

## LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZATION: THE CASE OF EU SUMMIT PROTESTERS IN BRUSSELS, 2001<sup>\*</sup>

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*Although transnational political institutions have been around for decades, it is only recently that the wave of protest against neoliberal globalization has successfully mobilized on a transnational scale. Nevertheless, barriers to transnational participation in protests are especially difficult to overcome. By means of a survey conducted with protesters from all over Europe during the 2001 anti-neoliberal globalization demonstrations at the EU summit in Brussels, we explore the specific impediments to transnational mobilization in the European context. How do anti-neoliberal globalization movement organizations manage to overcome obstacles while other movements are only able to coordinate collective action on a national level? Special attention is given to the impact these difficulties have on the motivation and profile of foreign versus local protesters. Are foreign protesters more radical in their actions than the local participants? Do they take a stronger stance towards their protest actions against globalization? We close by speculating on the future of this movement and on transnational collective action in general.*

Taking part in protest demonstrations has become a normal part of politics. Venting dissatisfaction or making demands in the streets has become commonplace in our “demonstration democracies.” In almost every Western country recently the self-reported number of people that take part in protest marches has risen substantially (Norris, Walgrave, and Van Aelst 2003). The vast majority of these actions have a national focus and remain mostly silent about international issues. Recently, however, protests against international organizations and institutions seemed to have multiplied, although empirical research on contentious actions on the European level shows only a slight rise in “Europrotest,” with the large majority of actions remaining domestic (Imig and Tarrow 2001; Rucht 2002; Giugni and Passy 2002). Even as the scope and authority of transnational institutions grow, citizens are not inclined to target transnational institutional levels for contentious action. In this article, we try to make sense of this paradox by focusing on one particular transnational action event and examining the features of its participants. By carefully comparing the features of domestic and foreign demonstrators, we will empirically establish the obstacles and thresholds that hamper transnational mobilization.

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The recent wave of anti-neoliberal globalization protests seems to have overcome barriers to transnational mobilization by successfully attracting foreign participants.<sup>1</sup> One of the most impressive transnational mobilizations was undoubtedly the 1999 protest during the World Trade Organization (WTO) summit in Seattle. Since then similar protests have taken place during international summits of the G-8, WTO, IMF, World Bank and, more recently, the EU. Each time a diverse and seemingly international crowd rallies at the summit's location to protest organizations of neoliberal globalization. Despite the numerous actions and campaigns, the international character of this movement remains vague and unexplained. Are the demonstrators really coming from different countries, as many observers assert? And if so, how did the organizers manage to overcome the barriers that prevented successful transnational mobilizations during earlier periods?

All kinds of movements and mobilizations are studied under the transnational label, and recently application of the term seems to be subject to inflation among social movement scholars. Transnational can refer to the *target* of the protest, such as supranational or international agencies like the WTO or the European Union (EU). It can refer to an *issue* when the topic addressed is of a transnational nature, like a war or a trade agreement. It can refer to *movement organizations* such as transnational NGOs with branches in many countries, like Greenpeace. It can refer to the *coordinated action* of different national movements staging parallel action events in their own country, like the worldwide February 15, 2003 protests against the war in Iraq. Finally, transnational can refer to the *protesters* themselves, if participants from different countries show up at the same collective action event, as was the case in Seattle.

Neither transnational targets, issues, movements, or actions are our prime concern in this article. Our study focuses on the composition of protestors and their presumed transnational character. Some mobilizations might be transnational in all these respects, while others can be considered transnational only in some of them. The movement against neoliberal globalization meets most of these transnational criteria, including the international composition of its participants, which makes it suitable for the aims of this study. In Seattle the protest was both diverse and transnational as regard to targets, the issues, *and* actors (Smith 2001a). The barriers of transnational mobilization most commonly mentioned in the scholarly literature more directly affect the participants than the issue, the target, the action, or the movement. Indeed, the mobilization of people from different countries appears to be the trickiest aspect of the anti-neoliberal globalization movement, and the hardest test for transnational mobilization in general.

To answer how barriers to transnational mobilization are overcome, we will draw upon a case study of anti-neoliberal globalization protests during the EU summit in Brussels on December 14, 2001. By means of questionnaires handed out at the demonstration we gathered data that enable us to map protesters' characteristics, and especially their country of origin. We begin in the section by discussing the practical hurdles movements have to overcome in order mobilize participants transnationally. What obstacles prevent people of different countries from joining protest demonstrations? Following the literature, we distinguish practical, psychological, and political barriers hindering international protests. Then, we suggest specific hypotheses on the differences between domestic and foreign demonstrators, and describe our research method of surveying people at demonstrations. In the subsequent section, we then present our findings. What is the national origin of the demonstrators? Do foreign demonstrators have a different socio-demographic profile than Belgian demonstrators? Are they mobilized differently? Do they have other opinions on the globalization issue? And, most importantly, can these mutual differences be traced back to the barriers to transnational mobilization? Finally, we close this article by reflecting on our results and speculating how the movement against neoliberal globalization and other movements might manage to further overcome practical, psychological, and political barriers to transnational mobilization.

## BARRIERS OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZATION

The successful demonstrations of the anti-neoliberal globalization movement came as a surprise to many social movement scholars. Not only were the numbers of participants unanticipated, but also their supposedly international composition. Previous research on protest actions consistently found only a limited number of truly transnational events. Although the EU is undoubtedly a transnational institution, Imig and Tarrow's study (2001) shows that between 1984-1977 only 5% of protests in EU states concerned EU-related issues. Of this small group, the vast majority (83%) was labelled as "domesticated protest," namely EU-related, but carried out by domestic protesters against domestic targets. Only a tiny 0.85% of all actions were truly transnational European actions that directly or indirectly targeted the European Union and involved protesters from different EU member states.

Of course, it does not make much sense to expect demonstrations against EU-institutions to occur in Lisbon, for example, when EU does not reside there and EU decision makers rarely meet there. Yet our own protest-event analysis of all demonstrations in Belgium (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2000), including the demonstrations in the European capital of Brussels where the EU-commission periodically meets and the European Parliament regularly gathers, shows that the number of EU-related protests in the 1991-2000 period is surprisingly small. Of the 3913 demonstrations recorded in the 1990s in Belgium, only 11% concerned international and/or EU-related topics. Also, although the EU has continued to grow in its scope of authority over the last decade, our data show that the highest proportion of internationally targeted protest occurred in 1992, and is not linked with growing European integration. Although on the average the number of *demonstrators* in EU-related demonstrations in Belgium is somewhat higher, international demonstrators still are only 16% of the total participants during the ten-year period. These findings are confirmed in Bush and Simi's study (2001) of anti-EU farmer protests during the 1990s. They found that farmers were more inclined to seek their own interests (often against farmers from other EU countries) by pressuring their national governments than targeting the European Union through transnational cooperation. Klandermans and colleagues came to similar conclusions in their research on Dutch and Galician farmers. They found that the farmers still predominantly pressure national governments to protest EU policies (Klandermans, de Weerd, Sabucedo, and Rodriguez 2001). Reising (1999) states that while Europe-related protest might be slowly increasing, this does not mean that specifically transnational protest actions are becoming more popular.

The low level of Europrotest challenges the thesis that European integration and the ensuing decrease of member's political power would be followed by similar changes in interest articulation (Marks and McAdam 1996). The growing European integration may have created new political opportunities, but European civil society seems to have used them timidly so far. How can this lack of transnational protest with its accompanying lack of transnational participation be explained? In the literature different factors are held responsible for the lack of unconventional European action. Following Marks and McAdam (1999) three possible thresholds can be distinguished: practical, psychological, and political ones.

### *Practical Obstacles to Transnational Participation*

Geographical distance perhaps is the most obvious of practical obstacles (Marks and McAdam 1999). Even within the European territory physical distance can form a tremendous barrier for transnational mobilization. On a global scale the problem becomes even more salient as summit organizers choose increasingly remote venues in order to discourage protests. A study on the Australian reactions to three anti-neoliberal globalization protest

actions stressed that, despite the use of internet as a mobilization tool, distance and physical location continue to play a major role in shaping protest actions (Capling and Nossal 2001). Likewise a survey of the anti-war on Iraq protest on February 15, 2003 revealed that only a handful demonstrators traveled more than 200 kilometres to participate in a protest march, even in large countries like the UK, Germany, and the US (Walgrave and Verhulst 2003). The world is not our village yet, where a simple stroll gets us to where we want to be. Moreover, investments of time and money are much higher for transnational protests than domestic ones. Participants need time to travel, look for transportation, and often a place to stay. Social movement organizations can try to lower these practical barriers, but need the funding and the organizational capacities to do so. In this sense the lack of strong international social movement organizations might be problematic.

#### *Psychological Obstacles to Transnational Participation*

The concept *psychological distance* can impede the transnational mobilization of people from different countries. This embraces several dimensions. First, there is a lack of individual attachment to higher levels of governance such as the European Union. Most EU citizens are still predominantly nationally or even sub-nationally focused, and rarely consider the European Union, let alone a transnational organization like the WTO, as a direct target. An analysis of the 2002 Eurobarometer (EB 56.3) revealed that only 4% of the European respondents identified with Europe above their nation of origin (Baetens 2003a). Second, this lack of a *transnational European public*, as Rucht (2002) calls it, is associated with the national focus of the mass media and the lack of genuine European media. The average EU coverage in the Belgian media, for example, is a meagre 2.5% of all newspaper and TV coverage for 1991-2000 (Baetens 2003b).<sup>2</sup> Third, limited media attention not only decreases psychological attachment to the EU but also limits the framing of political and economic grievances in EU terms. Fourth, psychological distance is reflected in the lack of personal interaction between the activists themselves. Here, language barriers still play a role. Also, collective identity traditionally draws on social networks like family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues, which are typically limited at the transnational level (Diani 2001). Finally, collective identities are enhanced by the successful framing of issues, but at the transnational level, frames must be adapted to different cultures and belief systems (Keck and Sikkink 1998a). Cross-cultural frame bridging is a crucial factor for transnational mobilization, but it demands far more time and resources than national framing (McCarthy 1997).

#### *Political Obstacles to Transnational Participation*

There are factors related to *political opportunity* that limit transnational actions. There is a consensus among movement scholars that the national political opportunity structure is a crucial element for explaining the level of mobilization and the success of a protest movement (Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, and Giugni 1995; McAdam, McCarty, and Zald 1996). In some respects, the political opportunities at the European level are less favorable than on most national levels. The European Parliament is an elected institution within the EU, and hypothetically could be influenced by unconventional action, but its power is limited. Other institutions, like the European Council of Ministers, are composed of national representatives and reinforce the tendency towards nationally focused action. Despite the expansion of the qualified majority voting system in the EU, national governments maintain their veto power on numerous policy areas, which makes them easy targets for protest actions by movements whose primary organizations are national—even for EU-related topics. In fact, nationally centred tactics could even prove to be more effective than directly supranational protest (Grant 1993; Rucht 2002). The third player in the EU arena, the European Commission, is a less likely target for protest because it relies mainly on

consultation and exchange of expert data, and therefore is more susceptible for conventional actions like drafting reports and lobbying. Research on the environmental movement at the EU level, for example, suggests that these organizations tend to place protest actions aside, and focus more on institutionalized policy participation methods (Imig and Tarrow 1999). Giugni and Passy (2002) found a similar preference for lobby tactics at the EU level concerning EU migration policies. Moreover, some movement organizations are generously subsidized by the Commission, and enjoy privileged access. In this context, they are reluctant to foster radical protest actions that could jeopardize their comfortable position (Rucht 2001).

### HYPOTHESES ABOUT TRANSNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Given these thresholds, and considering the damage that a poor protest turnout may inflict on a movement's momentum, a reluctance to organize demonstrations supranationally is hardly surprising. However, in recent years the anti-neoliberal globalization movement has successfully staged several transnational protests, and even succeeded in attracting considerable participants from different countries. Still, one might expect that the thresholds we have discussed even affect the composition of these successful demonstrations in two basic ways. First, we would expect fewer foreign participants compared to domestic ones. Second, and more importantly, we believe that the effects of the three clusters of barriers—practical, psychological, and political—will be reflected in characteristics of the demonstrators themselves. More concretely, there will be important differences between domestic and foreign participants attending the same demonstration. The greater the differences, the greater the effect of transnational barriers, and the stronger the argument for their determining influence on the composition of protesters. We do not only expect that there are differences between native and foreign participants, but very specific differences.

Concerning hypotheses about the *practical* barriers of distance, time, and money, we expect that foreign demonstrators will come primarily from neighbouring countries. We also expect the composition of foreign protesters to be younger and have a greater proportion of students than their Belgian counterparts. Being young and a student make it easier to take time off. The opposite applies to having children, which does not enhance time flexibility and makes it more difficult to attend protest demonstrations. Also, since mobilizing agencies' efforts are aimed at lowering the barriers of participation, we expect that more foreigners are members of participating organizations and that they are more likely to be mobilized via organizational channels and less through general media channels. Additionally, because participation in a demonstration abroad requires thorough planning and preparation, we hypothesize that, on the average, foreign demonstrators took the decision to participate earlier than native participants. Finally, because these practical barriers are not easily overcome, we expect that it is more likely that foreign demonstrators are not new at it, that is, surmounting the barriers of transnational protest is a "skill" that has been honed by past experience. We expect that, compared to Belgian counterparts, a higher proportion of foreign protesters will have also attended other foreign protests.

Regarding the *psychological barrier* of attenuated interest in EU politics, we hypothesize that that it may be overcome by a higher degree of general political interest among foreign protesters. Furthermore we expect non-Belgian demonstrators to identify stronger with Europe and to consider themselves to be European citizens first and national citizens second. The same applies to their appraisal of the EU-membership of their country, that they consider it to be crucially important. Another indicator of attachment to higher-level governance is previous participation in similar protest events.

In terms of the *political thresholds* and the poor EU opportunity structure, we hypothesize that these might be overcome by radicalism. If participants recognize that the chance of effectively influencing policies is low, it probably takes more determination and

commitment to the cause for foreign activists to take part in the event. Therefore, we expect the foreign demonstrators to be more politically radical, perhaps even more “angry,” so to speak, than their native counterparts. We mean by this a lower satisfaction with democracy, less trust in political institutions, less trust in international institutions, less belief in the responsiveness of politics, a stronger critique of the way the EU deals with globalization, and less reluctance to use violent and radical action forms.

#### **DATA COLLECTION: SURVEYING THE BRUSSELS 2001 EU SUMMIT DEMONSTRATION**

The movement against neoliberal globalization may be the first truly transnational movement, not the least because it is largely a product of globalization itself. The movement reacts against the current model of economic liberalization propagated by international economic institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. These institutions’ structure, decision-making procedures, as well as their policies of economic deregulation and environmental degradation are fiercely challenged (O’Brien, Goetz, Scholte and Williams 2000). The demonstrations at the WTO summit in Seattle at the end of 1999 have become a major symbol of the anti-neoliberal globalization struggle (Van Aelst 2000; Smith 2001a).

However, Seattle was not the beginning of this movement. For several decades, third-world organizations have asked questions about the unequal distribution of wealth and the dubious role of international organizations like the IMF and the World Bank, but their concerns recently received a new, more international, and more radical élan as the issues of sweat-shops, job loss, and the detrimental effects of structural adjustment loans have taken root in first-world countries. Since the WTO debacle in Seattle almost every summit of a transnational organization has led to street mobilizations: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank summits in Washington and Prague, the summit of the FTAA in Quebec, the European summits in Nice and Gotenburg, and the G-8 summit in Genoa (Van Aelst, Walgrave 2002). These and other smaller demonstrations set the mood for the summit of European leaders in Brussels at the end of 2001, scheduled to mark the end of the Belgian EU-presidency. Three networks of organizations, partly overlapping each other, were engaged in actions during the Belgian EU-presidency: First, there was *D14*, referring to the planned protests set for December 14, 2001. This was an organization of international scope with branches in Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, the UK, Germany, France, and even in Serbia. Second, the *North-South Coalition* consisted of several Belgian NGOs. Finally, an organization called *For Another Europe* aided in organizing protests, in which ATTAC was a leading force. These three groups succeeded in marking the entire length of the Belgian EU presidency with international protest. The high point of the protests was December 13 and 14, when two different demonstrations were staged in the Brussels’ streets. Trade unions rallied on December 13, with 80,000 participants; and the three anti-neoliberal globalization networks organized their own protest event the following day, with 25,000 attending. The trade unions feared Gotenburg-like incidents caused by radical elements in the movement, and wanted separate demonstrations, although it appears that quite a few people attended both demonstrations. We only surveyed the demonstration of December 14.

Interviewing participants at protest demonstrations is not a common research technique (Van Aelst, Walgrave 2001; Norris et al. 2003). To the best of our knowledge, it has only been used in a few studies. Most elaborate is the work of the French research team including Favre, Mayer, and Filleule (1997), who developed a method designed to offer all participants an equal opportunity of being interviewed. Their method was refined further in this research, which used a two-step procedure to establish a random survey of demonstration participants. First, fieldwork supervisors counted the rows of participants, and selected every Nth row to ensure that the same number of rows was skipped throughout. Then a dozen interviewers selected every Nth person in that row and distributed questionnaires to these

individuals during the actual protest march itself. The selected participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at home and to mail it back. We applied this field survey method before during several national demonstrations in Brussels between 1998 and 2001 (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001).

These data gathering protocols were adjusted because of the international character of the demonstration. Different organizations had mobilized internationally, but it remained unclear how many people from different countries would actually come to Brussels. On the basis of contacts with some leading figures from mobilizing organizations we decided to distribute 400 questionnaires in Dutch, 300 in French and 300 in English. The decision to only use three languages was made because of practical reasons (time investment, limited language skills of the interviewers). As a consequence some protesters from foreign countries were unable to fill in the questionnaire and to send it back. Although it makes sense that many could easily understand English or French, we cannot be sure how the nationality ratio in our sample is skewed as a consequence of this. Also, the University of Antwerp's lack of recognition outside Belgium might have reduced the number of non-Belgians from sending back their completed questionnaire. Furthermore a small group of about 200 'black block'-demonstrators refused to accept the postal questionnaire, so our sample might underestimate these (minor) radical elements in the movement. Still, we believe that the 378 respondents in our dataset can be seen as a fairly reliable sample of the total population of the demonstration. Confidence in the procedure was reinforced by a response rate of more than 40%, which is satisfactory for an anonymous survey without any reminders, and similar to the response rates we had for previous surveys of Belgian demonstrations (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). In these surveys we tested the representativeness of the returned questionnaires by comparing them with a random sample of face-to-face interviews and never found any significant difference. Therefore, we did not carry out this test during the December 14 demonstration.

A final remark is warranted regarding these methods and the demonstration they were applied to. We do not claim that the December 14 protest in Brussels perfectly represents anti-neoliberal globalization mobilizations. Although the Brussels demonstration was one of the many protests in a long list of similar contentious gatherings at EU summits, it might not be representative of anti-neoliberal globalization rallies that targeted the G-8, WTO, or the World Bank. Participants in EU-targeted demonstrations are surely attached to the EU and have sympathy for the European project, which might not be the case for anti-WTO demonstrators. Second, the central and accessible location of Brussels could have affected the barriers for transnational mobilization. However, this gives us an argument *a fortiori*: if we find significant differences between foreign and domestic participants in Brussels, we surely would find more dramatic differences in more remote venues such as Goetenburg and Doha.

## RESULTS

The Brussels' crowd contained people from different countries but, as all three clusters of barriers would predict, most participants were Belgian. Table 1 contains the figures. Countries are more or less ordered according to their distance from Belgium, and it is clear that distance is important. The relationship between distance and number is almost perfectly linear. The further you get from Belgium, the smaller the chance that you will attend a demonstration in our beautiful country. The demonstration counted more than a quarter of French, Dutch, German and British protesters coming from neighboring countries. More remote areas of the Union were hardly present, with the exception of a remarkable Danish delegation.

**Table 1.** Participants' Nationality at the December 14 Demonstration at Bursseles EU Summit

NATIONALITY	Proportion (in %)
Belgian	61.8
Dutch	10.9
French	10.1
German	6.6
British	3.4
Austrian	0.8
Irish	0.5
Italian	0.3
Danish	2.4
Swedish	0.5
Spanish	0.5
Greek	0.3
Serb	0.3
Australian	0.3
Multiple nationalities	1.1
TOTAL	100%

The real test of our barrier hypotheses lies in a comparison of Belgian and foreign demonstrators. Therefore we ran a multivariate model predicting the nationality of the demonstrators (foreign/Belgian) containing the variables of the hypotheses and adding some standard demographic controls. Some of the variables in the model are scales illustrated in the technical appendix. The results of the model are to be found in table 2.

Of the original model of twenty-two variables only eight proved to be significant. The others were removed from the final parsimonious model. The total explained variance of the model is satisfying. As expected, there are considerable differences between Belgian and non-Belgian demonstrations and our model is capable of capturing most of these differences. Based on our operationalization of the three barriers for transnational mobilization, we can predict rather well who the foreign demonstrators are and who the native ones are. The barriers for transnational mobilization clearly matter and leave their trace in the different protesters' profiles.

No control variables are significant. These basic features do not differentiate foreign from native participants. The *practical* barriers, in contrast, seem to be most important. It is not so much age but rather being a student that differentiates both types of protesters. Of course student status and age are closely associated, and if we omit student status from the model, age becomes the most important factor. The average participant was young, with more than 60% being younger than thirty. In general, it is interesting to note that the protesters' profile fit the classic profile of protesters very well (Marsh and Kaase 1979), namely, predominantly young, higher educated men. That demonstrating abroad can be considered as a habit that can be learned is supported by the significance of the parameter, "having demonstrated abroad before." Of the specific organizational variables, only two are significant. Bivariately, the others were significant too but their explaining power vanished in the multivariate model because they were closely associated with the other indicators. Foreigners are more frequently accompanied by co-members of their organization, and they were less informed than Belgian participants about the march by the mass media (and more by organizations). Obviously, this relates to the Belgium media's strong coverage of the EU and the Belgian presidency in general, and of the Brussels summit in particular. Yet even for the



**Table 2.** Parameters of a Binomial Logistic Regression Predicting the Foreign versus Belgium Nationality of the Participants in the December 14 Protests at the EU Brussels Summit.

	B	Significance
<b>Socio-demographic controls</b>		
Gender	-	ns
Education	-	ns
Religion	-	ns
<b>Practical barriers</b>		
Age	-	ns
Student	1.744	****
Having children	-	ns
Demonstrations abroad before	1.078	***
Organization members company	1.114	***
Demonstration info channel media	-.746	****
Member organizing organization	-	ns
Time decision to participate	-	ns
<b>Psychological barriers</b>		
Political interest	.509	*
European Identity	-	ns
EU membership a good thing	-	ns
Participation previous globalization demonstration	-	ns
<b>Political barriers</b>		
Satisfaction democracy	-.652	**
Trust parties, government, parliament	-	ns
Trust EU, WTO, IMF	-	ns
Evaluation responsiveness politics	-.111	*
Satisfaction EU deals with globalization	-	ns
Support radical movement strategy	.383	**
EU and globalization	-	ns
Constant C	-3.241	ns
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.484	

Note: The coefficients represent unstandardized betas (B), and significance in a binomial logistic regression analysis model predicting the demonstrators' nationality as the dependent variables. The Belgian nationality was used as the reference nationality. Sig. \*\*\*\*=.001 \*\*\*=.01 \*\*=.05 \*=0.1. The variables were entered in the order of the table, and a stepwise backwards procedure was applied.

foreigners, the media (TV, radio and newspapers) played a relatively important role in the mobilization. We recorded on average higher mass media information channel scores among them than among participants in most of the other demonstrations we surveyed in previous research in Brussels. Although not in the model, the internet did not differentiate the types of demonstrators. One out of three Belgians as well as non-Belgians sought information on the demonstration via the internet. The non-significant internet result is remarkable since it is generally regarded as the key factor to the successful mobilization against the WTO-summit in Seattle and the MAI negotiations (Smith and Smythe 2001; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002). To conclude the discussion of the practical barriers: factors such as distance, time, and money still determine transnational mobilization to a large extent.

The *psychological* indicators in our model matter much less. Only political interest makes a difference, confirming the idea that non-national demonstrators are more attached to higher levels of governance. The other psychological indicators were only significant on a bivariate level, and vanished in a multivariate model. Yet, it is interesting to note that in

general the crowd consisted of rather experienced demonstrators against neoliberal globalization, foreigners and Belgians alike. More than 60% said they had participated before in similar protests. Only 6% stated that this was their first demonstration in the last five years. In general, the participants in the anti-neoliberal globalization protests in Brussels' were experienced demonstrators.

Finally, regarding *political barriers*, the violent actions in Genoa and Gotenburg may give the impression that the movement against neoliberal globalization is permeated with anti-state radicals (Norris et al. 2003), in which protesters are driven by distrust of the political system and willing to take disruptive action. If this is the case, we would expect to find that radicalism is particularly strong among foreign demonstrators. Do we have any evidence for that? Only three political barriers proved significant. Foreign demonstrators are less satisfied with the functioning of democracy in their own country, they agree more with the idea that the political system in general is not very responsive to the needs and demands of citizens, and they endorse more a radical movement strategy, not opposing violence and agreeing with the statement that "talking is not enough" to reach the movement's goals. In that sense, non-Belgian demonstrators displayed a more politically extreme profile indeed. Our other indicators of radicalism did not make it to the final model, but most of them yielded significant correlations with the nationality of the protesters on the bivariate level. Furthermore they were strongly correlated with the satisfaction with democracy variable, which explains why they did not contribute to the explanatory power of the multivariate model. Foreign demonstrators did not distrust national or international institutions more than their Belgian counterparts (in general the demonstrators are much more critical towards IMF and WTO compared to the EU), they were not less satisfied with the way the EU handles globalization, and they did not blame the EU as the culprit for all kinds of negative effects of globalization any more than the Belgium participants.

In sum, the practical, psychological, and political barriers all seem to contribute to the distinct profile of the foreign protesters, but does the model give us any clues about which of them matter most? At first sight it appears that the ordinary practical thresholds can account for most differences, and that political and especially psychological barriers are less important. Yet it is dangerous to draw this conclusion since we do not have equally good indicators for all three dimensions, in particular that of psychological distance. We would need, for example, measures of media use, and consumption of foreign political news in particular. Also, variables on the knowledge of international politics and on demonstrators' personal international experiences (travel, studies, etc.) would be useful in analyzing the psychological barriers more accurately.

We can conclude that our analysis shows that the hurdles foreign protesters have to overcome have a measurable impact on their profile. These protesters are (young) students and they prefer a more radical action strategy. They are better prepared for demonstrating abroad, as they have done it before. They are mobilized through closed forms of network mobilization, and rely less on the mass media to keep informed about the demonstrations.<sup>3</sup> And they are more critical of politics. In short, they are young, organized, and radical compared to their Belgian counterparts.

### **DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A NORMALIZATION OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZATION?**

We began this article by stating that taking part in protests has become a normal part of Western politics. Protests have become normalized and are easily available instruments to convey political preferences, complementing normal political behavior like voting and contacting politicians (Norris et al. 2003). It may be said that this normalization of protest also leads to a consequent "normalization of the protester," meaning that people who take to the streets are increasingly similar to nonparticipants (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). All kinds

of people feel inclined to show their discontent by protest participation, not just young, highly schooled males as suggested by the traditional SES-model (Marsh and Kaase 1979; Jennings, Kent, Van Deth 1990; Verba, Kay, Schlozman, Henry, and Brady 1995). However, while the barriers of participation in national protests seem to be decreasing, our research shows that the barriers of *international* participation are still very much present, and that international participation does not seem to be normalized at all. Indeed, the barriers seem to be so formidable that only a few are able to surmount them.

International participants in demonstrations abroad tend to be young, highly schooled males. They are experienced protesters, well organized, and embedded in movement organizations. Despite global communication via the internet, despite relatively cheap worldwide air travel, despite the new transnational movement networks trying hard to facilitate participation, and despite the growing political importance of transnational organizations—making them natural protest targets—transnational mobilization is difficult and apparently only succeeds in attracting the stronger groups. Although there are indications that civil society, like economics and politics, is increasingly globalizing, social movement participation seems to be caught in a time warp of a decade or two regarding participation of their constituencies. How can transnational mobilization barriers be overcome? To conclude, let us speculate about future developments regarding the barriers to transnational participation.

First, movement organizations may try to overcome the *practical* barriers by giving detailed information on transportation and accommodation. Such information can be easily spread via the internet. An example of this was the “Field Guide to the FTAA Protest in Quebec City,” an alternative “travel guide” that took activists by the hand and led them through all the obstacles to effective participation in the demonstrations against the free trade summit in 2000 (Van Aelst 2002).<sup>4</sup> Second, strengthening the transnational networks, as movements are doing intensively now, is another strategy that might lower barriers. Recent research on transnational activism seems to indicate improved cooperation between non-state actors in general and environmental, peace, women’s, and human rights movements in particular (Green and Griffith 2002). Since travelling abroad for protest can apparently be learned, these supranational mobilizations will probably have more success in the long term as more different people learn the skills of “summit hopping” through transnational networks. However, optimism about increases in transnational activism must be attenuated because summit organizers raise barriers by searching for extremely remote and not very action-friendly meeting locations. The last WTO summit, for example, took place in the oil-state Qatar. And after the tragedy in Genoa the next G-8 summit was planned to take place in a distant venue in the Rocky Mountains. Moreover, political authorities and police are better prepared than they were some years ago and in some cases they simply make transnational mobilization impossible by, for example, closing down borders for protesters. This heightens transnational mobilization barriers dramatically, boosting demonstrators’ uncertainty, as they are not sure that they will reach their destination. The more aggressive protest policing at some of the last summits too might deter new candidates from joining the transnational protesting crowd. All these counter-tactics heighten the participation costs, and could well mean the end of major transnational protests.

The practical barriers are the ones that movements can most obviously influence directly—at least partly. Psychological and political barriers are more exogenous, and are largely given. A possible proactive strategy in this regard is to reinforce a movement’s collective identity transnationally. It is exactly through contentious gatherings all over the world, combined with the “constructive” national, European, or world forums (and counter-summits), that transnational movements can forge ties and construct mutual trust and common goals. In their research Keck and Sikkink (1998b) observed the increasing importance of these counter summits and NGO-forums to fuel transnational advocacy networks. It is common that

transnational movements struggle to coordinate different constituencies, which often pursue diverse and even incompatible action goals. Organizers constantly have to make reference to the broader values and causes that these constituencies share, and sometimes must adapt movement goals so that they are relevant to the different constituencies. Examples of this can be found as early as in the 1980s in Germany, when feminists, ecologists, and third-world organizations took the streets together during IMF-World Bank joint meetings (Gerards and Rucht 1992). Furthermore, in the long run, we expect mobilizing transnationally will become easier as a “European public” gradually comes into being.

Yet, any expectation about an upcoming era of transnational mobilization must be attenuated again. The collective identity construction through action events can create unwanted association with anarchistic sectors, and with the violent protest methods they tend to employ. This might cause activists to withdraw from the movement and it can jeopardize the benevolence of the movements’ entourage so vital for action mobilization (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). Unfortunately for the movement, media coverage tends to focus on these anarchist groups and the violence they use. A study of the media coverage on Belgian TV and newspapers of the 2001 EU-summit revealed that almost half of the news about the movement contained references to violence, be it statements about violence, expected violence, the absence of violence, or pictures showing intimidating protesters, their violent actions, or the consequences thereof (Baetens 2003b). Moreover, organizations mobilizing against neoliberal globalization have extra difficulties coping with media labels because of the democratic master frame they draw upon. The democratic ethos they defend results in an inclusiveness, which makes it very difficult to exclude particular groups and makes it almost impossible to impose a hierarchic structure to control the movement (Brooks 2003). The lack of control over these violent groups and the inability of the movement to effectively exclude them, not only affects the nature of the summit protests, but threatens the protest action itself by intensifying government repression, as was the case in Genoa, Gotenburg, and Doha.

Although the institutional design of the European Union, and especially of the European Council, is not conducive for transnational contentious politics, the six monthly European summits of these Councils in the capital of the presiding country offers great political opportunities for transnational mobilization. These are ideal events to attract the attention of the media, the public opinion, and even state representatives (Ayres 2001). Summits have long been used as opportunities to organize so-called counter summits. These are not new phenomena—they appeared for the first time during the 1970s by the European Trade Union Confederation, and were further developed by the unemployed movement during the 1990s, peaking during the Amsterdam summit in 1997 (Balme and Chabanet 2002: 57-81). However, it appears that EU-summits will be more routinized in the near future, with all being held in Brussels instead of Europe’s capitals. This may result in less media attention, more weary demonstrators (growing board of yet another trip to Brussels), and a more experienced and better protest policing, which decreases opportunities for eye-catching protest.

In sum, the barriers for transnational mobilization might be withering but are still very much present. Movements are struggling to get rid of the remaining obstacles but new obstacles appear to be looming in the near future. It is not certain at all if Western democracies will witness the transformation from a movement society (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Etzioni 1970) to a transnational movement society in the near future.

## APPENDIX: VARIABLES AND SCALES USED IN THE ANALYSIS

<b>Socio-demographic controls</b>	
Gender	Male or female
Education	6-categories from lower 1 to higher 5
Religiosity	3-categories: non-believing, Christian, or other
<b>Practical barriers</b>	
Age	Years old: 6-categories:
Student	2 categories: being a student or not being a student
Having children	Yes or no
Demonstrations abroad before	"Did you participate before in a demonstration against neo-liberal globalization abroad?" Yes or no.
Organization member company	"Are you at this demonstrations accompanied by (co students)"(0,1)? + "Are you at this demonstration accompanied by co members of an organization"(0,1)? Scale adding both variables (0-2).
Demonstration information channel media	"Were you informed about this demonstration via TV" (0,1)? "Via Radio" (0,1)? "Via Newspapers" (0,1)? Scale adding these variables (0-3).
Member organizing organization	"Are you a member of an organization that is (co-)organizing this demonstration?" Yes or no.
Time decision to participate	"When did you decide to take part in this demonstration?" The day of the demonstration, in the past few days, a few weeks ago, more than a month ago.
<b>Psychological barriers</b>	
Political Interest	"Some people are very interested in politics. Others are not interested at all. Are you very interested in politics, or are you not at all interested?" 4 point scale.
European identity	"I feel first European and only then a member of my own country" 5 point scale.
EU membership is a good thing	"I think it is good thing that my country is a member of the European Union" 5 point scale
Participation at previous globalization demonstration	"Did you ever take part in a demonstration or manifestation against globalization prior to this one?" Yes or no.
<b>Political barriers</b>	
Democratic satisfaction	"Are you generally satisfied or dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy in your own country?" 5 point scale
Trust parties, government, parliament	"Below you find a list of institutions. Could you indicate for each of these institutions how much faith you have in them?" "The government?" "The parliament" "The political parties?" Scale adding each of these 5 point scales.
Trust EU, WTO, IMF	"Below you find a list of institutions. Could you indicate for each of these institutions how much faith you have in them?" "The EU?" "The WTO?" "The IMF?" Scale adding each of these 5 point scales.
Evaluation responsiveness politics	"There is no point in voting, parties do whatever they want anyway." "Most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything." "In politics, a lot of things happen that are kept secret." "Political parties are only interested in my vote, not in my ideas and opinions." "When people like myself voice opinions to politicians, these are taken into account." Scale adding each of these agree/disagree scales.
Satisfaction EU deals with globalization	"To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the European Union deals with globalization?" 5 point scale
Support radical movement strategy	"Violent demonstrations damage our movement." "We will never reach our goals by talking alone." Scale adding these agree/disagree scales.
EU and globalization	"The European Union is too supportive of the system of free world trade." "The European Union helps to maintain the inequalities between North and South." "The European Union does not pay enough attention to sustainable development and the protection of the environment." "The European Union does not pay enough attention to social rights." Scale adding these agree/disagree scales.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is wrong to state that “anti-globalization” protesters are against globalization per se. It is mainly the neoliberal policies of the globalization project and their negative side effects on human beings and the environment that are contested (Ayres 2001). The discussion about an apt label for the movement is ongoing and important because the movement has regularly been attacked on the basis of its anti-globalization stance (Smith, 2001b). Here we will refer to this movement as the anti-neoliberal globalization movement.

<sup>2</sup> These figures are based on TV newscasts and front page reports of Belgian newspapers during the period 1991-2000, and are part of a empirical research concerning EU and WTO related coverage conducted at the University of Antwerp.

<sup>3</sup> Closed mobilization refers to a process in which only people with certain social features, only people who belong to a certain group, are the object of mobilizing activities. Typical closed mobilizers on a macro level are social organizations like unions, political parties, churches, social movement organizations or interest groups who direct their effort towards their members or supporters. Within the closed mobilization type too, there is a micro level equivalent: colleagues and classmates. In an open mobilization process, in contrast, the public as a whole, and not only people with certain social features, is the potential target of mobilization efforts. Typical open mobilizers are, on the macro level, the mass media. On a micro level also family, friends, acquaintances and neighbors could be considered as mobilizers able to touch upon the whole population.

<sup>4</sup> Our data showed that especially younger students made the trip because of their time flexibility. However, movements with an older supporting public, like trade unions, may compensate more rigid schedules of their members with the strength and professionalism of mobilizing organizations.

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