaign was dedicated to *issue framing* of trade, environmental, labor and human rights issues and *ideational preparation* of activists and potential supporters for protest participation. Given the very broad efforts at coalition building among multiple constituencies that characterized the campaign and the fact that most of the public knew little or nothing about the WTO prior to the Seattle events, this was probably a crucial factor in the campaign's success. Indeed, the diverse and sometimes competing groups that mobilized the Seattle protests

maintained a surprisingly clear focus on trade and globalization issues across the campaign.

For the 249 education and information events in our sample, we were able to code definitively the issue focus of 221 (89%). We found that nearly half were billed as focusing on the WTO and trade issues, with much smaller proportions focusing specifically on the environment, labor or other issues. Among the host of other potentially competing issues, none achieved higher than 15% of the issue focus of all educational events. The campaign, for all the diversity of its participant organizations and their constituencies, managed to keep the focus of attention on the WTO and related trade issues. Even though critics warned that the WTO ministerial would provide a convenient occasion for a host of radical groups to make unrelated demonstrations of their causes, the focus of the mobilization campaign was remarkably consistent (Table 3).

Despite the attention given to international activist networks in nearly all accounts of the Seattle protests, our data points to how large-scale social movement mobilization in the era of globalization may still rely heavily on locally based constituencies and the resources that can be mobilized in national polities. While exact counts are difficult to construct because of the large volume of event co-sponsorship, organizations based in the Puget Sound area were heavily involved in sponsoring and promoting events and activities during this period. Although transnational organizations made a modest organizational contribution to the local mobilization effort, foreign activists provided a core of highly informed, resourceful activists who were prominent as speakers and authorities on specific issues. Symbolically, this was important for American organizers because it undercut the efforts of the WTO and its corporate and governmental sponsors to portray the WTO as

Table 3. Information/Education Event Sponsor Issue Focus.

Issue Focus	%
WTO/Trade	49
Environment	15
Labor	10
Human rights	9
Third world	2
Other	15
Total	100

Based on a sample of 221 (89%) of education and information events.

a benevolent force acting in the best interest of developing countries and its opponents as nativist, protectionist, and indifferent to the plight of developing countries.

Our event data provide a clear sense of what makes confrontational street protest effective; the success in disrupting the WTO conference was the outcome of careful planning and implementation. Not only was extensive ideational preparation probably important in expanding the ranks of movement supporters, but great care was also taken to provide activists with training in the techniques of nonviolent civil disobedience. Training events, organized by groups such as DAN, accounted for about 18% of all events. In implementing such training, movement, organizers drew on the wider activist community of the Pacific Northwest, much of it already familiar with the direct action repertoire. Activists were well-prepared to disrupt the conference and blunt police crowd control tactics. Despite their evident innovation and imagination, these were not spontaneous demonstrations – they were the result of a broader strategy that drew on an existing community of activists that indoctrinated and trained newcomers. Organizers had developed effective tactics and communication structures in the weeks preceding the conference that gave them real advantages during the ministerial week. We think that this training may explain why the protesters proved so agile in their confrontation on N30 with law enforcement that, by contrast, was ill prepared and inexperienced in confronting urban protest.

Because we followed daily listings of events, we are able to trace the structure of mobilization events over time. In the two months preceding the protests, we observe a steadily increasing number of events. Although the peak of the campaign was clearly the Ministerial Week, this week only accounts for about 35% of events. What is clear is that the events that riveted public attention were long in the making and relied upon a sophisticated, long-term mobilization campaign. As KCLC executive secretary Ron Judd noted, “What happened in Seattle was not an accident. For months, Labor led an effort with allies to educate and inform the community about the devastating impacts of the WTO and its policies.”⁹

DISCUSSION

Seattle, Genoa, Quebec, Washington, DC – confrontational protests against IGOs in cities around the world spearheaded by a vanguard of transnational activists have become the hallmark of the public perception of the global justice movement. But the evidence we have presented from Seattle is an

important reminder that the clashes we observe in the streets are only the visible tip of much larger submerged campaigns that probably achieve the greatest success when they manage to harness local organizations and resourceful domestic interest groups to transnational causes. What has been described as the first great manifestation of a global movement might best be understood in terms of a set of variables familiar to students of *national* resource mobilization and *local* activist communities.

We find that in Seattle the basis of collective action was akin to what Tarrow (2002) has called the “rooted cosmopolitanism” – local, and, to a lesser extent regional, activist communities with weaker ties to transnational movements. The evidence we have collected reveals careful organizational and ideational preparation by a loose coalition of SMOs and NGOs designed to inform and mobilize *existing* social movement constituencies. By aligning injustice frames around common concerns, strategic issue framing, and ideational preparation, particularly as accomplished by national interest groups and NGOs, facilitated cooperation among diverse organizations and activist communities. To their surprise, local activists found that their ongoing efforts briefly enjoyed the financial support of powerful allies that decided that the Seattle ministerial provided an opportunity for “inside-outside” pressure to reshape U.S. trade policy.

In short, we find that in the Seattle campaign, nationally based interest groups and NGOs, some of them working in coalition, provided the resources, institutional access, and personnel to fuel local activism. Without the resources and clout of domestic movements and NGOs, the chances of a large-scale protest would have been much smaller. We suspect that wherever large-scale protests are mounted in the movement for global justice, they will be rooted in the local communities that generate robust interests and identities, and rely on established interest groups to provide resources.

This is not to suggest that the Seattle protests do not reflect larger shifts in the social movement field. While there was clearly an international component to the campaign, the domestic sources of mobilization remained the critical factors in popular protest. There were three noteworthy dimensions of transnational relations that mattered. The first was new *opportunities* for contention provided by IGOs. Dissident groups saw the WTO Ministerial as an opportunity to draw worldwide media attention. Labor, environmental, and trade-related interest groups effectively exploited opportunities opened up by the WTO conference occurring in a major U.S. city. As Keck and Sikkink (1998) note, when domestic political opportunities are blocked, interest groups may adopt a “boomerang” strategy by seeking out international targets to try to bring pressure on their government from outside.

The process by which interest groups newly define allies and targets for mobilization points to the second important element of the Seattle campaign: expanding *linkages* between activist communities around the world that made the Seattle events resonate globally. Activists were assisted by information technologies that eased coordination and used electronic media to provide continuous accounts of the Seattle protests that countered unfavorable mainstream media coverage (Eagleton-Pierce, 2001). The ability to diffuse information, tactical innovations, and injustice frames around the world rapidly can significantly extend the influence of transnational movements (Ayres, 1999). Yet the influence of transnational organizations and advocacy groups can easily be overstated. Most have no direct means of influencing policy and must be content with "mobilizing shame against a country" (Olson, 2000). Much of this consists of documenting and broadcasting abuses before a worldwide audience. Activists in the Seattle campaign demanded that the WTO's activities be fully transparent to the public in order to reveal its anti-democratic and exploitative agenda. Juliette Beck of Global Exchange explained of the group's strategy, "that's all we are asking people to do: help us drag these institutions out into the sunlight of public scrutiny where they belong. They'll shrivel up like Dracula" (Finnegan, 2000, p. 51). However, the bulk of the research shows that the effect that movements have on influencing policy through changing public opinion is generally fairly modest (Burstein & Linton, 2002). This too underlines the importance of alliances with conventional interest groups and parties for global justice movements.

The third element in the campaign was *coalition formation* across interest groups, NGOs and SMOs that structured events in Seattle and coordinated efforts across diverse sets of actors. This occurred primarily in the political arena. Our findings suggest that grassroots activists and rooted communities may be the crucial constituencies for international movement campaigns, but they require the support of conventional SMOs and NGOs that provide the resources necessary for resistance to corporate globalization. Careful examination of the labor, citizen's advocacy, and activist constituencies in the Seattle campaign revealed how transnational opportunities may make possible not only new transnational coalitions, but also domestic political coalitions and alliances (see also Levi & Murphy, 2002). It is not clear, however, whether these coalitions will prove ephemeral or a part of reshaped contentious politics.

All of this suggests greater caution in proclaiming a new era of activism. If progressive visions of a "cosmopolitan democracy" (Held, 1995) of transnational movement organizations and citizen initiatives are to be realized,

the principal contributions transnational social movements seem to make is through the generation of publicity. The importance of TSMOs may stem less from their capacity to influence policy outcomes, but rather from their ability to transform the terms and nature of debates surrounding public issues. Much of the discussion of "global civil society" and transnational citizenship tends to overestimate the influence of new communications technology and overlook the continuing importance of the local and domestic contexts of collective action. Our data clearly show that the WTO protests drew chiefly on the strength of *local* activists and *national* interests groups employing conventional resource mobilization tactics (see McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Jenkins, 1983).

It is also worth noting the importance of democratic political norms. Social movement activities in Seattle were largely politics of the *streets and public spaces*. Nearly all WTO-related events occurred in public settings and open meeting places, not only during the ministerial but also in the preceding weeks. Activists used public forums and the resources of the public domain as the chief means through which to express their concerns. The notion of "transnational movement community" tends to obscure the fact that democratic rights and access do not obtain outside of national politics and overlooks the differences between the sorts of links between people that are typically forged through indirect social relations (e.g., the internet) and the locally dense ties that have historically constituted the core of social movements (Calhoun, 1998). What social movement researchers have long referred to as the "indigenous resources" with which collective action is usually mobilized – community organizations, associations, churches, labor unions, clubs, kinship groups, etc. – are generated through face-to-face exchanges in local contexts not easily translated to the transnational level.

The Seattle campaign suggests that TSMOs may be most effective as bridging networks, rather than as more conventional mobilizing structures. What does this mean for the future of anti-globalization movements? Alas, it may be too soon to say. As has been widely noted, in the few years since the "Battle in Seattle," a wave of mass anti-globalization protest hit cities around the world. But changing tactics by intergovernmental agencies and changed political context may break what appeared to be an accelerating cycle of protest. WTO ministerials have more recently been held in countries that lack the basic set of civil rights common to the industrialized democracies, making it difficult for local forces to mobilize or transnational activists to operate.

Furthermore, a new set of conflicts has dominated both the international political and U.S. domestic stages since September 11, 2001. Since then, the

focus of both domestic and transnational activists has shifted to opposition to war and protesting the violation of human rights and civil liberties occasioned by security crackdowns in many Western countries. Domestic policing and public insecurities concerning terrorism and disruption of public order may be inaugurating a much chillier climate for protest (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2001). These factors make it less likely in the immediate future that global justice protesters will enjoy the latitude that made the Seattle campaign possible. Yet what is clear from anti-war mobilization around the world, including in Seattle, is that a new generation of locally minded activists are essential for the cause of a more just global society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank four anonymous reviewers and acknowledge the support of the WTO History Project at the University of Washington (<http://www.wtohistory.org>). Please address all correspondence to Gillian Murphy (gmurphy@u.washington.edu) Department of Sociology, Box 353340, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-3340.

NOTES

1. In conducting this research, the authors interviewed representatives of the following organizations: the AFL-CIO and its local affiliate the King County Labor Council (KCLC), the Direct Action Network (DAN), Students Against Sweatshops, the University of Washington affiliate of the National Lawyer's Guild, the Rainforest Action Network, People for Fair Trade/Network Opposed to the WTO and the Brown Collective. Most of these interviews have since been incorporated into the WTO History Project at the University of Washington, to which the authors were active contributors.

2. The authors' correspondence with Theda Lee, chief international economist, AFL-CIO, Washington, DC May 8, 2000.

3. See statement in International Association of Longshore and Warehouseworker Union (ILWU), President's Report, May 1999.

4. The AFL-CIO's Lee reported: "We spent somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million, closer to \$1million than \$500,000. The largest expense was the rental of Seattle's Memorial Stadium, then the ads, and all the materials (brochures, ponchos, etc.). As you know, we redeployed about 30 staffers to Seattle for much of the fall. This figure does not include that spent by our affiliated unions - probably USWA, IAM, and IBT spending the most." Authors' correspondence with Lee, May 8, 2000.

5. Starhawk, quoted Guillo and Allen (Eds), *Voices from the WTO* (pp. 47-48).

6. Mac Lojowsky, Comes a Time, in Guillo and Allen (Eds), *Voices from the WTO* (pp. 12-16).

7. Mike Dolan interviewed by Jeremy Simer, March 3, 2000 WTO History Project, University of Washington, Seattle.

8. Interview with Dolan conducted by Murphy and Pfaff, November 10, 1999.

9. Judd quoted from Guillo and Allen (Eds), *Voices from the WTO* (p. 51).

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APPENDIX

Our data on the Seattle Anti-WTO Campaign was coded from the timeline of events provided by the WTO History Project at the University of Washington (<http://www.wtohistory.org>) and was corrected by event reports in the *Seattle Times*.

In coding campaign events, we coded nine variables.

1. Date
2. Sponsor
3. Co-sponsor
4. Type of Organization – SMO, TSMO, NGO, TNGO, and others
5. Organization Structure
 1. Networking Organization/Coalition
 2. Single Issue Organization
 3. Multi-issue Organization
6. Organization Primary Locus of Activity
 1. Local – In Seattle
 2. National – U.S. and Canada
 3. International – From outside of U.S. and Canada
7. Type of Event

1. Informational/Educational
2. Committee/Planning Meeting
3. Training
4. Fundraising
5. General/Open Meeting
6. Debate
7. Demo/Protest/Direct Action/CD
8. Other
8. Issue Focus
 1. Labor
 2. Human rights/Democracy/Social Justice
 3. Environment/Health/Food/Agriculture/Biotech
 4. 3rd World Issues/International development
 5. Trade/WTO
 6. Other
9. Location of Event
 1. Organization's designated space
 2. Public space/Streets/Public facilities
 3. Private business or residence

PART III:
SCHOLARLY CONTROVERSY:
A DEBATE ON THE SOCIAL
ORIGINS OF CORPORATE
IRRESPONSIBILITY