

#### ABSTRACT

This paper analyses a set of 467 local protests that took place against neoliberalism on 5 global days of action between 1998 and 2001 and finds that the targets of protest differ on each continent. The majority target either the global institutions of neoliberalism, such as the IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organization or the Group of 8, or neglect to identify a single institutional target. However,

the most popular local target in Africa and Asia is national or local government. In Latin America protests are most likely to target banks or stock exchanges, and in the US, Canada and Europe, corporations. The sources of such variation lie in pre-existing political repertoires, transnational organizational networks, and processes of structural equivalence that underlie diffusion patterns.

## BREAKING THE BANK & TAKING TO THE STREETS: HOW PROTESTERS TARGET NEOLIBERALISM\*

Lesley J. Wood

How do people fight corporate globalization? When the target is a global system, to whom do activists direct their anger and their claims? While the most visible sites of anti-globalization protest have been the summits of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, these events are only the tip of the iceberg. On 'global days of action', local events have been organized in over 100 cities. These protests targeted a wide range of institutions which included banks, stock exchanges, local and national governments, McDonalds restaurants, and Nike stores in their opposition to neoliberalism. This paper will examine the targets of these "global justice" protests over a four year period (1998–2001) and will suggest that in order to understand the variation between continents in terms of target choice, one must consider pre-existing political repertoires, social movement networks, and the diffusion processes that spread innovations to new sites.

One must examine the targets of protest in context. Changes in political institutions are tied to transformations of 'political repertoires' or the practices and targets of collective action. In Western Europe, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, political practices were transformed with the rise of the nation state. At that time, those wishing to agitate collectively became less likely to engage in direct action against local authorities and more likely to use a modular and less

Lesley J. Wood  
Department of Sociology  
Columbia University  
413 Fayerweather Hall  
1180 Amsterdam Avenue  
Mail Code 2551  
New York, New York 10027  
[ljw31@columbia.edu](mailto:ljw31@columbia.edu)  
<http://www.sociology.columbia.edu>

\* I must thank Kelly Moore, Pamela Oliver, Francesca Polletta, Sid Tarrow, Charles Tilly, Takeshi Wada, Cecelia Walsh-Russo and the participants of the Workshop on Contentious Politics at Columbia University for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

JOURNAL OF WORLD-SYSTEMS RESEARCH, X, 1, WINTER 2004, 69–89  
Special Issue: Global Social Movements Before and After 9-11  
<http://jwsr.ucr.edu/>  
ISSN 1076-156X  
© 2004 Lesley J. Wood

violent ‘repertoire’ of petitioning the nation state (Tilly 1995, 1997). Increasingly, the timing of protest came to be tied more closely to the rhythms of parliamentary discussion and governmental action (Tilly 1995:364). Since that time, despite temporary waves and cycles of mobilization, the political repertoires of protesters have remained relatively stable. However, many suggest that with increasingly powerful transnational institutions and dense relationships between formerly isolated domestic social movements, a shift of similar proportions is underway (Smith 2001; Tarrow 2003; Tarrow & Imig 2001).

This paper looks at protests against the transnational institutions most central to extending the neoliberal model. While largely unreported in North America until the Seattle protests of 1999, international coordination began to increase with the initiation of ‘global days of action’ in 1998. Of course, the barriers to coordinated protest against transnational institutions are daunting. The sites of summits are often distant, the issues complex, and the existing organizational infrastructure that surrounds transnational mobilization weak. Until September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, these demonstrations appeared to be increasing in size and number. But after the attacks on the World Trade Center, many activists, particularly in the US, rushed to distance themselves from anything associated with political violence or “terrorism”. In combination with the intensified policing strategies of the ‘war on terror,’ these changes have (at least temporarily) limited protest in the US. However, globally coordinated protests are on the rise on other continents, with the movements collaborating against neoliberalism segueing into even larger global days of action against the war in Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

For activists interested in influencing global economic policy, organized efforts to intervene in transnational institutions have predominantly taken the form of lobbying, either directly as Non Governmental Organizations, or indirectly through national representatives. Indeed, a class of experts has emerged, working to gain entry and influence into institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and regional transnational authorities such as the European Union (Smith 2001). Rucht has found that the rate of use of even the most routine protest tactic of public demonstrations seems extremely low among transnational social movements, in contrast with national social movements (Rucht 2001). Many studies of “global resistance”

<sup>1</sup> On February 15, March 15, and March 22, 2003, global days of action were called against the war. The largest globally coordinated protests to date, over 700 cities took part.

focus on this less contentious side of global level politics, the lobbying, conferences and networking that take place in the transnational political arena (Smith 2001; Tarrow 2002).

What about those dissenters who are unwilling or unable to lobby transnational institutions? As observers have noted, movements of the resource-poor derive much of their effectiveness from their ability to disrupt (McAdam 1982; Piven & Cloward 1979; Tarrow 1998). By examining the use of street blockades in Mexico and bank occupations in South Africa, we can begin to build a dataset that incorporates this more transgressive side of transnational protest. Such ‘Contentious events’ are defined as gatherings of ten or more people—outside of formal government routines, in a publicly accessible place and making claims that, if realized, would affect the interests of their targeted object (Tilly 1995:63). Events were included in the dataset if they affiliated themselves with the global day of action through speeches or signs, or if they submitted a report to compilers of protest activities.<sup>2</sup>

Global days of action are a growing form of transnational contention. Tarrow and others have argued that transnational contention that is truly contentious is rare. His definition of a transnational social movement is a useful one: “sustained contentious interactions with opponents—national or non-national—by connected networks of challengers organized across national boundaries

- challengers must be rooted in domestic social networks
- challengers must be connected to one another more than episodically through common ways of seeing the world, or through informal or organizational ties

<sup>2</sup> Repeated Google™ searches from 1998–2003 for:

protest	demonstration	IMF
action	WTO	World Bank

and the abbreviations for the dates, “M16, J18, N30, S26, and N9” built this collection, with the goal of a complete set of events. Fortunately, activists had already compiled many of these events onto pages including:

<http://www.agp.org>  
<http://www.indymedia.org>  
<http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp>  
[http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no9/seattle\\_chronology.html](http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no9/seattle_chronology.html)  
<http://www.jwj.org/global/S26/s26rep.htm>  
<http://bak.spc.org/j18/site/uk.html#sreports>

and many others. Sites viewed during August 2002. While most of these pages are in English, others are in German, Spanish, Italian, French, Dutch, Norwegian, Portuguese and Korean.

✦ challenges must be contentious in deed as well as word. (Tarrow 1998:184)

The local protests against neoliberal institutions that I examine in this paper meet this definition. But the targets of these mobilizations vary between continents in surprising ways. This paper focuses on the targets of 467 protest events that took place in 69 countries on five global days of action between 1998 and the end of 2001. It will emphasize the patterns of targeting before 9/11, but suggests that even after 9/11, we will continue to see variation in the ways protesters on different continents target neoliberalism.

## GLOBAL DAYS OF ACTION

Both locally rooted and globally coordinated, the strategy of 'global days of action' has become increasingly popular over the past five years. This strategy encourages local activists to protest in their own community on a day identified in a 'call to action', distributed through social movement networks and the media. The dates are selected to correspond with summits of transnational institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, the Group of 8 or the World Trade Organization. The level of communication and coordination between these events varies, depending on the communication and associational networks that link the different sites of protest.

Global days of action are not new. In 1889, the Socialist International declared May 1st a day of workers demonstrations and in 1910 similarly established a Women's Day. The next year, more than one million women and men attended rallies in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. In the last five years global days of action have been called by various organizations and networks in support of locked out dockworkers, indigenous people and prisoners, against McDonalds, Nike, genetic engineering, and most recently, the war against Iraq. While not all movements have embraced the tactic with the same degree of enthusiasm, the coordinated anti-war protests indicate that this is a tactic worth observing. This paper focuses specifically on the global days of action protests that contest the neoliberal policies represented by the summits of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the Group of 8 and the World Trade Organization.

### How Targets Change?

How do locally rooted activists make claims on distant institutions like the IMF or the World Trade Organization? Many organize marches and rallies against the institutions and their policies in town squares and city streets, carrying signs and making speeches. Some, however, may also choose more accessible targets in order to express their outrage. These targets often have only indirect ties to the transnational institutions.

In order to understand targets of protest I place the data on collective actors, meaningful practices and targets into context. Research suggests that social movement organizations generally choose targets and tactics that conform to existing modes of action in a particular region and on a specific issue. Successful events will encourage conformity of targets and tactics in subsequent actions. As we stated earlier, targets also conform to the structure of political power, as the growth of the state inadvertently create opportunities for mobilization through restructuring social relations and creating a means of communication by which opinion could be mobilized (Tarrow 1998:58). In a similar fashion, there is some evidence that the formalization of the transnational arena is providing opportunities for mobilization.

While pre-existing repertoires can help to explain continuities, the new opportunities and challenges presented by global institutions and policies have led national and local social movements to innovate. Studies of political networks suggest that the practices of social movements shift when the patterns of relationships in which they are engaged are altered (Gould 1995; Mische 2003; Steinberg 1999). With the decline of state communism and the emergence of the World Trade Organization, local and national social movements that had engaged in struggles against privatization, the IMF and World Bank, for environmental protection, self-determination and other issues began to see their interests as shared, and link their struggles together. Such networks appear to be the modal organizational form in transnational contention (Tarrow 2002). Through these networks, anarchists from Europe broadcast stories about their successful "street party" protests and hear tales of the Zapatista resistance, unions and environmentalists can listen to each other's strategies, and the struggles of different communities and nations in North and South begin to be linked in new ways.<sup>3</sup>

This process has been described as *scale shift*—a change in the number and level of coordinated contentious actions leading to broader contention and a wider range of actors (McAdam et al. 2001:332; Tarrow & McAdam 2003). Tarrow has noted that scale shift involves two related pathways; first, *diffusion/emulation*—whereby practices travel to new sites along pre-existing and new ties and lead to emulation, and second, *brokerage/coalition formation*, through which movements that become linked and organizations that are in coalition increasingly tend to use similar approaches. Scale shift not only spreads tactics, it creates new frames around which the conflict is organized and new conceptions of allies

---

<sup>3</sup> The "north" here is defined in terms of economic influence and includes the southern countries of Australia and New Zealand.

and opponents (*ibid.*). While both pathways need to be better understood, this paper highlights the first route—the diffusion of target strategies through four pre-existing networks. As Chabot and Duyvendak (2003) have noted, in order to gain insight into the contingencies and interpretive processes that underlie diffusion, it is necessary to examine the ways that communities interpret and employ a foreign innovation (Chabot and Duyvendak 2003:706). Using the case of the ‘anti-globalization movement,’ this paper will look at how local activists on different continents participate in the global days of action. It will examine how these activists engage, using strategies that reflect their pre-existing political repertoires, and whether they adopt the tactical innovation of targeting multinational corporations as an indirect way of targeting neoliberalism.

### One Struggle – Many Struggles

Despite burgeoning networks, we should not expect a single, unified global revolution, or one world government any time soon. The spread of social movement strategies depends on activists being able to ‘attribute similarity’ to the transmitting groups and their tactics. This depends on the ability of protesters to creatively dislocate and relocate an item for their context, and adapt strategies and identities accordingly (Chabot et al., 2003:707–8). This receptivity depends in part upon the existence of networks that link movement organizations, and in part on dynamics that underlie the flow of information between sites of protest.

Like all information, targets and tactics diffuse most easily to new sites that the transmitters have direct contact with. As a result, social movement networks help to facilitate both diffusion and mobilization. This would help to explain why many protests in France and Germany, linked by the ATTAC network, tend to follow a particular routine, marching along a route of sites of public investment—schools, post offices and hospitals. This would also help to explain why movements within a particular continent, or “state system” that are in contact tend to engage in similar social movement strategies.

In addition to relationships between protesters, it is important to look at the role of relationships to authorities. Political practices tend to diffuse at the same rate to sites that have a similar set of relations to other sites, or are “structurally equivalent” (Soule 1997). Structural equivalence is the level of similarity of a given actor’s external relations to those of other actors, whether directly connected or not (Tilly 1997). Previous studies have suggested that locations and movements that have a similar position to authorities such as the WTO may result in a similar level and form of mobilization (Walton & Seddon 1994). To understand the variation in targets, it is useful to consider the relationship of sites of protest to the structure and membership of global institutions and its influence on the flow of information.

**Figure 1**

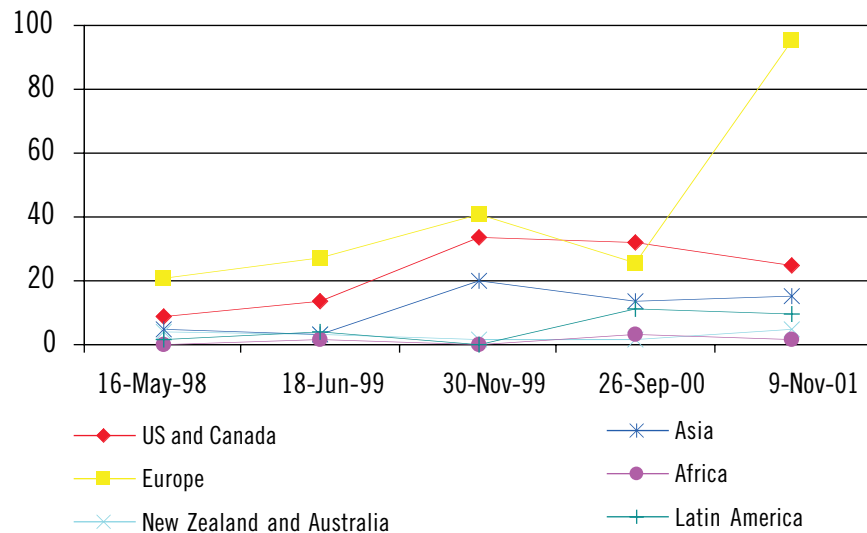
Date	Summit Location	Number of Events	Number of Cities Protesting
May 16 – May 18, 1998	Group of 8 (5/16) in Birmingham, WTO (5/18) in Geneva	43	41
June 18, 1999	Group of 8, Koln Germany	58	54
November 30, 1999	WTO in Seattle, USA	111	97
September 26, 2000	IMF and World Bank in Prague, Czech Rep	98	88
November 9, 2001	WTO in Doha, Qatar	157	152
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>467</b>	<b>432</b>

By understanding the significance of pre-existing political repertoires, social movement networks, and the dynamics that underlie the flow of information, I can begin to understand the variation in the ways protesters on different continents target neoliberal institutions.

#### *Protest Data*

This study analyzes a set of the most visible recent protest events against neoliberalism. These protests were held on or around five days designated as “days of action” that took place between 1998 and 2001. These days of action were called by various activist networks to coincide with the meeting of transnational trade bodies.<sup>4</sup> The number of cities mobilized for each event varied, but the Ministerials of the WTO appear to inspire the greatest level of activity, due in part to mobilization by multiple networks that are seeking to take advantage of potential opportunities in a relatively new institution. Protests took place on all continents, and while the majority of demonstrations (69%) were in Europe and North America, Asia and South America held the largest events. See Appendix A

<sup>4</sup>. (1) May 16–18, 1998. At the founding conference of People’s Global Action (PGA) network in February 1998, the decision was made to link up the dates of the summits and call the first global day of action against neoliberalism. (2) June 18, 1999. The Jubilee 2000 network and the International Confederation of Federated Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the PGA and affiliated Reclaim the Streets sub-network called for action. (3) November 30, 1999 was called as a day of action by PGA and Jubilee 2000. (4) September 26, 2000. Called by local organizers in Prague and spread internationally, particularly through the PGA network. (5) November 9, 2001 was called a day of action by the ICFTU and the PGA.

**Figure 2 – Global Days of Action**

Unlike many studies of contentious events, this paper uses activist reports of protest events, taken from the Internet. This approach improves upon standard strategies of using news media as a source. I identified 467 events that took place over the 5 days of action, whereas a LexisNexis™ search of all news media identified only 127, and a Reuters search, only 40.<sup>5</sup> In general, the media coverage of protests increased through time, reporting between 7–30% of each day of action's events. The activist reports incorporated significantly more detail of tactics and organization than media reports but significantly less detail on the activities of targets or the goals of the event. As past studies would predict, the media accounts tended to over-represent violent and large events.

As explained earlier, events are included if they are public, larger than 10 persons and explicitly identified with the global day of action by organizers, participants or compilers of global day of action catalogues. Organizational meetings or

<sup>5</sup> Coverage for the November 9, 2001 event includes one reference to “30 events in Germany”, and a list of 19 cities where events were planned by the Canadian Labour Congress. Evidence suggests that some of the Canadian events were primarily educational, and would not have been considered contentious events in our data. They were excluded unless other reports gave more details.

conferences are excluded. Events that have been included in the activist compilations of global days of action events include, rallies, a guerilla attack on a police station, leafleting the public, marches, street parties, property destruction, street theater, civil disobedience, riots, occupations, banner hangs, and the disruption of offices, businesses, and streets.

Perhaps surprisingly, 27 of the events identified by the news media were not included in activist reports—suggesting that some events that are unconnected to existing activist networks of communication and independent media but are visible to authorities. These ‘missing’ events were equally spread across time and continents.

### Choice of Targets

Protesters target institutions when they march to their front doors, chant, hold signs and distribute leaflets against their policies, break their windows, occupy their offices and generally disrupt business as usual. Often, one demonstration will involve multiple targets. When we look for correlations between these targets and the continent where an event takes place, we find protests target neoliberalism differently on each continent. While the majority of protests explicitly or implicitly target the global institution meeting on that day, or decline to identify a specific target, many direct their ire at local, accessible institutions. The most popular local target is the multinational corporation, with national governments, banks and stock exchanges attracting significant amounts of opposition. Multinational corporations increased in popularity as a local target, especially after the Seattle protests of 1999. However, after the attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001, while the number of protests continued to increase, corporations became less popular. This study will examine this geographic and temporal variation carefully, revealing patterns within this specific case, and suggesting more general dynamics of scale shift and its interaction with social movement networks and pre-existing political repertoires.

### Networks of Resistance

There is no consensus amongst activists about whether the WTO and organizations like it should be reformed or abolished (Smith 2001). The reform vs. revolution question is associated with particular networks and targeting strategies. The networks aiming for reform emphasize specific policies, especially around access and accountability, as well as substantive issues around protection of labor and the environment. The International Congress on Federated Trade Unions aim to ensure labor rights are included in the debates.<sup>6</sup> The Jubilee 2000 network demands the abolition of debt for the poorest nations.<sup>7</sup> The ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l'Aide aux Citoyens*)

network began as a campaign for the implementation of the so-called Tobin Tax, the proposal by Nobel laureate James Tobin to tax all speculative financial transactions but has shifted towards a more general goal of democratizing the global financial institutions.<sup>8</sup>

The anti-capitalist People's Global Action network are less interested in the reform of the institutions. One hallmark of this network is: "A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalisation."<sup>9</sup> PGA affiliated events offer a more systemic critique, along with the goal of increased global mobilization, and the expression of alternative values.<sup>10</sup> In Europe, North America and Australia and New Zealand, these include the colorful "Reclaim the Streets" protests. While many would be tempted to categorize these demonstrations as solely expressive and counter-cultural, their alliances with unions, human rights

---

<sup>6</sup> The most established global network in our data is the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), was set up in 1949 and has 231 affiliated organizations in 150 countries and territories on all five continents, with a membership of 158 million. The events organized primarily by ICFTU make up approximately 10% of our dataset.

<sup>7</sup> Jubilee 2000 emerged from religious communities in 1996, and gathered 24 million signatures in more than 60 countries. Its main goal was the cancellation of debts of the poorest countries by the year 2000. Since that time it has expanded its foci and works more generally against neoliberalism, organizing human chains around summit sites, and can be identified in the leadership of approximately 3% of our events.

<sup>8</sup> Founded in 1998 by Bernard Cassen and Susan George of the socialist monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique*, ATTAC has established local chapters in 33 countries (primarily in Europe), includes 80,000 members. The network works in alliance with the labor movement and uses marches and creative non-violent protest to work towards the democratic control of financial markets and their institutions. The events organized primarily by ATTAC make up 16% of our dataset.

<sup>9</sup> Launched in 1998 in Geneva, the PGA is a decentralized collaboration with no formal membership, linking existing organizations that have endorsed the hallmarks. The network is active in approximately 40 countries, particularly in Latin America, Asia and Europe. Participants include well known movements including the Sandinistas, Zapatistas, Phillipine, Brazilian and Indian peasant movements and the European direct action movement including Britain's Reclaim the Streets and Italy's *Ya Basta*. The demonstrations organized by groups identified as part of the PGA (through inclusion on the PGA webpage) make up 53% of our dataset. <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/index.html>. Sites viewed during summer 2002.

<sup>10</sup> As McCarthy has pointed out, a primary goal of many transnational social movement organizations may be to build transnational solidarity beyond state boundaries (McCarthy 1997:72).

organizations and community organizations have tied this street party strategy to concrete local and national issues including the environment, the privatization of social services, labor rights and public space.

The changed political climate after 9/11 led to an increase in the proportion of protest events affiliated with networks interested in reform, while anti-capitalist protests appear to decline in number, due in part to the relative marginalization of the PGA network, especially in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to having different goals, networks were associated with particular target strategies. A slight majority of protests (52%), particularly those associated with ICFTU, ATTAC or Jubilee 2000 targeted the WTO, G8, IMF and World Bank explicitly or implicitly. In contrast, demonstrations affiliated with the PGA network, or its sub-networks like Reclaim the Streets were more likely to select a local target. Indeed, 226 of the 467 demonstrations made claims against a concrete target other than the transnational institutions explicitly under protest. These targets varied by continent and through time, not only due to the influence of the networks, but as a result of pre-existing regional political repertoires, and the dynamics of diffusion. The most frequent local targets were corporations, banks and stock exchanges and national governments. We'll discuss each in turn.

### Multinational Corporations

The most popular local targets of days of action against neoliberalism were the branches and headquarters of multinational corporations. McDonalds, Nike, Monsanto, the Gap, Shell and others were the target of twenty-seven percent of the protests in our sample. They were picketed, disrupted and destroyed during the course of protest. In Canada, the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, activists are more likely to target a corporation than any other local target. Interestingly, these are the countries most central to the neoliberal institutions. These are also the countries that are most likely to lack established repertoires for fighting against neoliberalism. After the 1999 protests of Seattle, this targeting strategy diffused quickly to new sites of protest.

---

<sup>11</sup> The global conference of the PGA took place as scheduled from September 19–22, 2001 in Bolivia. However, the post 9/11 political made travel for the delegates difficult for a number of reasons. Delegates were refused visas and permission to travel. The Bolivian government denounced the PGA as a 'terrorist summit'. The Executive Intelligence Review published the article 'Terrorism Central: People's Global Action.' During a press conference held by the PGA, journalists questioned the relationship between the PGA and the terrorist attacks (Sophie 2001).

While protests against businesses by their workers are not new, direct action against businesses by their customers is more unusual. Historically, demonstrations against businesses by consumers have most often been concerned with prices. Although stores were targeted in the US during the civil rights movement, these 'anti-globalization' protests and their linking of economic, labor and environmental issues with consumerism, appear to have emerged from the recent history of environmental and anti-sweatshop activism in North America and Western Europe. But what is the logic behind targeting a corporation that is not accountable in any directly democratic manner to the public? Writer Naomi Klein offers one explanation, arguing that these targets are not the real goal; "For years, we in this movement have fed off our opponents' symbols—their brands, their office towers, their photo-opportunity summits. We have used them as rallying cries, as focal points, as popular education tools. But these symbols were never the real targets; they were the levers, the handles. They were what allowed us, as British writer Katharine Ainger recently put it, "to open a crack in history" (Klein 2001).

The strengths of a corporate target are its accessibility and the way a single target can signify multiple meanings. This flexibility facilitates the diffusion of corporations as targets through easing the process by which communities of activists can identify with other anti-corporate protesters. Protesters can and do argue when they target a McDonalds that they are targeting globalization, "corporate control", the WTO, capitalism, and the USA. They might explain that they are fighting for animal rights, labor rights or against rainforest destruction. Or they may simply argue that McDonalds itself is the problem. Indeed, for some McDonalds appears to have become a universal but multi-vocal symbol of globalization.<sup>12</sup> After 9/11 it seems that the demobilization of protests in the US and Canada meant that this ambiguity became less of a desirable characteristic, as protesters attempted to distance themselves from any resemblance to the attackers of the similarly ambiguous target of the World Trade Center. Indeed, on days of action before 9/11, up to 49% of protests targeted corporations. On 9 November 2001, the figure was only 10%.

---

<sup>12</sup> McDonalds was a target at 25 protests in our dataset. The locations were as follows; Aviles Spain, Berkeley, Bialystock, Burlington, VT, Fortaleza, Lisbon (twice), Montevideo, Melbourne, Milano, Minsk, Montreal (twice), London, Newcastle, UK, Oviedo, Spain, Prague (three times), Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Tarragona, Tucson, Wellington and Zagreb.

## National Governments

Nineteen percent of protest events in the sample targeted national governments. In Africa and Asia, protests were more likely to target national governments than any other target. Interestingly, none of the countries that had high levels of targeting national governments were in the G8 or the WTO Quad.<sup>13</sup> Counter-intuitively, this suggests that the most powerful governments were less likely to be targeted by their populations than nations with small markets and less economic power.

Although more recent protests linking both war and globalization appear to have focused their attention on national governments, there does not seem to be any clear increase or decrease of the significance of governments as a target of protest through time in this albeit limited dataset. When we use regression analysis, unsurprisingly we find that larger protests and a location in a capital city can significantly predict the choice of government as a target.<sup>14</sup> The continuing significance of government both before and after 9/11 supports other research that suggests that those who want to protest against European institutions and policies still target domestic institutions. (Tarrow 2001).

## Banks and Stock Exchanges

Fifteen percent of the protests in the sample targeted banks and/or stock exchanges. There was an increase in the proportion of protests that targeted banks on the second day of action, June 18, 1999 (J18) due to the "Global Carnival Against Capitalism's" call to action by the PGA network, which explicitly identified financial centers as targets on days of action. In Latin America, banks and/or stock exchanges are the most frequent local targets.

This pattern is related to pre-existing repertoires. However, in Latin American social movements have been fighting against the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and World Bank for over twenty-five years. Massive riots in the 1970s and 1980s built a history of protest against privatization and neoliberal reform. Governments and opposition groups routinely blame the IMF for all

---

<sup>13</sup> In principle, WTO rules are established by consensus of all 134 members, but in practice the so-called Quad countries (U.S., Japan, Canada and the European Union) can meet behind closed doors and influence the agenda and organization of meetings and policy. Membership in a Quad country is significantly negatively correlated with targeting government (Pearson's correlation  $-.179$ , Std. Error  $.058$ ).

<sup>14</sup> Location in a capital city correlated with government as a target (Pearson's correlation  $.147$ ). Size of event correlated with government as a target (Pearson's correlation  $.201$ ).

manner of problems, and direct the attention of the public to appropriate targets (Walton et al. 1994:133).

Mirroring the relationship between national governments and global institutions, none of the regions that target banks and stock exchanges are in the G8 or the WTO "Quad." It seems that when choosing local targets, protests tend to target the historically resonant and accessible symbols of transnational power. The influence of new forms of protest may be limited by these pre-existing repertoires. The targets of protest shifted dramatically in the US and Canada after 9/11 away from corporations and towards the transnational institutions themselves. In contrast, in Latin America, protest routines remained largely unaffected. As a result, the frequency that stock exchanges and banks were targeted showed no change.

### Implications for Understanding Target Strategies

In order to understand why the targets of anti-globalization protests differ on each continent, we need to look at pre-existing repertoires, networks of organizations and the processes that underlie diffusion. As we have seen, the economic and political context of different regions influence the existence and activity of political organizations, their issues, campaigns and of course their choices of tactic and target (Appendix B). With the increasing visibility of transnational institutions, these pre-existing domestic networks transpose contention to the international level without liquidating it locally or nationally (Tarrow and McAdam 2003). This shift is a contingent process that depends in part on relationships between domestic social movements and transnational authorities. As a result, there are regional and temporal differences within the struggles against neoliberalism.

As Smith (2001) pointed out, the first stream of resistance to the IMF and World Bank began in developing countries, where resistance to IMF-imposed structural adjustment policies arose as countries of the global "south" sought to address the mounting problem of international debt (Walton and Seddon 1994). Many of the countries most active in the movements in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in Africa, did not participate in the global days of action. However those that did participate had pre-existing repertoires from earlier austerity protests that targeted IMF and World Bank policies. In Latin America, the protests targeted the financial institutions that symbolized the agents of austerity policy and the international economy (Walton & Seddon 1994:110). In contrast, most of the political mobilization in the "north" that opposed the policies of these transnational institutions over the past twenty years has taken the form of lobbying and peaceful protest. This difference affects the receptivity of activists to locally new targets. When local activists, particularly those rooted in environ-

mental campaigns that targeted corporations linked up with the PGA network, they adapted their targeting strategy for the protests against neoliberalism. As a result, corporations became an increasingly popular target in Europe, Australia and New Zealand, but especially in the US and Canada.

Yet the practice of targeting corporations did not spread everywhere. It became dominant only in countries which are part of the core of neoliberal institutions, those countries which are 'structurally equivalent' in relation to the WTO and the Group of 8. This finding corresponds with previous research. As Sarah Soule argues, "socially constructed categories of similarity lead to the diffusion of an item." (Soule 1997:873). Countries that were outside of the powerful center of these institutions and had a pre-existing repertoire of protest against neoliberalism remained relatively unconvinced by strategic innovations. This is not an automatic process, being structurally equivalent in this case corresponds with being within similar networks, both factors facilitate the process of 'attributing similarity' between receiving and transmitting anti-corporate activists.

Reversing the process, after the attacks on the World Trade Center, those same networks were used to signal a retreat from the tactic of targeting corporations. The changed political climate prompted many US activists to attempt to distance themselves from those who would attack corporate targets, and thus contributed to an increasing polarization of the movement. It appears that the same networks and processes that facilitated the diffusion of corporate targets, especially after the success of the protests in Seattle, would also facilitate the retreat from this innovation.

### CONCLUSIONS

On November 9, 2001, protesters opposing the meetings of the WTO taking place in inaccessible Qatar organized rallies, marches, and raised a ruckus in 152 cities worldwide. It was possibly the largest globally coordinated protest ever held to that date. At those demonstrations, crowds chanted against the WTO, and railed against their own governments, while others occupied the headquarters of banks and corporations and disrupted commercial outlets. The choices of target differed on each continent, much as they had before 9/11. However, a mere two months after the attacks on the World Trade Center, fewer protesters were targeting corporations, particularly in the US. In response to 9/11, anti-globalization protesters had retreated from more disruptive tactics, preferring to target the transnational institutions directly.

This was not a unified global shift. Protesters from Brazil to Boston continued to reflect their different locations and political histories. However, in the same way that the strategy of attacking a McDonalds diffused through North

American and European sections of activist networks like the PGA, the shift away from corporate targets also followed comprehensible patterns. Of course, understanding how tactics and targets rise and fall in popularity requires more than a map of transmission and reception. Further work must look at the cognitive and interpretive processes that facilitate the diffusion and rejection of tactical innovations. As our knowledge develops, the dynamic connection between local activists and transnational processes and institutions will be better understood.

## REFERENCES

- Chabot, Sean and Jan Willem Duyvendak. 2002. "Globalization and transnational diffusion between social movements: Reconceptualizing the dissemination of the Gandhian repertoire and the 'coming out' routine" *Theory and Society* 31: 697–740.
- Gerhards, Jurgen and Dieter Rucht. 1992. "Mesomobilization: Organizing and Framing in Two Protest Campaigns in West Germany," *American Journal of Sociology*, 98:555–596.
- Gould, Roger V. 1995. *Insurgent Identities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Klein, Naomi. 2001. "Protesting in the Post-WTC Age." *The Nation*, October 10. Viewed on October 15, 2001 <http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=11684>
- Lichbach, Marc. 1995. *Rebel's Dilemma*. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press.
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *The Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, John D. 1997. "The Globalization of Social Movement Theory." in Jackie Smith et al., *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State*. Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press.
- Mische, Ann. 2003. "Cross-talk in Movements: Reconceiving the Culture-Network Link," in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam. *Social Movements and Networks*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Piven, Frances Fox & Richard Cloward. 1979. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Rucht, Dieter. 2001. "Lobbying or Protest? Strategies to Influence EU Environmental Policies," in Doug Imig and Sidney Tarrow (Eds.), *Contentious Europeans: Protest and Politics in an Emerging Polity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, Ch. 6.
- Scholte, Jan Aart. 2000. *Globalization : a critical introduction*. New York : St. Martin's Press.
- Smith, Jackie. 2001. "Globalizing Resistance: The Battle of Seattle and the Future of Social Movements." *Mobilization* 6 (1):1–20.
- Sophie. 2001. "'We Are Everywhere': Peoples Global Action Meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia." <http://www.chiapasnews.ukgateway.net/news/020101.html> Viewed in September 2003.

- Soule, Sarah A. 1997. "The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest." *Social Forces* 75(3): 855–883.
- Steinberg, Marc. 1999. *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England*. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press.
- Tarrow, Sidney and Doug McAdam. 2003. "Scale Shift in Transnational Contention," Unpublished paper for the conference on "Transnational Processes and Social Movements" at the Villa Serbelloni, Bellagio Italy, July 22–26, 2003.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1994, 1998. *Power in Movement*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tarrow, Sidney and Douglas Imig. 2001. *Contentious Europeans: protest and politics in an emerging polity*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2002. "The New Transnational Contention: Organizations, Coalitions, Mechanisms." Prepared for Presentation at the Theme Panel on "Social Movements and Transnational Politics." APSA Meeting, Chicago.
- Tilly, Charles. 1997. "Parliamentarization of Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834." *Theory and Society* 26:245–273.
- Tilly, Charles. 1995. *Popular Contention in Great Britain*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Walton, John & David Seddon. 1994. *Free Markets and Food Riots*. Oxford: Blackwell.

APPENDIX A

467 protest events, 65 countries, 315 cities

May 16 1998 – May 18 1998 (43 events, 22 countries, 41 cities)

- Asia (4 countries, 5 cities)
- Australia/New Zealand (2 countries, 4 cities)
- Europe (12 countries, 21 cities)
- Latin America (2 countries, 2 cities)
- USA/Canada (2 countries, 9 cities)

June 18, 1999 (58 events, 24 countries, 54 cities)

- Africa (2 countries, 2 cities)
- Asia (3 countries, 3 cities)
- Australia/NZ (1 country, 3 cities)
- Europe – (12 countries, 27 cities)
- Latin America (4 countries, 4 cities)
- USA/Canada (2 countries, 14 cities)

November 30 1999 (111 events, 22 countries, 97 cities)

- Asia (7 countries, 20 cities)
- Australia/NZ (1 country, 2 cities)
- Europe (12 countries, 41 cities)
- USA/Canada (2 countries, 34 cities)

September 26 2000 (98 events, 33 countries, 88 cities)

- Africa (1 country, 3 cities)
- Asia (7 countries, 14 cities)
- Australia/NZ (2 countries, 2 cities)
- Europe (16 countries, 26 cities)
- Latin America and the Caribbean (5 countries, 11 cities)
- USA/Canada – (2 countries, 32 cities)

November 9 2001 (157 events, 42 countries, 152 cities)

- Africa (2 countries, 2 cities)
- Asia (11 countries, 15 cities)
- Australia/NZ (2 countries, 5 cities)
- Europe (17 countries, 95 cities)
- Latin America and Caribbean (7 countries, 10 cities)
- USA/Canada (2 countries, 25 cities)

APPENDIX B – PERCENTAGE OF EVENTS SELECTED TARGET ON ALL DAYS OF ACTION

Figure B1 – Targets on All Continents

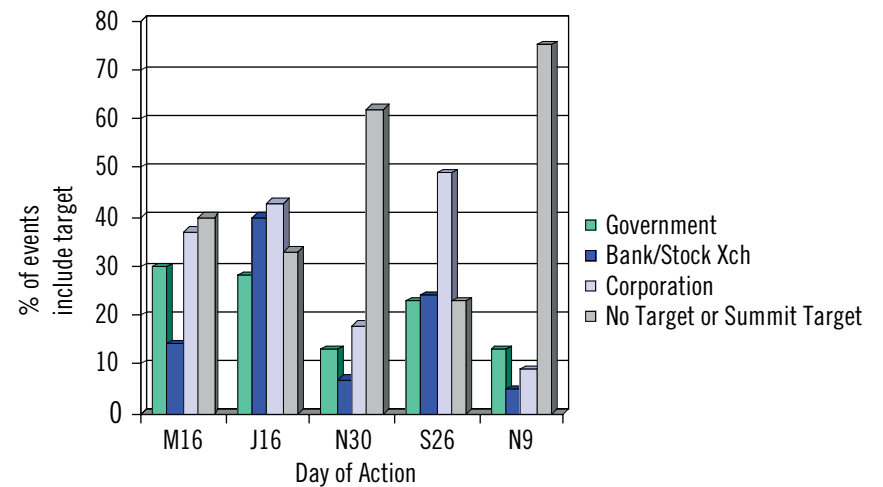


Figure B2 – Local Targets in Europe

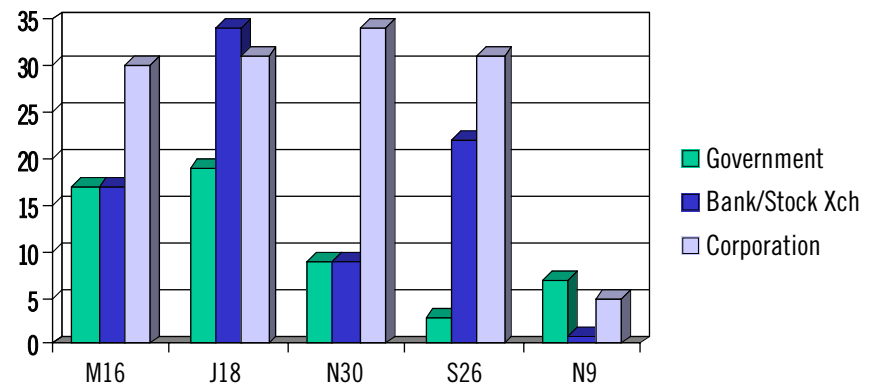


Figure B3 – Local Targets in USA & Canada

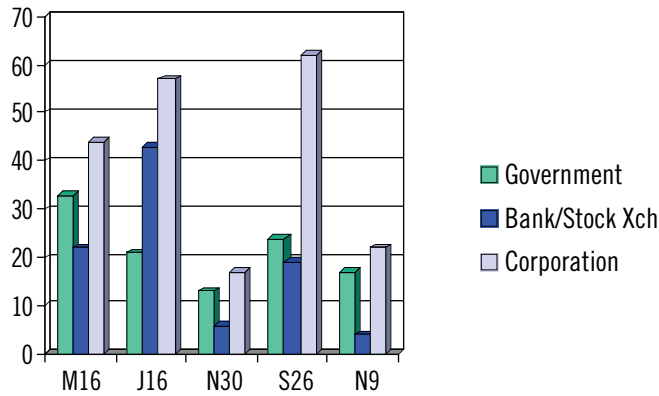


Figure B4 – Local Targets in Africa

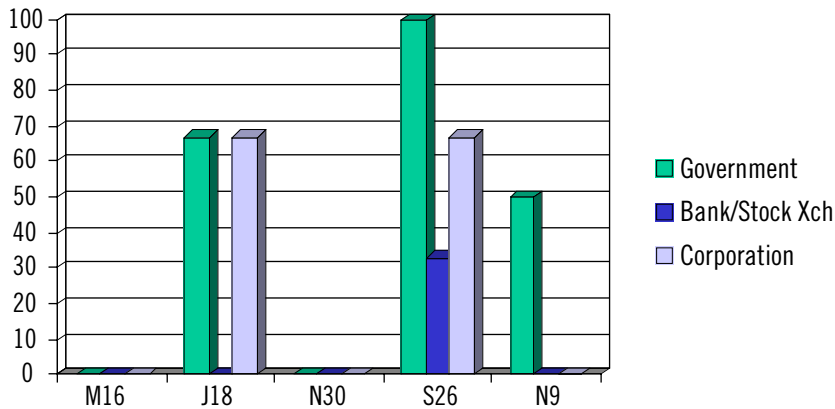


Figure B5 – Local Targets in Asia

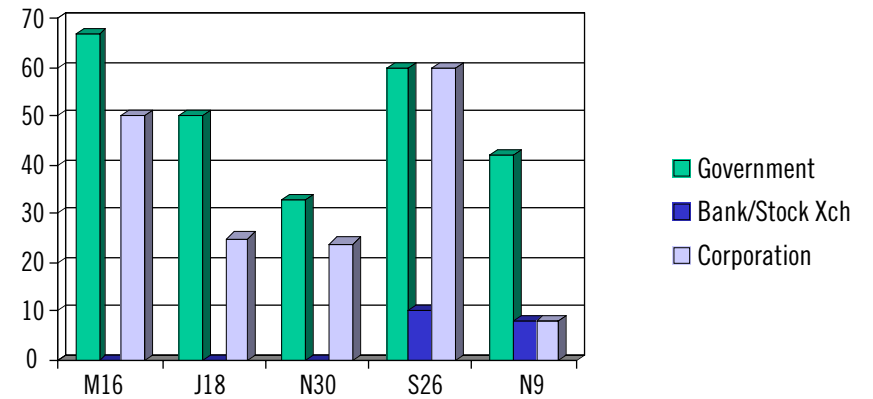


Figure B6 – Local Targets in Australia and NZ

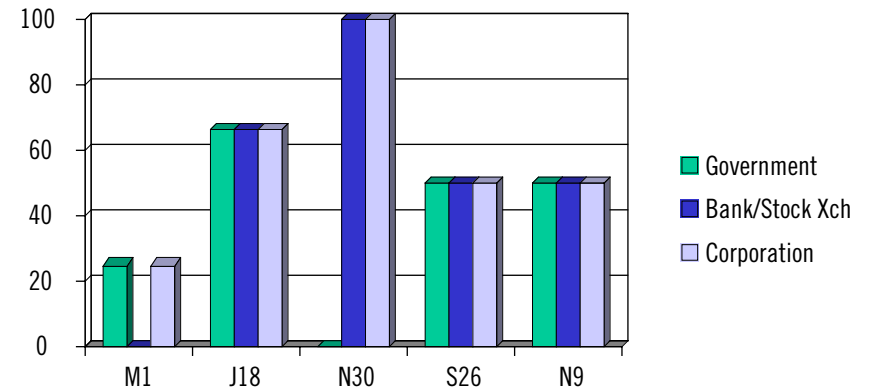


Figure B7 – Local Targets in Latin America

