

## **CBSM Thematic Session 2007 Transnational Linkages and Movement Cultures**

### **Session Description:**

Amid growing and intensifying exchange across borders, transnational connections provide local activists with potentially powerful resources to effect social change. While many scholars have explored the political opportunities and/or resources that transnational links offer local and national movements, few have asked when and how movement cultures draw upon global or 'world' cultural norms, identities, symbols, and strategies that present discursive and emotional opportunities for activism. Under what conditions do local movements engage in "upward scale shift" towards transnational mobilization, and when do they re-engage in local, regional and national organizing through "downward scale shift"?

This thematic session will explore the aspects of movement communities that facilitate or constrain activists' ability to utilize transnational cultural resources in local and national contexts, including local culture, organization, resources and ideology. In addition, this session will examine how movement communities and their cultures shape the adoption or adaptation of norms, identities, symbols and strategies to effect social change. Specifically, we ask: when and how are movement communities and cultures constrained by their connection with and use of global norms, identities, symbols and strategies? What aspects of movement communities and cultures enable activists to draw upon global discursive and emotional opportunities? How do movement cultures influence the adoption or adaptation of strategies from other contexts?

### **Discussion questions:**

Based upon submitted abstracts and papers, the session organizers sent a list of discussion questions to the listserv in order to direct and facilitate discussion. Below, each set of questions references the relevant papers for the thematic session.

#### **1. Inequalities and Participation**

How inclusive are coalitions?

How does location of an organization within a movement impact (or fail to impact) decision-making structures?

How are resources distributed?

### **Relevant papers:**

Aunio, Wood—generational inclusion

Doerr—how member organizations participate in ESF; gender; multi-culturalism

## **2. Global/National/Local Connections**

What factors lead to scale shift?

How does the local become connected to the global?

To what degree can the local impact the global?

Does the global automatically dominate?

Is there a “Western” imperative?

### **Relevant papers:**

Fallon and Aunio; Jalali; Nepstad—impact of domestic culture, frames

Fetner, Friedman—characteristics of local/national groups

Olcese—how a transnational alternative culture gets created

Trautner—role of internet

Gresh—role of transnational NGOs

## **3. Strengths and Weaknesses of Transnational Movements**

How can weaknesses be overcome (or can they be)?

How can strengths be built upon?

### **The Workshop Session:**

In the workshop session, participants introduced themselves and briefly discussed their work and interest in the session. Participants were then asked to bring up relevant questions from their submitted papers or work that related to the themes of the workshop. These questions guided the ensuing discussion; as individuals commented on each question, more questions were raised. The following is a list of the questions. They are in the order in which they were discussed. Towards the end of the session, participants attempted to touch upon overarching themes and questions from the workshop.

### **Questions:**

1. Do non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focus too much on political rights and pay too little attention to social and economic rights?
2. Is there a disjuncture between local groups and international NGOs or foundations?
3. Is the ‘international’ ‘Western’?
4. What international networks work?
5. How do international organizations (such as the UN and EU) differ from one another?

6. Are there 'pro-market' advocacy networks?
7. Do conservative and liberal groups or networks differ? How?
8. How do different networks organize? Which ones work? Which ones fail?
  - a. Campaigns—how are they organized? Which ones work? Which ones fail?
  - b. Coalitions—how do they organize? Which ones work? Which ones fail?
9. What role do the media play? Which organizations and/or networks utilize the media more effectively?
10. What role does culture play? How do transnational movements overcome cultural barriers and/or local boundaries?
11. Do some frames resonate better than others locally? Which ones?
12. How do people shift values?
13. What do different identities mean? How do people build solidarity?
14. How does the state facilitate or constrain action?
15. How does the local relate to the international?
16. How do local groups bridge issues and/or discourses?
17. When/How are international discourses useful?

**Overarching themes:**

Where does movement strategy come from? What about culture? What are their impacts?

What leads to the diffusion of ideas?

At the end of the workshop session, participants that had not yet signed up for the listserv were informed about it. With a mailing list in hand, the session organizers volunteered to email everyone with the listserv information and notes from the session. Participants agreed to repost their papers to everyone on the list and the listserv.