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**Conclusion: Social movements in the new millennium:
Framing the changing dynamics of contention**

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There are so many different dimensions to the changes that can be traced in the terrain of political contention that it is hardly surprising that each of the essays in this section defines the central challenges in different terms. Yet the common element in how they frame the question is their focus on role of national state institutions. Della Porta argues that national institutions, and thus mobilizations, are eclipsed by transnational ones, thus addressing the seat of real power, in her view. McCarthy, Rafail and Gromis see the terrain as shifting down rather than up, with national institutions being less targeted than local ones in the US, as American domestic politics have transferred power to the states and away from federal government. Mayer helpfully stresses the extent to which any of these changes are specific to context, with France particularly having a strong national level social movement tradition that is regularly evoked for mobilizations, especially by labor. McAdam and Tarrow further address this relationship between national state institutions and proclivity to mobilize by directing attention to how contending political parties within national party systems can operate variously as partners for and alternatives to social movement organizing.

These trenchant analyses indicate that a major part of what alters movement dynamics is the changes in states and what they do, as Koopmans' essay suggests. This institutional political context includes important shifts in power between states and

transnational economic actors, like the World Bank, CitiBank, and Toyota. It also includes the regional shifts of power like European integration within the EU and dis-integration of the states in the USA. They show us political institutions responding to such shifts as governments and parties compete for power in a context in which the stakes are high, the rules uncertain, and alliances in flux. Still, the general principle behind these various developments seems stable: follow the money. The flows of money and thus power are changing, all agree, reconfiguring the material terrain of opportunity.

In bringing movements in, as actors in shaping this flow of resources and institutionalization of opportunity over time, McAdam and Tarrow particularly emphasize macro-level “strategic situations” in which states and movements interact. The papers in this section show how such situations affect both sides of any struggle. Rises in corporate power combine with declines in corporate accountability make the banks and transnational corporations targets of global justice movements, as Della Porta shows, while corporate funding of parties (both Democratic and Republican) explains some of the institutional shift to the Right in US politics since the 1980s associated with the increase in surveillance and repression directed at protest mobilizations on the left, as McCarthy, Rafail and Gromis note. Indeed, even the prominence of the EU in economic development and finance probably has more to do with the strategic situations for French and other European mobilizations than Mayer’s comparison of French and US cultures of contention would suggest.

Still, political culture matters, along with more organizational institutional context. The “Frenchness” of the French includes a willingness to resist state actions that

impoverish ordinary citizens, an attitude toward the welfare state that European social movements have cultivated over generations. Conversely, US right-leaning movements from the John Birchers in the 1950s to Focus on the Family in the 1990s have cultivated an attitude of anxiety about the welfare state expressed in the American right's charges of creeping socialism and elitist "Frenchness." The perception – constructed over time by movement framers – that the EU is itself a unitary, neoliberal actor helps to mobilize national resistance movements in many contexts at various times: in Denmark in the accession process; in Ireland, in rejecting the proposed constitution; in Greece about the Euro; in Poland about gender equality directives. The focus on institutions, whether economic or political, alone as shaping the context for mobilizations leaves out the discursive frames that give meaning to politics. In this essay, I attempt to bring meaning back in.

The politics of discourse

Issue framing, along with political institutions in or outside the state, forms part of the terrain on which movement mobilizations take place. I define framing as an *interaction in which actors with agendas meet discursive opportunities as structured in institutionally authoritative texts*. The frames that resonate with particular populations pick up and adapt ideas that are part of their (still predominantly national) discursive frameworks. Movements on the Left and Right do discursive politics with the cultural tools available to them in that time and place. They are also not the only actors with agendas. As Della Porta argues, institutionalized actors have always promoted a "minimalist and procedural" conception of democracy that has been challenged by

movements pressing for a broader inclusion of issues and voices. How democracy functions in any particular context depends to a large degree on what democracy is framed as *meaning*, both in terms of the institutional arrangements that texts authorize and the disputed frames that are in play.

Unlike the other authors of this section, I suggest that the changing terrain of movements in the present century may have less to do with the scale or locus of material power as such than with the unresolved issues of democracy raised by movements in the last century. The institutionalization of procedural democracy often went hand-in-hand with the exclusion of certain kinds of issues and constituents from institutional access to politics in different ways in different countries. Universal suffrage was not part of the American Revolution, for example, but needed a Civil War, a women's suffrage movement, and an African American Civil Rights movement to include the majority of the US population. Exclusion remains an issue: some portions of US-controlled territory (Washington DC and Puerto Rico) have limited access to formal democracy and new voter ID measures threaten to exclude groups seen as threatening the status quo.

In other words, democracy itself remains a contested term. The struggle over what democracy should mean is not limited to states that have openly autocratic regimes, such as Egypt, but is becoming more overt in places such as Wisconsin and Ohio (where it particularly involves the right to collective bargaining), New Hampshire and Indiana (where disenfranchisement is at issue) no less than in Greece or Germany (where national financial commitments to the EU are seen as undemocratic). Whether or not any of these movements succeed in shifting the meaning of democracy in a more participatory direction remains to be seen, but the tension between a view of democracy as

institutional, representative and achieved and a framing of democracy as participatory, discursive and aspirational is still very much in evidence.

Redefinitions of democracy reform institutional arrangements, but they also fundamentally transform the substance of political struggles. When politics is defined as about exclusions built on race, gender, sexuality, and national identity, there are different forces brought into play than when politics is defined by reference to partisan competition or economic resistance to corporate globalization. Thus, insofar as “democracy” is defined as the power of people, the question arises, “which people”?

The terrain of contentious politics shifts when the institutional conflicts focus on different political issues, framed as relevant to different actors, and opening different windows of opportunity for collective identities to emerge. Adams and Padamsee (2001) discuss this in terms of the “signs” that regimes use to invoke various “subject positions,” speaking to people in terms of their religions, genders, racialized communities, family values or other potential identities. To illustrate, consider McAdam and Tarrow’s story of how electoral activity is intertwined with movement mobilizations. They stress the parties and movements as actors; the discursive model looks instead at systems and values.

In the case of US civil rights mobilization, for example, the nature of the electoral system was itself at issue. As the links among movements, parties, congressional debate and social policy were profoundly transformed, the “Solid South” shifted from alignment with Democratic Party to Republican Party electorally, without changing its states rights discourse, a framing about white power that resonates still. Thus Republicans could appeal to portions of the white electorate with racially coded social issue campaigns (including the ‘war on drugs’ and ‘welfare reform’) without fear of electoral

consequences from Black voters. This reframing of US politics in terms of coded racism, or what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) calls “racism without racists,” also led to changes in voting districts, electoral laws and debates about inclusion and exclusion that still shape party debates. Movements and parties are not just related to each other; both are related to a broader field of political discourse.

Similarly, one might ask if the “de-parliamentarization” of politics in Europe is driven as much by shifts in the locus of corporate power *vis à vis* the state as it is by the changing definitions of what politics is supposed to be *about*. Once the classic Left-Right alignment of political conflict in European welfare states was disrupted by “new” movement politics, space was opened for contestations that address precisely the issues on which Left and Right had agreed. As the voluminous literature on New Social Movements has shown, the issues of environmental destruction, inadequate investment in higher education, and the exclusion and devaluation of women citizens challenged the institutional political system that excluded them from being “political.”

Feminism and the changing framework of the political

The reframing of democracy to include formerly non-political issues changed the relationship between the polity and the sectors of the population that had been excluded. A good example for understanding this process is the transformation of global norms to encompass more of women's citizenship than ever before. Feminism – which I define as the revolutionary demand for women's autonomy, gender equality, and political solidarity among women (a female version of the radical claims for *liberté, égalité, fraternité*) -- has now become more or less institutionalized as a discursive framework with power to generate resonance for particular political claims (Liu 2006; Jenson 2008). Women's specific interests were reframed by feminist movements from being apolitical needs into politically charged demands. Across much of Europe, the entire existing political system – from conservative parties to leftist movements – were framed as anti-democratic *because* they offered no formal avenues for including these concerns in the institutionalized framework for debating “politics.”

Changes ensued as women became visible as citizens and voters. In Germany, for example, the politics of feminism flowed into movement organizations and new political parties such as the GREENs, but also transformed old parties, like the German Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SPD). The SPD, long beholden to the unions, dropped its longstanding objections to part-time work and longer shopping hours; the CDU, which had long seen itself as reliant on women's votes, “modernized” its family-friendly image by shifting its appeals to invoke women's rights discourses in restructuring parental leave policy and in promoting visibility of effective women in political office (Von Wahl 2006; Wiliarty 2010).

One term much bandied about in German feminist politics is “gender democracy,” meaning both the equal sharing of political power by women and men and also women’s empowerment to raise issues of gender justice for both women and men. In Lisa Brush’s terms (2003), it is a challenge to both the “gender of governance” (the composition of the decision-makers) and the “governance of gender” (social policies that subordinate women and their interests in daily life). This re-framing of gender as a matter of democracy has been happening all around the world, but in the context of quite different strategic situations in different regions. Indeed, it is the variety of outcomes seen in the struggle over gender politics that draws attention to just how pervasive the re-framing of gender as a contestable political issue has become.

Across Europe, democracy as a frame includes everything from demands that challenge the gender division of labor (more women in political office, daddy days for men to provide childcare at home) (Hobson and Fahlen 2009) to arguments for the repression or exclusion of Muslims to protect a supposed Western culture of tolerance (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2009). European welfare states offer a discourse of citizenship that is more open to state involvement in challenging the gender division of labor than would be tolerated in the US, but which also claims the emancipation of women as an accomplishment that is now endangered by religious intolerance. Going beyond these two styles of already institutionalized democracy, the claims about who and what human rights includes are themselves a global discourse of immense power for both bringing democracies into existence and setting troubling limits on what they manage to include (Markovitz and Tice 2002; Maddison and Jung 2008).

One crucial struggle lies in the claims women are still bringing for realizing their citizenship. As in the early 20th century, this includes a strategic situation in which some Central American democracies (particularly Nicaragua and El Salvador) have seen the leftist parties return to power through alliance with the Catholic Church. The policies adopted have included both more generous state investments in education, health care and nutrition but also draconian penalties for women even suspected of abortion (Heumann 2010; Viterna 2011). These states, which claim to be social democratic, protect fetuses more than women: imprisoning women who miscarry for any reason but still turning a blind eye to incest, domestic violence and rape as crimes. These left-leaning, Catholic-supported governments are not subject to the transnational scrutiny directed at Islamic-supported governments in Turkey or Indonesia, nor does their credibility as “leftist” seem impaired transnationally. So the question of whether democracy actually includes women and acts to enforce their rights as citizens is still part of the unsettled discursive terrain of politics.

Issues that revolve around women’s rights and women’s bodies are also indicators of a larger institutional terrain for movement mobilization, one that Foucault theoretically highlighted as the biopower of the state: the management of life itself, with political debates being framed as being about the regulation of birth rates, immigration, pensions, and health care. The issues of surveillance and control, which express biopower, are central to such political choices and make claims for greater freedom resonate even within formal democracies. Issues where bodies and their management are central are not as easily aligned on the classic left/right dimension, as both movements and states struggle over the parameters of privacy, security and autonomy for both women and men.

The personal domain, a “sphere” identified as political by women and with women, is now incontrovertibly so for both women and men, whether contestations are about food or sex, keeping secrets or giving care.

It is not trivial that Western states have changed their understanding of politics to now include women. For women to seek public office was itself once a radically disruptive act. Now the terrain has shifted toward defining decision-making situations as failing to meet standards of democracy when more than 60% of the power-holders are of one gender. Parties, legislatures and executives and even courts are increasingly vulnerable to a perception of illegitimacy if they fail to meet this standard, and the norm of gender equality is hard for even relatively conservative parties to openly challenge. Yet despite having won ground in this regard, feminist discourses face a discursive terrain in which “family” is treated as more valuable than individual women, not only in so-called traditional societies, but in supposedly modern ones such as the US. Indeed, US “family value activists” have been influential globally in seeding and supporting anti-abortion campaigns in Latin America, anti-homosexuality campaigns in Africa and anti-birth control campaigns in the UN (Buss and Herman 2003; Hassett 2007; Heumann 2010).

The larger strategic situation that this creates for contentious politics in the 21st century is one in which discursive framework of the Cold War has been replaced by a “clash of civilizations.” (Huntington 1992) In both conflicts, the norm of gender equality is a key part of the dichotomous discursive field on which state and movement politics were situated. The Cold War’s East claimed the achievement of women’s emancipation as its own; the West embracing religion, patriarchal family forms, and repression of

homosexuality as means to counter the threat of “godless communism” (Moeller 1993). In the post-socialist era, the hollowness of such state-socialist claims was first exposed, but then a new conflict and a new polarity with mobilization potential was discovered. In the War on Terror, western European countries congratulate themselves on achieving women’s liberation and castigate the Islamic East for being religious, patriarchal and anti-gay. The continuing inequality of women in all states in the West is obscured by pointing East and framing Islam and Middle Eastern states as the real oppressors of women, just as the continuing inequality of women in communist states was formerly obscured there by their governments’ ability to point to the political domestication of women in the West during the Cold War. Although the sides have switched, the broad discursive battle between east and west remains a key element in what political battles will be waged, what challenges movements for social justice will face, and what resources are available for repression.

Using feminist experience to reframe political terrain

A focus on the discursive context for movement mobilizations as a significant, locally variable and geo-politically shifting terrain also reconstructs the meaning of radical and reformist politics. Because feminists (as well as other challengers to state biopower such as disability activists, gay rights groups, and environmentalists) have taken their movement claims fairly quickly from the streets to the executive levels of government, the question of how movement success actually transforms societies suggests that deeply transformative – radical -- changes need not be associated with large or long-lasting demonstrations in the streets. Higher levels of resistance and blockage

may force challengers onto the streets, but global level shifts in discursive opportunity (such as the inversion of Cold War gender politics in the War on Terror) may also open the door to truly radical change at some historical moments. The diffusion of anti-authoritarian movements in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and most recently the Middle East and North Africa, also suggests that there are geopolitical flows of ideas and inspiration that shape the terrain for movement mobilizations, along with specific national conditions that shape individual developments in particular countries. Truly radical transformations may not come so much from groups that define themselves as radical and for whom an identity as radical matters as from the confluence of discursive and institutional opportunities at the transnational, national and local levels.

Reform strategies may be preferred when discursive as well as material blockages have faded; shifts in discourse may themselves open up opportunities for radicals to work through more conventional means. Feminist activists have become insiders, all over the world and in parties of various hues, and this “NGOization” of the movement shifts the reasons, repertoires and resources for feminist struggles, with outcomes that are quite diverse in how states respond (Lang 1997; Liu 2006; Maddison and Jung 2008). For example, the technocratic expertise that women’s networks have acquired becomes a tool in the competition among states to show that they are achieving gender equality (Markovitz and Tice 2002). Gender equality is increasingly being measured statistically within and across domains of state competences, having become part of global policy norms in everything from the Millennium Development Goals of the UN to the parental leave and part-time parity measures of the EU.

State pledges to embrace gender mainstreaming as a tool and gender equality as an objective may well be hollow without external activists mobilized to hold them accountable (Woodward 2004), but the fact that states are defined as accountable to the norms of gender equality is an achievement shifting fundamental political balance of power. Women are empowered as citizens and political activists of all sorts when states draw international legitimacy from the now-acknowledged norm of gender equality, and feminist movements have become creative in finding ways to use transnational public opinion to hold national governments accountable.

But this TAN-type mobilization mixes movement and state resources into different types of tools, usable at multiple scales. The impoverished illegal immigrant women who spoke up about domestic violence discursively acted to mobilize women's groups who redefined sexual violence as grounds for asylum in Canada, and their experiences then turned them into activists who transformed the international regulations of asylum and definitions of human rights (Alfredson 2008). The porousness of states to transnational discourses is matched by activists' abilities to use the resources of the national state to shift transnational norms, procedures and legal regulations. Kathrin Zippel (2004) points to what she calls the ping-pong effect in Europe between the Member States and EU as activists turn back and forth to spur action where it is lagging.

In sum, the changing dynamics of contention are not well conceptualized only as a shift in institutional opportunity structures – whether in state-society relationships such as states downloading, offloading or laterally shifting power to others, or within states by centralization of authority in the executive, or in the growing power of corporate interests at national or transnational scales. The dynamics of contention are discursive as well as

institutional, and movements themselves matter in changing the discourse by opening up the demand for democratic inclusion to formerly disempowered groups and, relatedly, by engaging in contentious struggles over concerns that have been formerly defined as private and apolitical.

Movements, however, are not the only sources of change in the discursive terrain, since global conflicts and state interests in securing their legitimacy also lead states to embrace and reject different norms and values. The rapid reversal of polarity on gender, sexuality, family and religion between West and East is an indication of how the strategic situation facing movements may be discursively reshaped by forces well beyond their individual control. Moreover, however much globalization and its related dynamics have shifted institutional power relations, there are elements of transformation that are also quite nationally and regionally specific. EU gender politics is not moving on the same track as US gender politics, and even within Europe feminist mobilizations have not moved at the same speed or even at times in the same direction.

Although I have used feminist struggles over defining democracy to include women's active citizenship as my illustration of how the frameworks of discourse are both significant elements of opportunity and also malleable objects of political struggle, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only such case where discourse matters. Moreover, the successes of feminist movements should not be seen as just winning space for women in the polity. Such challenges have also changed the dynamics of contention and the terrain of opportunity facing all movements. Without becoming movement-centric and placing all responsibility for creating social change on the movements' own actions, analysts need to assess how the norms, participants and political projects that have

entered into the understanding of democracy since the 1970s are continuing to influence the discursive terrain on which the struggles among states, movements and transnational actors will be fought in the decades ahead.