Transnational Social Movement Organizations and Counter-Hegemonic Struggles Today

Jackie Smith
University of Pittsburgh
jgsmith@pitt.edu

Basak Gemici
University of Pittsburgh

Samantha Plummer
University of Pittsburgh

Melanie M. Hughes
University of Pittsburgh

Abstract

World-systems analysts have drawn our attention to the importance of the long-standing worldwide struggles of subaltern groups to defend their livelihoods and address fundamental conflicts of our times. Climate change, financial volatility, and rising inequality are exposing the existential threats the global capitalist system poses to growing numbers—many of whom once enjoyed some of its benefits. These urgent challenges create possibilities for social movements to attract more widespread support for alternatives to global capitalism. Using data on transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) from 1953-2013, we assess possibilities for counter-hegemonic movements to provide the organizational infrastructure for a global movement to transform the world-system. We describe the organizational foundations for transnational cooperation among social movements and consider what changes in the population suggest about its counter-hegemonic potential. Our study reveals substantial organizational expansion, greater participation from actors in the periphery, regionalization, radicalization in the issue frames pursued by activist organizations, and network ties that suggest more limited and strategic engagement with the inter-state system. We attribute these changes to U.S. hegemonic decline, the end of the Cold War, and changes in inter-state institutions.

Keywords: Social movements, transnational activism, organizations, networks, world-systemic crisis

Today's world-historical moment is characterized by multiple, interconnected crises, or what world-systems analysts refer to as systemic crisis. In moments of systemic crisis, challenges to the system such as financial volatility, climate change, and growing inequality cannot be resolved with the solutions that worked in the past (Chase-Dunn 2013).[1] These threats to the persistence of the capitalist world-system intensify hardships for large segments of the population, but they also produce vulnerabilities that marginalized groups can exploit in their efforts for social transformation (see, e.g., Steger, Goodman and Wilson 2013). The rise and expansion of *transnationally organized* social movements both reflects the system's vulnerabilities and helps define possibilities for alternate futures (Chase-Dunn 2005; Wallerstein 2014).

Growing evidence of the system's limits may lead more people to embrace what analysts call "counter-hegemonic," or more radical "antisystemic" positions (see Arrighi et al. 1989; Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000; Chase-Dunn 2005). Counter-hegemonic positions seek significant changes in the organization of power and governance in the world-system. Such positions include anti-colonial struggles to shift hegemonic leadership away from the United States to some other country or countries. Movements seeking a more fundamental transformation of the system— including a reconfiguration of the core logics and values such as anthropocentrism, free markets, or consumerism that define the system— are best described as anti-systemic.

People's engagement in counter-hegemonic struggles can lead them to embrace more fundamental critiques of global capitalism, and activists and groups can shift their strategic thinking over time. Activist campaigns can include and encourage exchanges among groups emphasizing both counter-hegemonic and anti-systemic goals. Thus, although relatively few social movements explicitly call for an abandonment of global capitalism, today we see more calls for variations on the themes, "our world is not for sale," and "system change, not climate change."[2] Counter-hegemonic movements and anti-systemic movements have been a constant presence in world history, but they have remained relatively weak and isolated, unable to mobilize enough supporters willing to abandon the capitalist system in favor of alternatives. In times of crisis,

---

[2] This phrase has been embraced by a number of groups, including one bearing the slogan as its name https://systemchangenotclimatechange.org/; the professionalized advocacy group Council of Canadians; and Grassroots Global Justice.

however, possibilities for attracting new supporters improve, and such periods are often accompanied by surges in movement activity.[3]

We draw from earlier work by world-systems analysts to explore the organizational foundations for progressive "counter-hegemonic globalization," which Peter Evans defined as "a globally organized project of transformation aimed at replacing the dominant (hegemonic) global regime with one that maximizes democratic political control and makes the equitable development of human capabilities and environmental stewardship its priorities" (2008: 272). Although the prospects for a more democratic and egalitarian world are far from certain, the failure to identify and nurture such prospects increases the likelihood of an increasingly violent and uninhabitable planet (see Moghadam 2012). The proliferation of environmental refugees and the rise of exclusionary right-wing groups over recent years illustrates this tendency.

While news headlines highlight intensified human suffering and natural disaster alongside growing levels of social polarization and violent conflict, a far less visible worldwide trend is that of significant growth of progressive transnational social movement organizations and their networks. We argue that these organizations represent an important part of the long-term and necessarily global struggle to define a more equitable and sustainable world-system based upon universal rather than exclusionary, national identities to replace the one that is collapsing along with U.S. hegemony.

Increased organizational capacities and the spread of new communications technologies have allowed civil society and social movement networks to expand geographically, intensify communication and cooperation, and articulate global analyses and identities (Sikkink and Smith 2002; Smith 2008, 2004; Willetts 1996). These networks have become increasingly visible in more frequent and large-scale global days of action, including the 2003 "second superpower" protests against the U.S. invasion of Iraq and, more recently, the wave of mass "Arab Spring" protests. We draw from a newly updated dataset on transnational social movement organizations (TSMOs) to examine patterns of transnational organizing and their relationships to broader changes in the global political arena. We consider the implications of an organizationally stronger global social movement sector at a time of diminished inter-state institutional legitimacy and contested U.S. hegemony.

---

[3] Social movement scholars use the term "political opportunity structure" to refer to the relationships between broader institutions and power relations and movement mobilizing potential, and a substantial body of empirical studies support the idea that elite vulnerabilities and shifting power relations are linked to expanded movement mobilization and protest (see Moghadam 2012; Tarrow 2011). Karatasli, Kumral and Silver (2018) found that recent years of systemic crisis have been associated with growing levels of labor unrest.

World-Systemic Crisis and Counter-Hegemony

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore that existing global political arrangements are unsustainable and in a state of crisis, if not collapse. World-systems scholars have traced today's growing "systemic chaos" to the 1970s and the start of U.S. hegemonic decline (Wallerstein 2002). Earlier world-systemic transitions link the demise of hegemonic powers to new challenges from other contenders for world power. The resulting competition generates growing chaos and violence as the declining regime collapses (Arrighi and Silver 1999; Chase-Dunn 2002; Chase-Dunn and Boswell 2004; Chase-Dunn et al. 2010). Hegemonic power requires the articulation of a "hegemonic regime" that helps order the system, and for the period of U.S. hegemony, the post-WWII international order and the United Nations and Bretton Woods systems have defined that regime. Among other factors, the Trump administration's abandonment of international institutions and law undermines the legitimacy of the institutions that enable and support U.S. global leadership. This is particularly dangerous, given today's scale of militarization and the extensive competition over and deterioration of ecosystems.

Mainstream media and politicians' accounts focus on *and contribute to* extreme political polarization, ignoring other, more cooperative ways people and communities have attempted to find solutions to the burdens of economic globalization. The ideas progressive counter-hegemonic movements are generating about how to advance forms of cooperation that better meet people's needs have thus been left out of wider public deliberation about how to address the urgent challenges we face. By ignoring the accounts of these movements, we prevent serious intellectual engagement with the questions of what kind of world-system might replace the one that is clearly failing the majority of the world's people, and what actors and strategies might help move us from an increasingly volatile and polarized system to a preferred alternative. Linking world-systemic forces with the evolution of social movements, Arrighi and Silver argued:

> In past hegemonic transitions, dominant groups successfully took on the task of fashioning a new world order only after major wars, systemwide chaos and intense pressure from movements of protest and self-protection. *This pressure from below has widened and deepened from transition to transition, leading to enlarged social blocs with each new hegemony.* Thus, we can expect social contradictions to play a far more decisive role than ever before in shaping both the unfolding transition and whatever new world order eventually emerges out of the impending systemic chaos. *But whether the movements will largely follow and be shaped by the escalation*

of violence (as in past transitions) or precede and effectively work toward containing the systemic chaos is a question that is open. Its answer is ultimately in the hands of the movements. (Arrighi and Silver 1999:289, emphasis added)

We take this argument as our starting point, contending that attention to transnational efforts of activist groups to articulate collective identities and responses to global problems can help us identify emerging popular global projects and possible pathways to transformative change that address contemporary challenges. We map changes in the population of transnational social movement organizations to assess what these might reveal about the capacities of movements to advance a fundamentally different world-system—one that is far more democratic and responsive to the needs of people and our planet.

As Arrighi and Silver (1999) argued, what is different today from earlier hegemonic transitions is far more extensive organizing across national borders and identities. This is critical to the formation of a counter-hegemonic force capable of advancing alternatives to the dominant order. The global nature of the world-system requires a globalized movement response, as earlier anti-colonial and social democratic movements have shown (Wallerstein 2014).

In addition to their increased transnational nature, we know from varied accounts that today's counter-hegemonic movements are also less hierarchical in structure than the traditional left, and they are more networked with national and local-level activists and organizations (Juris 2008; Wolfson and Funke 2017). Carroll argues that since the 1990s global activism has involved a wider range of subaltern groups embracing more radical and coherent agendas (Carroll 2007 :39). His analysis of a selection of what he calls "transnational activist policy groups," or TAPGs, revealed that these have become "*more institutionalized, complex and networked*" (2007:53, emphasis original; 2016). They have also engaged in "more continuous and cumulative knowledge production, campaigns and outreach," reaching broader constituencies than was true in the past.

Not only are more diverse, localized, and less elite groups engaging more deeply in global political spaces, they are also articulating and advocating for what Carroll and Sapinski call "post-capitalist alternatives" (Carroll and Sapinski 2013; Carroll 2016; see also Steger, Goodman and Wilson 2013)—that is, they are advancing an explicit global political project that seeks to replace globalized capitalism. Thus, in addition to these changes in the character of transnational organizations and their local-global networks, we find important ideological changes documented through research on various campaigns and organizations. For instance, today's activists are less preoccupied with capturing state power—a project that has thus far failed to achieve movements' ultimate goals of greater equity and democracy—and more attentive to processes of advancing

new identities and transformative projects. For instance, Francis Shor documents the centrality in today's movements of cultural work aimed at "[changing] the mental landscapes of enclosure" (2010:32; see, also Chase-Dunn et al. 2007; Della Porta 2005; Reese et al. 2008; Santos 2006; Sen 2013; Sen et al. 2003; Steger et al. 2013; Wallerstein 2014).

The cultural and ideological work emerging among global movement forces have led numerous analysts to describe them in Gramscian terms as historic bloc formation and the furthering of a counter-hegemonic "war of position" (Carroll 2016; Goodman and Salleh 2013; Katz 2006). Gramsci's war of position involves work by insurgents to shape popular understandings and cultivate cultural and ideological support for transformative agendas as part of a long-term struggle for power. Such efforts are less visible than more overt and confrontational forms of conflict reflected in the "war of maneuver," yet they are critical to any effort for transformative change.

We can also compare these movements with Polanyi's analysis of early 20th century mobilizations and the "double movement" for social protection from capitalist exploitation (see Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000; Chase-Dunn 2005). Evans sees the success of today's counter-hegemonic globalization hinging upon activists' ability to transcend particular goals and represent the "breadth and variety of society's interests in protecting itself against the untrammeled dominion of the self-regulating market" (2008:273). Our project aims to situate our understanding of contemporary counter-hegemonic movements in the context of long-term global changes to provide a foundation for further research that can both aid our understandings of and support the necessary work of helping our society come to grips with the urgent threats we all face.

A Counter-Hegemonic Bloc?

Drawing from the above account of the contemporary world-historical context, what kinds of structures are needed to advance counter-hegemonic globalization? Social movement analysts and theorists cited above point to the prerequisite for social movements to develop processes and structures that reduce the systemic exclusions and inequalities reproduced by the prevailing world-system. An issue that has undermined the unity and effectiveness of transformative movements is the various divisions among activist framings of problems and solutions. What issues do movements engage, and what identities do they mobilize? Below we develop a set of propositions about what existing research suggests about the patterns we should expect to find in our data on transnational organizations, and what these patterns suggest about the overall capacity of these movements to further systemic transformation. We stress that our analysis is not meant as a formal test of research hypotheses, but rather an exploratory examination of the existing evidence designed to provide an overview of changes in the population and inform further theoretical and empirical research.

In their account of antisystemic movements, Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein argue that the basic threats to the system stem from the contradictions between the "relations of rule and the relations of production" (1989:92). These contradictions are reflected in growing contention over what Wallerstein (1991) calls the "geoculture"—i.e., value systems that normalize patriarchy, nationalism, and racism and that place a primacy on wealth accumulation. Many of the organizations we asses in this paper challenge this geo-culture, and they are working to address power inequities such as that between the global North and South. The rise of austerity and growing failure of the system to provide for people's basic needs—not just in the periphery but increasingly in the core—contribute to a crisis of legitimacy, as more people question the ideology that supports the capitalist world-system. Coupled with this is the rise of human rights discourse and growing "civilizational conflict" (Arrighi et al. 1989:92; see also Moghadam 2012). Thus, we expect to find in the population of transnational movements substantial segments devoted to efforts to provide for people's basic economic welfare and human rights (including rights to a safe and healthy environment) and to challenge western modernist hegemony and authorities (Proposition 1). Moreover, we expect that over time, movements will have developed greater ideological coherence as participants engage with one another and develop deeper understandings of the issues around which they struggle and their interconnections (Proposition 2).

A primary and persistent structure of inequality is the core-periphery division through which hegemonic powers preserve and advance their own material accumulation and political influence at the expense of weaker players. Thus, we propose that if the population of transnational social movements indeed has counter-hegemonic potential, we should expect it to reflect greater participation and leadership from outside the core countries, namely the global South (Proposition 3).[4] Another shift in the geographic makeup of TSMOs that would signal a change in the organization of power in the world-system is a decentralization of organizations away from global structures like the UN or WTO towards regional entities (Proposition 4). As people working within regions seek to influence global policies and agendas, they must build unified positions and strategies with neighbors, thereby helping decenter power and influence in the system. Below we explore geographic patterns of transnational organization to determine whether we see more Southern participation and growing regional organization in this population. While a finding of greater regionalization does not necessarily signal more progressive tendencies, it would support our expectations that counter-hegemonic forces of varying types are challenging U.S. global dominance. If we can document such a pattern, further work to uncover the networks and aims of regional organizations can help us better interpret its meaning.

---

[4] We include countries from both the semi-periphery and periphery in our classification of "global South."

The resource demands of transnational organizing and the need for complex global analyses and strategies require that movements develop ties that facilitate communication, information exchange, and cooperation among diverse organizations and between local and global scales. To what extent do transnational social movements engage with other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-state institutions, and is this pattern changing? We expect that over time, enhanced technologies and the opportunities to build transnational associations through more frequent convenings in spaces like United Nations World Conferences and movement-organized convergences such as the World Social Forums should result in greater numbers of ties between TSMOs and other actors over time (Proposition 5).

At the same time, while we expect movements to remain engaged with the inter-state system, we know that in many issue areas—most notably feminist and environmental movements—there have been heated struggles over questions of whether and how to engage with governments and inter-governmental agencies. While the United Nations system presents possibilities for advancing counter-hegemonic notions of human rights, global financial institutions such as the World Bank and World Trade Organization have overshadowed the UN in their ideological influence and enforcement capacity, and over time capitalist elites have also mobilized UN agencies to support neoliberal projects and to coopt segments of civil society (Bruno and Karliner 2002; Charnovitz 2002; Smith 2008, chapter 9). Thus, if today's movements are becoming increasingly counter-hegemonic, then we would expect to see less emphasis on maintaining formal ties to inter-governmental organizations (Proposition 6). As with our proposition regarding regionalism, the decline of connections to the inter-state arena does not necessarily demonstrate growth of progressive counter-hegemony. To make that case we need to go beyond the macro-level data we use in our analysis to examine the content of movement discourses about their global strategies and relations with governments and international agencies. Nevertheless, patterns of regional and global ties can help us address questions about global social cohesion and polarization.

Below we describe the data we use to evaluate our propositions about changes in the population of transnational social movement organizations and our methods for organizing these data. Our analyses aim to address the propositions outlined above and discuss what the patterns we observe suggest about possibilities for counter-hegemonic globalization. We conclude with some overall observations and suggestions for future research.

Methods and Data

The data for our study come from the Transnational Social Movement Organization (TSMO) dataset, which records organizational information from the *Yearbook of International Organizations,* published annually by the Union of International Associations (UIA) (see Boli and

Thomas 1997, 1999 for details on the UIA).[5] The dataset includes founding dates, headquarters location, major issue focuses, countries of activity, counts of ties to intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations or European Union, ties to international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs),[6] types of members, organizational structure, and the names of international agencies with which the group has contact.[7] The complete dataset includes organizational records of all TSMOs—that is, organizations whose aims were to promote some form of social or political change, broadly defined—found in alternate editions of the *Yearbook* between 1953 and 2013. Our research team and collaborators[8] reviewed all organizational entries using a detailed set of selection criteria to identify organizations whose primary purpose was to advance some form of social or political change (Plummer, Smith and Hughes 2017).

Whereas we include records of right-wing organizations, the data for such groups is not reliable due to their often covert nature and the resulting lack of information in *Yearbook* entries. Our analysis here excludes trade unions, but TSMOs working to promote worker rights are included.[9] We reviewed and merged organizational entries across the years of the dataset, noting name changes and mergers as well as dissolutions. We also reviewed organizations' goals and re-evaluated and updated our coding scheme taking into account the changes in how issues and goals are articulated at different time periods, often in relation to contestation between movements and dominant global actors (Smith, Plummer and Hughes 2017). There are, of course, important limitations to the dataset. For instance, it documents only those formal organizations with a presence in three or more countries that have been identified by the *Yearbook* publishers. Many social movement groups do not adopt formal structures, and many organizations operating transnationally are local, national, or binational, and thus do not appear in the *Yearbook* census. There is also lag time between a group's founding and its entry into the *Yearbook*.

---

[5] Smith used an earlier version of this dataset in her 2004 article in the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, and this study updates and extends that analysis. When the data are released for public use, the authors will make the updated dataset available via the World Historical Dataverse, linked to this journal's website (expected by late 2019).

[6] INGOs refers to any non-governmental organization with members in at least three countries, regardless of purpose. TSMOs are a subset of INGOs that are explicitly formed to address social or political change goals. But this catch-all category of INGO also includes many groups irrelevant to our study, such as the International Elvis Presley Fan Club and the World Association of Flower Arrangers.

[7] See Smith and Wiest (2012) and Smith, Plummer and Hughes (2017) for detailed accounts of the data source, case selection, and coding procedures.

[8] Data for 1953 and 1963 was collected by Kathryn Sikkink and her research assistant, using the research protocol developed by Smith (See Sikkink and Smith 2002).

[9] For various reasons, trade unions were excluded from our initial selection of TSMOs, but we have collected records of trade unions up to 2003 in a previously published version of the TSMO dataset. For further discussion of how global change itself complicates global, longitudinal research on organizations see Smith, Plummer and Hughes (2017). The following years are excluded from the time series due to the lack of availability of access to the printed, English language editions of the *Yearbook:* 1955; 1957; 1975; 1979.

To help account for the limitations of the dataset as well as to aid our interpretation and analysis, we draw from extensive secondary accounts and from Smith's extensive qualitative research on transnational social movement organizing, which focused in particular on the World Social Forum Process and the movements engaged in that arena (Smith et al. 2011; Smith et al. 2014). This large body of qualitative research allows us to better interpret the macro-level data. Given the complexity of the global political arena in which these groups operate and the multifaceted and changing nature of the issues around which social movements mobilize, such qualitative evidence is imperative for making sense of the data we present.

In conducting our analysis, we looked at changes across each of the decades between 1953 and our latest data period, 2013, although most of what we present begins in 1973, when growth in TSMOs increases. In addition, we considered how an organization's founding cohort influences its characteristics. Previous analyses have found robust differences between organizations formed prior to and those formed after the end of the Cold War (see Smith and Wiest 2012). From a world-systems perspective, this is not surprising: the end of the Cold War signaled a fundamental shift in the geopolitics that has characterized the period of U.S. hegemony. Superpower rivalry between the U.S. and USSR was a key element of the U.S. hegemonic regime. When this bi-polar order ended, it opened spaces for new challenges to U.S. hegemony (see Wallerstein 2014:163). Thus, our analysis considers how this important shift in the organization of hegemony affected the character of social movements by splitting organizations into groups formed before 1990 and those formed in 1990 and thereafter.

Patterns of Change in the Transnational Social Movement Sector

The late 20th and early 21st centuries have been characterized by the expansion and increased institutionalization of inter-state politics. We have seen, in short, a proliferation of intergovernmental organizations, treaties and treaty-monitoring bodies, and a thickening of institutional apparatus to advance transnational communication and exchange and to address transnational and global concerns (Boli and Thomas 1999; Meyer et al. 1997a; 1997b). Alongside this growth of inter-state institutions is more extensive organizing by popular groups seeking to shape the policies of states and/or to otherwise advance ideas and interests that transcend political boundaries. Such groups pre-date the emergence of IGOs, and indeed were among the leading actors helping to shape the early inter-state world order. The oldest organizations in our dataset include Anti-Slavery International (founded in 1839) the Alliance Israelite Universalle (1860), International Committee of the Red Cross (1863), the Institute of International Law (1873), the Nordic Anti-Vivisection Society (1882), and the International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty (1883). These groups in particular worked to define the boundaries of state authority and to articulate basic human rights and environmental norms. That today's global

institutions reflect some of the values and ideas expressed in these early organizations demonstrates the persistence of key conflicts. As we witness deepening crisis and even breakdown in the global institutional and political order, we should consider what ideas and structures are apparent in social movements that might provide a basis for an emerging world order.

Figure 1 shows changes in the population of TSMOs over a 60-year period—from the mid-20th Century until 2013.

Figure 1: Transnational Social Movement Organizations 1953-2013
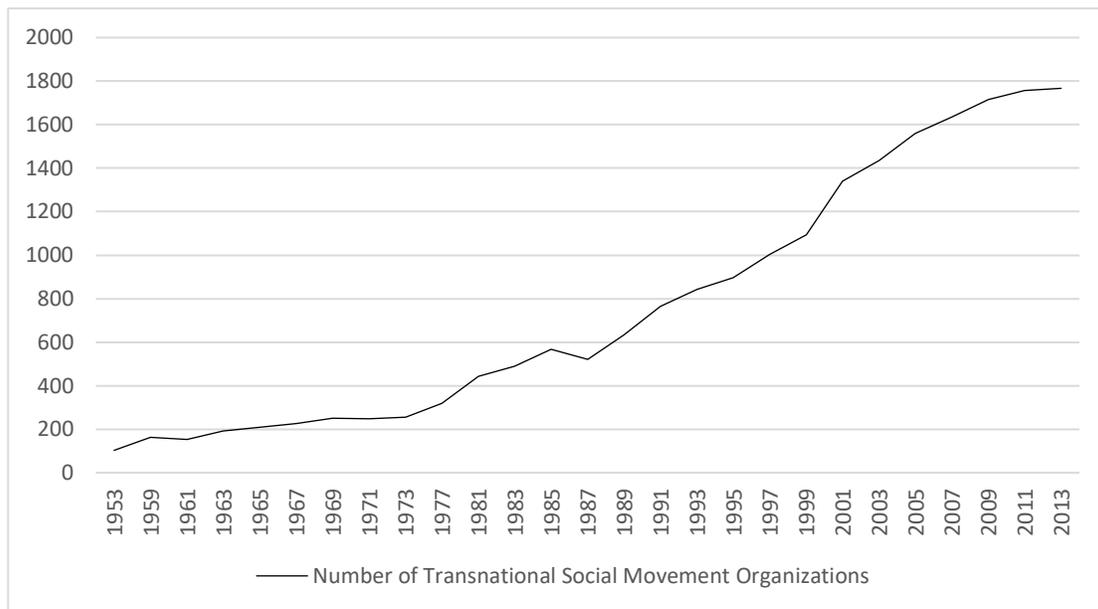
The general story here is that people are increasingly organizing across national boundaries to advance various social change goals. Figure 1 shows that the number of formally organized TSMOs grew from around 100 in the years immediately following WWII to more than 2000 by the end of the first decade of the 21st Century. The bulk of new organizational growth came after 1990, with the end of the Cold War and the convening of a series of global conferences addressing issues such as women's rights, development, peace, environment, and human rights. The UN global conferences served as "training grounds" for civil society activists working to affect global policies, providing resources for more individuals to participate in global political spaces, opportunities for activists to learn about global issues and be exposed to diverse perspectives, and occasions for networking with activists from different parts of the world (Archer 1983; Willetts 1996b).

The development of new communications technologies and low-cost transportation have also contributed to this growth of transnational activism. Thus, the growth evident in Figure 1 is just the tip of the iceberg of transnational activism, significantly underestimating the scale of activity. While technology has encouraged and strengthened transnational organizing, it has also enabled more people to connect transnationally even without the aid of formal transnational structures. Thus, more groups working at national and local levels have been able to participate directly in transnational alliances and global meetings (Desai 2015; Juris 2008a; von Bülow 2010). Indeed, at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the United Nations recognized this reality and for the first time began allowing national organizations to gain accreditation status with official UN bodies, beginning with the Commission on Sustainable Development (Charnovitz 1997; Willetts 1996a). Furthermore, in addition to formal TSMOs we document, transnational movements are made increasingly of networks of national and local activists and groups. Some analysts and activists use the term "translocal" to refer to contemporary global activism, reflecting the variety of ties and the diverse scales and arenas in which locally rooted activists and organizations operate (see, e.g., Alvarez 2000; Desai 2016; Escobar 2008; McFarlane 2009). Still, despite the limitations of these data, we believe they can provide important insights into global movements and their relationships to changes in the world-system.

Table 1 shows the issues around which TSMOs have organized, and we present the percentages of groups whose work addresses the most common issue areas.

Table 1: Transnational Activist Issues, 1973-2013[1]

	1973	**1983**	**1993**	**2003**	**2013**
Human Rights[2]	61.6%	59.3%	60.3%	63.9%	66.6%
Peace	37.7%	30.7%	27.6%	23.4%	23.2%
Women's Rights	14.1%	11.3%	14.2%	15.8%	17.1%
Environment	10.2%	14.1%	23.5%	27.3%	27.1%
Economic	10.2%	12.7%	16.0%	18.4%	18.0%
Multi-issue	21.6%	22.5%	24.4%	23.0%	21.2%
All other TSMOs	16.1%	18.0%	10.8%	6.9%	5.7%
N	255	489	844	1434	1767

[1]With the exception of 'All others,' issue categories are not mutually exclusive, as groups characterized as 'Multi-issue' may also be grouped in other issue categories that reflect their emphases.
[2]Our human rights category includes women's rights groups and groups working on the whole range of economic, social and cultural rights.

Consistent with our expectation that counter-hegemonic struggles will advance demands for human rights, we see that this is by far the most frequent issue focus for TSMOs, and the number of human rights TSMOs is increasing both in absolute terms and relative to the overall population

of TSMOs.[10] This may reflect the reality that human rights groups articulate and defend norms about the relationship between individuals and states, which may require strategies that transcend the borders of any given state.

The most dramatic growth is evident among environmental TSMOs, which rose from around 10% of the population in 1973 to 27% in 2013. Economic concerns also motivated a growing percentage of groups, rising between 1973 and 2013 from 10% to 18% of all TSMOs. On the other hand, during the same period, groups working for peace[11] increased in absolute numbers but declined as a percentage of TSMOs, from 38% to 23%. This declining emphasis may reflect decreasing optimism about possibilities for inter-state cooperation or a shift from more elite-oriented security politics towards more people- and community-centered projects. We also note two other significant features of this organizational field. First, a considerable percentage of groups—roughly a fifth throughout our time series—is organized to address multiple, intersecting issues, such as 'women in development,' or 'democracy, human rights, and the environment.' Such organizations might be seen as refusing to frame their work in the terms defined by states and inter-state institutions—that is, compartmentalized in ways that obscure the underlying complexity and inter-connections among issues.[12] Finally, we see that a smaller percentage of TSMOs falls outside these top six categories, suggesting that the organizational field has indeed become more coherent, with 94% framing their work in terms of these few, intersecting issue areas by 2013.

Further analyses are required to fully assess whether the changes in issue emphases stem from shifts in the ways individual organizations are framing their struggles or from the entry of new groups and demise of older ones in the population. Our preliminary analyses (See Appendix) show groups that appear in our dataset in the most recent period (2013) to be less likely to focus on peace or multi-issue aims than groups active in earlier decades. We found no substantial changes in other issues. This suggests that newer groups may be adopting some different strategic emphases than their predecessors. Further work to determine whether and how individual groups may be shifting their issue focus over time is part of our future research agenda, and such analysis is needed to determine the key drivers of change in the population.

---

[10] In their research on individuals participating in the World Social Forums in 2005 and 2007, Chase-Dunn and Kaneshiro (2009) also found that human rights was the largest single movement with which respondents identified. Moreover, human rights activists were among the most central in the networks these authors examined.

[11] This category includes groups working for international integration, i.e., promoting the European Union or various ideas of world federalism.

[12] Carroll and Sapinski's (2015:9) analysis of Transnational Alternative Policy Groups supports our contention that the embrace of multi-issue frames by TSMOs represents a resistance to the pressures created by civil society engagement with both the UN process and with funders of NGOization, or deradicalization and neutralization of activists' systemic critiques.

Geography & the Core-Periphery Divide

Next, we look at the broad geographic makeup of TSMOs. Although since the early 1950s the numbers of TSMOs based in the global South grew about eight times as fast as the numbers of groups based in the North, the vast differences in absolute numbers have meant that substantial inequalities in North-South participation persist. We note the over-representation of the global North in terms of both members' and headquarters' locations. This disparity reflects the structural inequalities reproduced in the global political order between the global North and South, or the core and periphery. Financial resources and infrastructure such as digital bandwidth and convenient transportation connections are essential for transnational organizing, and thus we are not surprised that these organizations cluster where such resources are concentrated.

In Table 2, we consider the share of TSMOs in a given year that report at least one member in a geographic region. This analysis shows that while the over-representation of Western Europe and North America have persisted, the percentages of groups with members in these two regions has declined somewhat over recent decades, as the overall population of TSMOs has grown substantially. Thus, in absolute terms, there are higher levels of engagement from outside these core regions than there was in earlier periods. The most significant increase in participation comes from the region of Central Asia, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Table 2: Locations of TSMO Members, 1973-2013[1]

TSMOs reporting members in region	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
Western Europe	91.5%	87.1%	84.1%	83.8%	78.9%
North America	70.3%	67.4%	66.5%	59.9%	58.1%
Eastern Europe	66.1%	57.3%	59.6%	67.9%	65.1%
Latin America & Caribbean	63.6%	65.5%	62.0 %	55.6%	55.6%
Middle East & N. Africa	63.1%	60.4%	53.3%	52.2%	52.2%
Sub-Saharan Africa	55.9%	56.0%	56.7%	56.9%	55.4%
South Asia	53.8%	51.8%	51.7%	49.1%	48.9%
East Asia & Pacific	57.6%	56.0%	56.5%	53.8%	50.6%
Central Asia	5.1%	6.5%	7.8%	15.6%	17.8%
TSMOs claiming regional identity[2]	**5.1%**	**7.2%**	**7.0%**	**33.4%**	**37.5%**
N	*236*	*386*	*690*	*1075*	*1173*
TSMOs reporting no country membership data	*7.5%*	*21.1%*	*18.3%*	*25.0%*	*33.6%*

[1] We present the percentage of all TSMOs in each year that report the presence of any country members.
[2] The share of TSMOs claiming a regional identity is calcultated as a share of all TSMOs in each year. The N's are 255 in 1973, 489 in 1983, 844 in 1993, 1434 in 2003, and 1767 in 2013.

While we see some small changes in the geographic makeup of TSMO participation, an important organizational development is a growing tendency for activists to organize on a regional

basis. Over the years we studied, the percentage of regionally-organized groups rose from 5% in 1973 to 38% of all organizations in 2013. Much of this growth is observable in groups formed after the end of the Cold War, which are more likely than older groups to be regionally organized. Indeed, auxiliary analysis by founding year shows that as of 2013, nearly half of all groups formed in 1990 or thereafter (46%) identified as part of a region (as indicated by their organizational name or aims), compared to 28% of those formed in earlier years. In addition, of TSMOs that reported country memberships in 2013, 16% of those formed after the Cold War reported having members in a single region, versus 6% of older TSMOs. This increasing tendency towards regionalism reflects what has been happening in the inter-state system with the creation and strengthening of regional IGOs, and it provides some support for our argument that we are seeing more decentralized leadership challenging U.S. global hegemony. Whether such regionalization indicates a trend towards greater conflict and polarization or towards greater democratization and institutionalization of local and regional voices into multi-level global processes is a question for future research.

One further insight we have found is that TSMOs appear to be changing how they structure their organizational memberships. We noticed in the *Yearbook* entries a greater tendency for groups to report "no formal members," which we read—in combination with evidence from case studies and discussions with organizers—to signal a shift towards less formal and more fluid organizational structures that do not conform to state boundaries. More TSMOs are themselves made up of organizational members—both transnational and otherwise. Also, analysts have pointed to the important role of individual leaders, "rooted cosmopolitans," (Tarrow 2005) and global-local "translators" (Merry 2006) in transnational organizations and campaigns. Thus, many activists use the network term to describe their organizational practices and structures. This suggests both the dynamic character of transnational organizing and perhaps also a decline in the significance of national borders and identities as activists work to innovate new, globally relevant democratic forms. If this interpretation withstands further scrutiny, it too would provide evidence to suggest that we are witnessing important changes in the inter-state system and its hegemonic role in structuring how individuals associate across borders.

In addition to various factors that privilege core countries as hosts of most TSMOs, the institutional arrangements of the inter-state order reproduce core country advantages, placing the headquarters for virtually all major IGOs in cities in Europe or the United States. Since TSMOs are often working to monitor IGOs or to work with groups that may locate themselves in proximity with these headquarters, it makes sense for these groups to place their transnational headquarters in the North. But if the legitimacy of the current system is in crisis and open to challenge from counter-hegemonic forces, it bears asking if we see more leadership and participation from outside

the core. While imperfect, one measure that allows us to assess such change is in the location of TSMO headquarters. Our auxiliary analysis shows that the percentage of TSMO headquarters in the global South rose from 11% in 1973 to 25% in 2013. Moreover, as of 2013, groups formed after 1989 were more likely to be based in the South than those formed in earlier years (28% vs. 21%). Nevertheless, the continued dominance of the global North reflects a persistent underrepresentation of Southern voices in global politics.[13,14]

We further explored how groups' issue focus shapes whether their headquarters were located in the global South. Table 3 shows comparisons between groups working on some of the most popular as well as most contentious and polarized issues in global politics—peace, women's rights, environmental issues, and indigenous rights. The results show a general trend across

Table 3: Share of TSMOs with Global South Headquarters by Issue, 1973-2013[1]

	1973	**1983**	**1993**	**2003**	**2013**
Human Rights[2]	15.7%	20.6%	28.1%	27.5%	28.8%
Peace	12.9%	17.5%	18.5%	18.1%	20.7%
Women's Rights	25.0%	18.5%	33.1%	35.2%	33.4%
Environment	3.9%	11.8%	24.2%	23.8%	21.8%
Economic	30.8%	27.9%	29.6%	33.7%	35.4%
Indigenous Rights	n/a[3]	28.6%	37.5%	42.9%	38.0%
Multi-issue	18.2%	26.6%	31.7%	31.6%	34.1%
All other TSMOs	0.0%	11.9%	10.1%	8.1%	7.1%
N	249	482	829	1370	1734

[1] With the exception of 'All others', issue categories are not mutually exclusive, as groups characterized as 'Multi-issue' may also be grouped in multiple issue categories that reflect their emphases.
[2] Our human rights category includes women's rights groups and groups working on the whole range of economic, social and cultural rights.
[3] No groups were coded as focusing on indigenous rights in 1973.

[13] This finding is supported by survey research on individuals attending the 2005 World Social Forums by Christopher Chase-Dunn and colleagues, although their analysis, which distinguished between semi-periphery and periphery countries, found an over-representation of the former and a significant under-representation of the latter, based on population percentages (Chase-Dunn et al. 2008). The location of the WSF in the semi-periphery country of Brazil helps account for the large presence of participants from the South American region.

[14] The rapid proliferation in the 1990s of TSMOs based in Europe is attributable to the strengthening of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which provided considerable new funding for groups organizing within Europe. When we exclude regional European TSMOs, the percentage of all groups with headquarters in the global South in 2013 expands by about 3%, from 10% in 1973 to 28 % in 2013.

Virtually all issue areas: the percentage of groups with headquarters in the global South increases markedly between 1973 and 1993.[15] Groups organizing around human rights—including indigenous rights and women's rights—and economic issues were the most likely to be headquartered in the global South at each time point. Although the environment is a key aspect of global crisis and conflict, environmental TSMOs were not more likely than other TSMOs to be headquartered in the global South. This is despite the fact that the UN Environment Programme, based in Nairobi, is one of the few IGOs with its headquarters in the global South. Indeed, of environmental TSMOs in 2013, just 22% were headquartered in the global South, a slight decrease from 24% in 2003.[16] This points to a need to look more closely at how TSMOs are framing environmental organizing and the geographic distributions of groups with a more critical, anti-capitalist approach to addressing climate change and other environmental threats.[17]

For each of the seven issues reported in Table 3, substantially more TSMOs were headquartered in the global South than was true for other issues. Also, in auxiliary analysis, we found that TSMOs formed after the Cold War were more likely to be headquartered in the South. This pattern was most pronounced for indigenous rights groups (a cohort difference of 34% in 2013), followed by peace groups and women's rights groups (a difference of 6% and 4%, respectively). Of course, some of this cohort difference is due to the reduced costs of long-distance organizing. Yet the differences we see across issues supports our contention that transnational activism itself was providing space for subaltern groups to play leadership roles in articulating and shaping global struggles (see, e.g., Moghadam 2012; Chase-Dunn et al. 2008a; Juris 2008b; Smith, Hughes and Plummer 2017).

Indigenous people's persistence as a political force challenges states' basic claims to territorial sovereignty, and it has become more visible in recent decades as indigenous and non-indigenous activists have come together transnationally and mobilized around increasingly polarized conflicts over resources and environmental protections (see Chase-Dunn et al. 2008b). Thus, we considered whether TSMOs that included indigenous people's rights among their goals were more likely to be based outside the core. In 2013, 38% of groups working on indigenous rights were based in the global South, compared with 25% of those with other goals. Of course,

---

[15] The exception is TSMOs focused on the global economy, and we see large fluctuations here that require more detailed analyses of this subset of groups to determine whether changes are the result of groups moving headquarters between North and South or to the headquarters locations of new organizations.

[16] Other environmental IGOs, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Committee on World Food Security, are based in the global North.

[17] Our other work has uncovered some important insights into how global issues are framed by movement groups and how this changes over time. Environmental groups may be especially likely to be subjected to efforts at co-optation or to see their framings of issues subverted due to pressures from a more organized and active transnational business elite (Smith, Plummer and Hughes 2017).

we note that larger and more concentrated populations of indigenous peoples tend to be located in the global South, and this likely explains much of this difference. Yet, coupled with our observation about women's mobilization, and given that indigenous ideas and framings have found their way into the central discourses in social movement spaces such as the World Social Forums as well as climate justice and food debates, we might see this reflecting the expectation that counter-hegemonic mobilization emerges from outside the core (see, e.g., Markoff 2003; Santos 2006; Arrighi et al. 1989). In particular, it seems that the most system-challenging claimants are likely to adopt organizational forms that challenge hegemonic structures such as North-South hierarchies and the construction of issues and political claims. These organizations are also more likely to be based in the periphery or among subaltern groups. Comparing the issue focus of TSMOs headquartered in the global North with those in the global South, we found some interesting differences that further support this argument: notably larger percentages of South-headquartered TSMOs worked on human rights (including women's rights), economic justice, indigenous, and multi-issue goals (See Appendix, Table A2).

That women's and indigenous groups have become more visible and vocal in important movement spaces such as the World Social Forums and climate justice politics is thus suggestive of how the analyses these groups bring may be shaping the overall movement field (Conway 2012; Desai 2015; Mendoza 2002). Among environmental organizations we see a highly visible split between groups working to achieve some inter-state agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and a growing number of organizations seeking more radical actions than those states have put forward. This conflict is articulated in terms of "climate justice," and analysts have observed this growing division among environmentalists since the mid-2000s (Bond 2012; Hadden 2015; Reitan and Gibson 2012). The articulation of an anti-capitalist critique in climate debates has fueled some important progress in advancing ideas that could actually reduce emissions and contribute to more meaningful and equitable action to mitigate unequal impacts of climate change, and it has led to new conversations between more mainstream groups and radical movements and frontline communities about how to respond to the failures of states to act on this urgent issue (Smith 2014). Such conflict may, in fact, be productive in ways similar to how heated debates between feminists in the global North and South fueled new understandings and framings of this issue (Moghadam 2012; Vargas 2003; West 1999).

Connectivity

Finally, we look at changes in the extensiveness of TSMO connections to other international actors—including both inter-state organizations and international NGOs. Table 4 reports connections between TSMOs and IGOs. The overall trend we see is that, consistent with our expectations, newer TSMOs are making fewer connections to intergovernmental organizations.

TSMOs formed after the Cold War reported fewer ties to IGOs, and their average number of ties is considerably lower than that of groups formed in the earlier cohort (1.3 versus older groups' average of 3.0 ties in 2013).[18] For more established groups (formed before 1990), a smaller percentage of groups reported no ties in 2013 than in 2003 (27% versus 35%, respectively), and the average number of ties increase from 2.6 in 2003 to 3.0 in 2013. However, at the same time we found that both the earlier and later cohorts of TSMOs continued to increase their ties to IGOs. Thus, it is not accurate to say that newer groups are closing themselves off from the inter-state arena altogether.[19] The pattern of North-South differences reported above is replicated here. In auxiliary analysis, we found that groups based in the global South report fewer average ties to IGOs than their Northern counterparts (1.7 versus 2.3 average ties in 2013).[20]

Table 4: TSMO Ties to IGOs by Cohort, 2003 and 2013[1]

IGO ties	Founded pre-1990		Founded in 1990 & on	
	2003	*2013*	*2003*	*2013*
0 Ties	34.9%	26.7%	48.1%	48.0%
1-2 ties	26.3%	32.2%	37.0%	36.5%
3-5 ties	24.9%	23.6%	10.3%	10.9%
>5 ties	13.9%	17.6%	4.6%	4.6%
Mean (s.d.)	2.6 (3.4)	3.0 (4.0)	1.2 (2.0)	1.3 (2.1)
N	779	653	370	608
Maximum ties	25	44	12	17

[1] Percentages are based on cases with any reported ties to IGOs or INGOs.

We can interpret the trend seen in Table 4 in different ways. It may support our argument that social movements are shifting their attention from the inter-state system as a source of solutions to the grievances around which they mobilize. After years of experience working within the UN conference framework, many activist groups working on women's rights, environmental justice, and economic and human rights issues have argued that the inter-state political arena is not likely to advance the changes these groups see as urgently needed. In fact, they have watched the UN

---

[18] We note that there is a significant amount of missing data for our counts of INGO and NGO ties, and it is difficult to discern from the *Yearbook* entries whether these missing records are in fact instances of groups with no IGO/INGO ties. We have erred on the side of caution and treated as missing cases where no information on either type of tie was present in the record. Where just one category of ties with either IGOs or with INGOs was present, we recorded the number of ties for the other category as "0."

[19] When we looked more closely at how organizational attrition was affecting this pattern, we found that groups that disappeared from our dataset over the time periods of our study tended to report the fewest ties to IGOs.

[20] This lower level of connectivity may reflect global inequalities and limits Southern groups face in getting access to remote IGO headquarters, or it may reflect strategic decisions by Southern groups to pursue strategies outside the inter-state realm. More detailed research is needed to determine the factors shaping these patterns.

become more constrained by neoliberal dogma over the course of the 1990s and less open to participation from civil society groups (Bond 2012; Charnovitz 2002; Mooney 2012; Willetts 2006). IGOs have thus lost legitimacy and support among at least some portion of the global public. In addition, fewer TSMO ties to IGOs suggests fewer government constraints on movement agendas and priorities. This interpretation is consistent with our expectations about what happens in periods of hegemonic decline.

However, these patterns could also mean that TSMOs are creating a more systematic division of labor, with some groups specializing in maintaining ties to IGOs and helping convey relevant information to other groups, which specialize in other pieces of work such as mobilizing local activists or information, coordinating activist coalitions, and communicating with multiple kinds of audiences (Smith 2005).[21] They may also be forming more intensive ties with select international agencies as IGOs work to address pressing global challenges, as *Via Campesina* has done with the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (McKeon 2015; see also Caniglia 2001). We believe that both things are happening, and that they are not mutually exclusive. A group can believe the UN is not legitimate or not helpful for advancing radical change and yet still take pains to remain connected either directly or via its broader networks. But regardless of what is driving this pattern, we can say based on the wealth of qualitative evidence about transnational organizing that this change reflects strategic learning and innovation by transnational social movements that results from their experiences in the course of transnational contention and the shared analyses generated through intra-movement dialogues. In other words, activist groups are not simply engaging these inter-state arenas because they are the 'only game in town,' and when they do engage with them, they are more likely to do so on their own terms and with a clearer sense of their collective goals.[22]

Finally, the dis-engagement with IGOs may be the result of other changes, such as reduced funding from IGOs themselves to support transnational organizing. Elite backlash against INGO participation in global institutions, government counter-terrorism initiatives, and rising

---

[21] Carroll and Sapinski's (2015) analysis of Transnational Alternative Policy Groups and their networks with IGOs and funders provides evidence in support of this argument. Their study of leading organizations in alternative globalization movements showed comparable rates of connection with both IGOs and INGOs among these groups, which we would expect to be most central in the overall TSMO networks. Most TSMOs in our study show relatively more ties to INGOs than to IGOs.

[22] Examples of the strategic thinking that is emerging from the work of transnational activism is especially clear in Pat Mooney's 2012 discussion, "Civil Society Strategies and the Stockholm Syndrome." Mooney points out the multi-pronged strategy of environmental groups whereby some groups boycotted official processes while others engaged in them to exert influence "or simply to execute 'damage control.'" Also, Morgan (2007) describes the complex ways indigenous movements were shaped by and in turn shaped global institutions. The UN processes related to indigenous peoples' rights were the outcomes of activism, but they also provided spaces and focal points that contributed to the articulation of global indigenous identities and encouraged more formal transnational organizing.

government austerity has reduced government and intergovernmental funding sources that had in earlier years helped support TSMOs' engagement with IGOs. Illustrating the constraints of systemic crisis, to the extent that such funding was provided as a means of helping boost the capacities and legitimacy of IGOs and to raise popular awareness of their work, this would further undermine the institutional order that has supported U.S. hegemony.

Turning to the connections between TSMOs and INGOs[23] in Table 5, we see a different pattern. Rather than declining connectivity, our results suggest somewhat more connections over time. The average number of ties has been increasing, and over time we found that slightly fewer percentages of groups in both cohorts reported no ties with INGOs. More TSMOs are reporting ties with larger numbers of INGOs.[24] This pattern is also observed in qualitative research on transnational organizing, which shows that a key strategy for activist groups is to actively build connections with their counterparts to enhance their access to information, share experiences and analyses, and to access other resources essential to activism. There is also widespread recognition among activists working with groups most marginalized from global politics that building relationships with other groups is critical to achieving political influence. Such recognition has encouraged groups to dedicate tremendous energies into building and supporting spaces such as the World Social Forums, World March of Women, and the parallel civil society spaces at UN

Table 5: TSMO Ties to INGOs by Cohort, 2003 and 2013[1]

INGO ties	Founded pre-1990		Founded in 1990 & on	
	2003	*2013*	*2003*	*2013*
0 ties	11.9%	11.8%	16.2%	15.1%
1-2 ties	46.5%	39.5%	55.4%	54.4%
3-5 ties	22.0%	23.6%	15.4%	15.6%
>5 ties	19.6%	25.1%	13.0%	14.8%
Mean (s.d.)	3.8 (5.6)	4.6 (6.4)	3.0 (5.6)	3.4 (7.3)
N	779	653	370	608
Maximum ties	55	50	72	100

[1] Percentages are based on cases with any reported ties to IGOs or INGOs.

conferences. We also note that while ties between TSMOs and INGOs are becoming more extensive, these reflect just a small portion of the actual ties among activist groups. Our records only report ties to international NGOs, neglecting the far more numerous national and,

---

[23] The category of INGOs includes both TSMOs and other NGOs that are not formally organized to advance social change goals.

[24] The network data we are currently collecting reveals that TSMOs are also increasingly reporting other INGOs as members.

increasingly, local groups with which many TSMOs work. Indeed, our conversations with activists and Smith's qualitative research reveals that the tendency in transnational organizing is towards strengthening connections and communication links between global and local spaces (see also Desai 2015; Shawki 2011).

In sum, our examination of the connections between TSMOs and other actors in the political arena show that, consistent with our expectations, social movement organizations do seem to be adapting their strategies in regard to their ties with the inter-state arena, reflecting what we interpret as a growing sense among social movements that these official spaces offer little room for them to pursue their transformative agendas. Yet, this does not mean that social movements are disengaging entirely from the inter-state polity. Our review of qualitative research and our comparison of women's and environmental groups show that that activists have become more strategic in how they use limited time and resources, developing a division of labor that extends their capacities despite limited resources. TSMOs continue to connect with other nongovernmental actors, and our data show strong and persistent levels of connection with international NGOs. The evidence we present here reflects just a small subset of international network connections, which are proliferating among national and local groups due to advances in technology. The long history of counter-hegemonic struggles provides a foundation for local activists who see the growing effects of global politics on local problems.

Discussion & Conclusion

At a time of growing chaos and instability in the capitalist world-system, we provide evidence of an expanding and increasingly organized and interconnected transnational social movement sector. Our study has shown that the population of formally organized groups working across national borders to promote social change has expanded dramatically over the past six decades, and it has become more unified around a set of demands that increasingly include making fundamental challenges to globalized capitalism. We argue that we can understand these changes by situating them in their world-historic context of U.S. hegemonic decline and changing inter-state institutional arrangements that have decentralized global leadership.

Organizing around demands for human rights and environmental protection—notably demands for what are essentially and increasingly the rights to the means of *survival*—transnational activist groups have developed more strategic approaches to the global political arena and are forging their own alternatives to inter-state political agendas. Newer organizations are more likely to be headquartered in the global South, and women's and indigenous groups were more likely than groups working on other issues to be based in the South. Although they continue to work with intergovernmental organizations, they are more selective in their ties. At the same time, they are continuing to connect with other civil society actors and are finding ways to

strengthen connections between global and local political arenas. We found variation between groups working on different issues, suggesting that particular institutional arrangements and/or conflict dynamics are shaping transnational organizing.

Taken together, these patterns show evidence of what Evans referred to as counter-hegemonic globalization. Yet, because we see a growing tendency for newer groups to be organized regionally and for them to be less connected to intergovernmental agencies, we might refer to this shift *away* from global-level integration as more aptly named "counter-hegemonic deglobalization."[25] However, unlike the nationalism reflected in Brexit or Trump's attempts to redefine NAFTA, counter-hegemonic deglobalization emphasizes the elimination of globalized trade and financial regimes in order to enhance the abilities of people and local communities—rather than states and corporations—to organize in ways that address their needs (Bello 2003). As with Evans's counter-hegemonic globalization, they thus "[maximize] democratic political control and [make] the equitable development of human capabilities and environmental stewardship its priorities" (2008: 272). Importantly, such work to empower communities remains global in its vision, and we found that TSMOs continue to proliferate and encourage horizontal ties that transcend state boundaries. We distinguish this from the counter-hegemonic projects led by nationalist movements or by states, which emphasize the replacement of the United States with a new hegemonic (and capitalist) state. Counter-hegemonic deglobalization thus paves the way for subaltern projects to become more viable. For instance, the global spread and promotion of *Via Campesina's* notion of "food sovereignty" reflects the principle of local control and subsidiarity. Common slogans in the global justice movement include "unity in diversity," and the Zapatista call for "one world with room for many worlds." These examples capture ideas common among transnational and other activists, that the world could be organized along a common set of principles that are shared globally but that enable local autonomy and choice about community priorities, values, and ways of being in the world.

Understanding the implications of these broad patterns for counter-hegemonic struggle requires further exploration of the wealth of qualitative evidence about transnational organizing. For instance, does the activity happening within transnational organizations and their larger networks reflect meaningful transnational interactions capable of achieving what activists seek? Do we see evidence of Evans's "counter-hegemonic globalization," or of a Gramscian war of position? Carroll's work helps us better appreciate how activities within these organizations might contribute to such fundamental changes in the world-system. His detailed look at global justice networks exposes the cognitive work these groups do to challenge hegemonic knowledge and alter

---

[25] We are grateful to Chris Chase-Dunn for suggesting this term.

how people understand their own identities and their social conditions. They are asking participants to engage their political imaginations to envision ways of making global policy more responsive and accountable to popular needs. At the same time, they are working to build unity, or solidarity, by expanding participants' notions of (global) citizenship and political community, forging collective identities that transcend national political and other boundaries (see, e.g., Carroll 2016; della Porta 2005). Thus, rather than replicating existing unequal order, a growing body of work shows that some transnational activist groups are engaging what Carroll calls a "logic of prefiguration" of an alternative order and, through praxis, they are "discovering political methodologies that activate democratic social learning as to how we might live differently" (Carroll 2007:53-54).

At a time when mass media highlights right-wing politics and racist and xenophobic tensions, this study documents the less-told but critically important story of the growth of transnational organizing for a more democratic, equitable, and sustainable world-system. Our exploration of several propositions about the population of TSMOs can inform more in-depth examinations of particular conflicts, regions, and activist network dynamics. We hope this research will advance new attention to this field of transnational movements and their possible roles in helping address some of the systemic challenges our world faces and inform activist-scholarship on questions of how these movements can become more sustainable and influential. In particular, work to uncover some of the connections between the transnational organizations we study here and local political spaces is needed. In this time of systemic crisis, more local activists are finding they must defend local interests while drawing lessons and ideas from prior social movement campaigns and the transnational networks of activists waging them. The survival of people and local communities depends increasingly on such work.

About the Authors: Jackie Smith is professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh and currently serves as editor of the *Journal of World-Systems Research* (see footnote 1 regarding the peer review process for this paper). Basak Gemici and Samantha Plummer are both PhD candidates, and Melanie M. Hughes is professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh.

Appendix

Table A1: Issue focus of TSMOs by Founding Years[1]

Issue focus	TSMOs present in dataset by decade (based on founding year, Data for 2013)			All groups in 2013 Dataset (from Table 1, for comparison)
	2013 only	**2003 & 2013**	**1993, 2003, 2013**	
Human Rights	67.9%	64.6%	66.7%	66.6%
Peace	18.4%	21.8%	30.7%	23.2%
Women's Rights	17.2%	16.4%	17.7%	17.1%
Environment	25.5%	31.6%	24.0%	27.1%
Economic	17.2%	18.1%	19.3%	18.0%
Multi-Issue	15.4%	21.5%	28.7%	21.2%
Other Issue	4.9%	4.4%	8.5%	5.7%
N	651	591	508	1767

[1] This analysis is meant to help us discern whether changes in the overall population are being caused by organizational attrition and by the addition of new groups or by changes within particular organizations. While further work is needed to address the second question, our analysis has attempted to remain attentive to this question. With the exception of 'All others,' issue categories are not mutually exclusive, as groups characterized as 'Multi-issue' may also be grouped in multiple issue categories that reflect their emphases.

Table A2: Transnational Activist Issues, 1973, 2013[1]

	1973		**2013**	
	North HQ	**South HQ**	**North HQ**	**South HQ**
Human Rights[2]	58.1%	88.9%	64.0%	76.4%
Peace	36.6%	44.4%	25.1%	19.2%
Women's Rights	12.1%	33.3%	15.3%	22.9%
Environment	11.6%	3.7%	28.8%	23.6%
Economic	8.4%	29.6%	16.0%	25.2%
Indigenous	n/a	n/a	3.7%	6.9%
Multi-issue	20.5%	37.0%	19.3%	29.1%
All other TSMOs	17.9%	0.0%	5.5%	1.4%
N	224	27	1284	437

[1] With the exception of 'All others,' issue categories are not mutually exclusive, as groups characterized as 'Multi-issue' may also be grouped in multiple issue categories that reflect their emphases.

[2] Our human rights category includes women's rights groups and groups working on the whole range of economic, social and cultural rights.

References

Alvarez, Sonia E. 2000. "Translating the Global: Local Effects of Transnational Organizing on Local Feminist Discourses and Practices in Latin America." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 1(1):29-67.

Archer, Angus. 1983. "Methods of Multilateral Management: The Interrelationship of Intergovernmental Organizations and Ngos." Pp. 303-25 in *The United States, the Un and the Management of Global Change*, edited by T. T. Gati. New York: New York University Press.

Arrighi, Giovanni, Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1989. *Antisystemic Movements*. New York: Verso.

Arrighi, Giovanni and Beverly J. Silver. 1999. *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*. Minneapolis, Mn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Beckfield, Jason. 2010. "The Social Structure of the World Polity." *American Journal of Sociology* 115(4):1018-68.

Bello, Walden. 2003. *Deglobalization: New Ideas for Running the World Economy*: Zed Books.

Boli, John and George Thomas. 1999. "Ingos and the Organization of World Culture." Pp. 13-48 in *Constructing World Culture: International Nongovernmental Organizations since 1865*, edited by J. Boli and G. M. Thomas. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bond, Patrick. 2012. *Politics of Climate Justice: Paralysis above, Movement Below*. Scottsville, South Africa University of Kwazulu-Natal Press.

Boswell, Terry and Christopher Chase-Dunn. 2000. *The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism*. Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

_____. 2004. "Global Democracy: A World-Systems Perspective." *Proto-Sociology: An International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 20:15-29.

Bruno, Kenny and Joshua Karliner. 2002. *Earthsummit.Biz: The Corporate Takeover of Sustainable Development*. Oakland: Food First Books.

Caniglia, Beth Schaefer. 2001. "Informal Alliances Vs. Institutional Ties: The Effects of Elite Alliances on Environmental TSMO Networks." *Mobilization: an International Journal* 6(1):37-54.

Carroll, William K. 2007. "Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony in a Global Field." *Social Justice Studies* 1(1):36-67.

_____. 2016. *Expose, Oppose, Propose: Alternative Policy Groups and the Struggle for Global Justice*. New York: Zed.

_____. 2015. "Modes of Cognitive Praxis in Transnational Alternative Policy Groups." *Globalizations* 12(5):710-27. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2014.1001231.

Carroll, William K. and J. P. Sapinski. 2013. "Embedding Post-Capitalist Alternatives? The
     Global Network of Alternative Knowledge Production and Mobilization." *Journal of
     World-Systems Research* 19(2):1-31.

_____. 2015. "Transnational Alternative Policy Groups in Global Civil Society: Enablers of
     Post-Capitalist Alternatives or Carriers of Ngoization?". *Critical Sociology* PRE(PRE):1-18.
     doi: DOI: 10.1177/0896920515589004.

Charnovitz, Steve. 1997. "Two Centuries of Participation: Ngos and International Governance."
     Michigan Journal of International Law 18(Winter):183-286.

_____. 2002. "Triangulating the World Trade Organization." *American Journal of International
     Law* 96(4):28-55.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher. 2013. " Five Linked Crises in the Contemporary World-System."
     Journal of World-Systems Research 19(2):175-80.

_____. 2005. "Social Evolution and the Future of World Society." *Journal of World Systems
     Research* 11(2):171-92.

_____. 2002. "Globalization from Below: Toward a Collectively Rational and Democratic
     Global Commonwealth." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social
     Science* 581(May):48-61.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher, Roy Kwon, Kirk Lawrence and Hiroko Inoue. 2010. "Last of the
     Hegemons?: U.S. Decline and Global Governance." in *IROWS Working Paper*. Riverside,
     California: Institute for Research on World Systems.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher, Christine Petit, Richard Niemeyer, Robert A. Hanneman and Ellen
     Reese. 2007. "The Contours of Solidarity and Division among Global Movements."
     International Journal of Peace Studies 12(2):1-16.

Chase-Dunn, Christopher and Matheu Kaneshiro. 2009. "Stability and Change in the Contours of
     Alliances among Movements in the Social Forum Process." Pp. 119-33 in *Engaging Social
     Justice*, edited by D. Fasenfest. Leiden: Brill. (Available:
     http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows44/irows44.htm)

Chase-Dunn, Christopher, Ellen Reese, Mark Herkenrath, Rebecca Giem, Erika Guttierrez,
     Linda Kim and Christine Petit. 2008a. "North-South Contradictions and Bridges at the
     World Social Forum." Pp. 341-66 in *North and South in the World Political Economy*,
     edited by R. Reuveny and W. R. Thompson. Malden, MA: Blackwell. Available:
     http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows31/irows31.htm

Chase-Dunn, Christopher, James Fenelon, Thomas D. Hall, Ian Breckenridge-Jackson and Joel
     Herrera. 2008b. "Global Indigenism and the Web of Transnational Social Movements."

Institute for Research on World-Systems (IROWS) University of California-Riverside, http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows87/irows87.htm. Unpublished Working Paper #87.

Conway, Janet M. 2012. *Edges of Global Justice*. New York: Routledge.

della Porta, Donatella. 2005. "Multiple Belongings, Tolerant Identities, and the Construction of 'Another Politics': Between the European Social Forum and the Local Social Fora." Pp. 175-202 in *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*, edited by D. della Porta and S. Tarrow. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.

Desai, Manisha. 2015. *Subaltern Movements in India: Gendered Geographies of Struggle against Neoliberal Development*. New York: Routledge.

Escobar, Arturo. 2008. *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Evans, Peter B. 2000. "Fighting Marginalization with Transnational Networks: Counter-Hegemonic Globalization." *Contemporary Sociology* 29(1):230-41.

Evans, Peter. 2008. "Is Alternative Globalization Possible?". *Politics & Society* 36(2):271-305.

Goodman, James and Ariel Salleh. 2013. "The 'Green Economy': Class Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony." *Globalizations* 10(3):411-24.

Hadden, Jennifer. 2015. *Networks in Contention: Global Civil Society and the Divisive Politics of Climate Change*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Juris, Jeffrey S. 2008a. *Networking Futures: The Movements against Corporate Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

_____. 2008b. "Spaces of Intentionality: Race, Class and Horizontality at the United States Social Forum." *Mobilization* 13(4):353-72.

Karataşlı, Savaş, Kumral Şefika and Beverly Silver. 2018. "A New Global Tide of Rising Social Protest? The Early Twenty-first Century in World Historical Perspective." Presented at the Eastern Sociological Society Annual Meeting, Mini-conference on Globalization in Uncertain Times. Baltimore, MD, February 22-25.

Katz, Hagai. 2006. "Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks." *Voluntas* 17:333-48. doi: 10.1007/s11266-006-9022-4.

Katz, Hagai and Helmut Anheier. 2006. "Global Connectedness: The Structure of Transnational Ngo Networks." Pp. 240-65 in *Global Civil Society 2005/6*, edited by M. Glasius, M. Kaldor and H. Anheier. London: Sage.

Markoff, John. 2003. "Margins, Centers, and Democracy: The Paradigmatic History of Women's Suffrage." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29(1):85-116.

McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald, eds. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Cultural Framings*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

McFarlane, Colin. 2009. "Translocal Assemblages: Space, Power and Social Movements." *Geoforum* 40:561-67.

McKeon, Nora. 2015. *Food Security and Governance: Empowering Communities, Regulating Corporations*. New York: Routledge.

McMichael, Philip. 2015. "The Land Question in the Food Sovereignty Project." *Globalizations* 12(4):434-51. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2014.971615.

Mendoza, Breny. 2002. "Transnational Feminisms in Question." *Feminist Theory* 3:295-314.

Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. "Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle." *American Anthropologist* 108(1):38-51.

Meyer, John W., John Boli, George M. Thomas and Francisco O. Ramirez. 1997a. "World Society and the Nation-State." *American Journal of Sociology* 103(1):144-81.

Meyer, John W., David John Frank, Ann Hironaka, Evan Schofer and Nancy Brandon Tuma. 1997b. "The Structuring of a World Environmental Regime, 1870-1990." *International Organization* 51(4):623-51.

Moghadam, Valentine. 2012. *Globalization and Social Movements: Islamism, Feminism and the Global Justice Movement, Second Edition*. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield.

Mooney, Pat. 2012. "Civil Society Strategies and the Stockholm Syndrome." *Development Dialogue* 61(September):327-31.

Morgan, Rhiannon. 2007. "On Political Institutions and Social Movement Dynamics: The Case of the United Nations and the Global Indigenous Movement." *International Political Science Review* 28(3):273-92.

Plummer, Samantha, Jackie Smith and Melanie Hughes. 2018. "Transnational Human Rights Organizing and Global Health Governance, 1963-2013." *Global Health Governance* 12(1):62-74.

Reese, Ellen, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Kadambari Anatram, Gary Coyne, Matheu Kaneshiro, Ashley N. Koda, Roy Kwan and Preeta Saxena. 2008. "Research Note: Surveys of World Social Forum Participants Show Influence of Place and Base in the Global Public Sphere." *Mobilization* 13(4):431-46.

Reitan, Ruth and Shannon Gibson. 2012. "Climate Change or Social Change? Environmental and Leftist Praxis and Participatory Action Research." *Globalizations* 9(3):395-410.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2006. *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forums and Beyond*. London: Zed.

Sen, Jai, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar and Peter Waterman, eds. 2003. *Challenging Empires: The World Social Forum*: Third World Institute: Available in Pdf format at www.choike.org.

_____. 2013. "The WSF over Thirteen Years: Learning by Doing?". *ALAI, América Latina en Movimiento* 484:http://www.alainet.org/active/63440.

Shawki, Noha. 2011. "Global Norms, Local Implementation — How Are Global Norms Translated into Local Practice? ." *Globality Studies Journal* (26).

Shor, Francis. 2010. *Dying Empire: U.S. Imperialism and Global Resistance*. New York: Routledge.

Sikkink, Kathryn and Jackie Smith. 2002. "Infrastructures for Change: Transnational Organizations, 1953-1993." Pp. 24-44 in *Restructuring World Politics: The Power of Transnational Agency and Norms*, edited by S. Khagram, J. Riker and K. Sikkink. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, Jackie. 2004. "Exploring Connections between Global Integration and Political Mobilization." *Journal of World Systems Research* 10(1):255-85.

_____.2005. "Transnational Social Movement Organizations." Pp. 226-48 in *Social Movements and Organizational Theory*, edited by G. Davis, D. McAdam, W. R. Scott and M. Zald. New York: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 2008. *Social Movements for Global Democracy*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

_____. 2014. "Counter-Hegemonic Networks and the Transformation of Global Climate Politics: Rethinking Movement-State Relations." *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought* 4(1):1-19. doi: 10.1080/23269995.2013.874111.

Smith, Jackie, Scott Byrd, Ellen Reese and Elizabeth Smythe, eds. 2011. *Handbook of World Social Forum Activism*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Smith, Jackie and Dawn Wiest. 2012. *Social Movements in the World-System: The Politics of Crisis and Transformation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Smith, Jackie, Marina Karides, Marc Becker, Dorval Brunelle, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Donatella della Porta, Rosalba Icaza, Jeffrey Juris, Lorenzo Mosca, Ellen Reese, Peter Jay Smith and Rolando V´azquez. 2014. *Global Democracy and the World Social Forums, 2nd Edition*. Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers.

Smith, Jackie, Samantha Plummer and Melanie M. Hughes. 2017. "Transnational Social Movements and Changing Organizational Fields in the Late-20th and Early-21st Centuries." *Global Networks* 17(1):3-22. DOI: 10.1111/glob.12152.

Steger, Manfred, James Goodman and Erin K. Wilson. 2013. *Justice Globalism: Ideology, Crises, Policy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tarrow, Sidney. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics, 3rd Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

_____. 2005. *The New Transnational Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Vargas, Virginia. 2003. "Feminism, Globalization and the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement." *Cultural Studies* 17(6):905-20.

von Bülow, Marisa. 2010. *Building Transnational Networks: Civil Society and the Politics of Trade in the Americas*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2002. "The Eagle Has Crash Landed." *Foreign Policy* (July):60-69.

_____. 2014. "Antisystemic Movements, Yesterday and Today." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 20(2):158-72. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2014.593.

_____. 1991. *Geopolitics and Geoculture: Essays on the Changing World-System*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

West, Lois A. 1999. "The United Nations Women's Conferences and Feminist Politics." Pp. 177-95 in *Gender Politics in Global Governance*, edited by M. K. Meyer and E. Prügl. Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Wiest, Dawn and Jackie Smith. 2007. "Explaining Participation in Regional Transnational Social Movement Organizations." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 48(1-2):137-66.

Willetts, Peter. 1996a. "From Stockholm to Rio and Beyond: The Impact of the Environmental Movement on the United Nations Consultative Arrangements for Ngos." *Review of International Studies* 22:57-80.

_____, ed. 1996b. *The Conscience of the World: The Influence of Ngos in the United Nations System*. London: C. Hurst.

_____. 2006. "The Cardoso Report on the Un and Civil Society: Functionalism, Global Corporatism, or Global Democracy?". *Global Governance* 12:305-24.

Wolfson, Todd and Peter Funke. 2017. "Contemporary Social Movements and Media: The Emergent Nomadic Political Logic and Its Nervous System " Pp. 76-93 in *Social Movements and World-System Transformation*, edited by J. Smith, M. Goodhart, P. Manning and J. Markoff. New York: Routledge.