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Jewellord Nem Singh

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## **Abstract**

Transnational activism related to social justice claims is a watershed research area in social movements research. In particular, trade protests have a transnational dimension that was marked by the collapse of the Ministerial Meeting at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to push for further liberalisation. Between 2001 and 2007, several protests targeted international institutions representing neoliberalism. Disruptive and sporadic in nature, global protests aimed to derail the deepening of the neoliberal development model using the free trade debate as a core policy arena. This article maps out a framework to analyse social mobilisation led by civil society actors at the regional level where it emphasises collective identity-building as a central tenet to successfully change the politics of trade policy making. In this paper, I examine the insufficiency of political opportunity structures as an explanation to regional level activism. Whilst the existence of regional institutions as targets and democratisation as a window of opportunity to mobilise are relevant explanations, transnational activism requires more identity construction to forge transnational solidarity. The paper shows this using the cases of the anti-free trade network in Southeast Asia and the anti-FTAA movement in Latin America, particularly the Hemispheric Social Alliance. Whilst Southeast Asian activists frame anti-free trade positions in a less radical fashion, the HSA used trade protests as a springboard for further mobilisation against the broader neoliberal agenda. And although framing processes in activist coalitions have some similarities, especially at the level of global movement, more differences can be found with regard to strategies due to the contrast in contexts of activism, which overall reflect collective identity formations in regions. Finally, 'cycles of protests' in Latin America and Southeast Asia demonstrate how previous protests against trade liberalisation in Latin America bring about more protests compared to Southeast Asia, wherein only anti-FTA campaigns have emerged and where other forms of neoliberal resistance have yet to be linked to the FTA campaigns.

## **Keywords**

Transnational social mobilisation; collective identity building; trade protests

## Introduction

The burgeoning mobilisation around free trade issues came at a historic moment when the Ministerial Meeting at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) pushed for further liberalisation through the Doha Development Agenda collapsed. Between 2001 and 2007, several protests targeted international institutions representing neoliberalism. Disruptive and sporadic in nature, global protests aimed to derail the deepening of the neoliberal development model using the free trade debate as a core policy arena. The changed political context of Latin America<sup>1</sup> and Southeast Asia after the Cold War has offered new opportunities and challenges of activism. Fundamentally, the Washington Consensus as implemented in Latin America called for free market policies guaranteed by formal democratic institutions. Whilst some forms of activism proliferated, such as elite advocacy movements carrying rights-based rather than economic grievances, popular movements seeking for trade justice became important to break the neoliberal consensus in the region (Grugel 2008). When compared to Southeast Asia, both the transnational and domestic networks of activists make knowledge claims and produce discourses challenging technocratic expertise and neoliberal globalisation through research-based, policy-oriented coalitions. The anti-water privatisation, land reform and peasant movements, and anti-WTO and anti-FTA campaigns are excellent examples of social mobilisation which may be less extensive than those in Latin America but definitely more intensive in terms of knowledge production capacity (Caouette 2006; Dionisio 2006; Manahan et al. 2007). The overall picture is that regional level activism is a newfound constructed space for contesting neoliberal globalisation but the extent to which a cohesive movement with regional identity exists is yet to be developed.

The paper problematises contemporary approaches to social mobilisation by focusing on the dynamics of regional level activism. By regional level activism I refer to political contestation of trade issues targeting regional institutions, and collective action geared towards re-shaping the regional environment, shifting the course of domestic politics towards more independent from free trade, and re-framing free trade as a “regional problem” rather than just domestic trade policy. The first section analyses the political opportunities towards mobilisation by looking at regionalism and democratisation projects in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Because regions adapt democratic reforms in varying ways, the only effect of democratisation is to turn mobilisation inwards rather than outwards, that is, increase mobilisation opportunities within national borders rather than enhance opportunities to mobilise at the regional level. This is followed by a discussion of collective identity-building processes among social movements. Drawing on both New Social Movements (NSM) and North American social literature about movements, I explore collective identity formation to understand why social movement participants accept the costs of transnational activism instead of pouring material and ideological resources into domestic campaigns. Consistent with the argument set forth by proponents of framing perspectives (Benford 1997; Benford & Snow 1988; 2000), NSM scholars speak of collective identity building as “(a) the formulation of cognitive frameworks

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, Latin America refers to countries from Mexico to the countries of Central and South America since the FTAA attempted to create a hemispheric-wide free trade area. However, I must admit that the resistance movement is stronger in South America and Mexico, with a few countries like Honduras and Costa Rica having strong anti-neoliberal civil society movements. As such, it may be misleading to treat the whole region as if there was a homogenous movement occurring simultaneously and with equal strength in the three regions. This holds true in Southeast Asia, where only in certain countries can we find anti-FTA and anti-WTO movements. Although the East Asian Miracle occurred first in East Asia – Japan, Korea and Taiwan – and then moved to Southeast Asia, the paper limits the discussion to Southeast Asia. However, a strong internationally linked peasant movement is already emerging in Korea. In fact, these were the visible groups in the Hong Kong protests in the 2005 anti-WTO protests (HKPA 2006; Jeon 2006).

concerning the goals, means, and environment of action; (b) the activation of relationships among the actors who communicate, negotiate and make decisions; and (c) the process of making emotional investments enabling them to recognise each other” (Melucci 1989). To illustrate this, I use primary and secondary sources on the anti-WTO/FTA network in Asia and anti-FTAA movement in Latin America. An important point here is that identity construction requires more rational calculation from NGOs and social movements when they join campaigns and decide to take the claims of other participants as integral to their own organisational/sectoral identity. Finally, the paper draws some conclusions regarding the cycles of protests. In many cases, the success of a campaign means the demise of the movement: a return to politics as usual, where representative institutions once again become channels of grievances instead of protests or strikes. However, in other cases such as the anti-free trade movements, they embrace broader social change objectives and transform into either an extended campaign or a new movement.

### **Transnational Anti-Free Trade Movements in Latin America and Southeast Asia: An Overview**

The decade of the nineties was characterised by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the internationalisation of neoliberal reform policies, and the shift from ‘hard’ to ‘soft’ security issues in the international agenda, all of which marked the triumph of neoliberalism and liberal democracy. The core elements of the Washington Consensus involve macroeconomic management geared towards fiscal discipline, privatisation of public services, and financial deregulation. This was intensified by the global expansion of the neoliberal project, especially after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis when developmental states like South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia swallowed the bitter pill of IMF-led reforms.<sup>2</sup> As argued by the reformers, the financial crisis was a crisis of the state and of its excessive interference on the market.

After less than a decade of untrammelled free trade, the consensus was broken as indicated by the social protests in capital cities. Shortly after the Battle for Seattle, disruptive protests turned into coordinated protest actions aimed at halting any consensus in elite meetings. The transnational network of activists have been supporting social movement campaigns of both organised campaigns and NGO advocacies on broader social justice claims, which has evolved eventually into ‘open spaces’ through social forums at the global, regional, and local levels.<sup>3</sup> And while the transnationalisation of economic grievances served as a source of collective identity, global discontentment was brought back to domestic capitals. In the Global South, specific struggles against neoliberalism were continuously

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2 There is considerable debate about the role of the State in development. Neoliberal and neo-classical thinkers would claim that East Asia stands as an exemplary case of export-oriented industrialisation (EOI) strategy as opposed to the import substitution industrialisation (ISI), as a way to achieve growth (World Bank 1993). On the other hand, statist and revisionists argue that the State and its relationship with capital, rather than policy choices, are more critical in the Asian Miracle (Amsden 1989; Kohli 2004; Wade 1990). Although the international institutions recognised the role of the State, they remained committed to the free market ideology and this was intensified when the developmental State model came under attack after the 1997 Financial Crisis.

3 These include the World Social Forum (WSF), the European Social Forum (ESF), the African Social Forum (ASF), the Southern African Social Forum (SASF), and some (in)formal networking processes in Asia. See Caouette 2006, della Porta 2006, and Larmer 2007 for critical discussions of these networks and social movements. In addition, social movements in Latin America have been more interested in transnationalising local resistance through coalition work, as in the case of the anti-CAFTA movement in El Salvador (Spalding 2007) and *Zapatistas* in Mexico (Briceño Ruiz 2007; Muñoz 2006).

being fought, such as collective action against free trade or the privatisation of water resources in communities (e.g. Foster 2005; Manahan et al. 2007).

Unlike most transnational advocacy networks,<sup>4</sup> where domestic mobilisation came first before the transnationalisation of collective action, anti-free trade movements emerged initially through the work of global/international networks of researchers/activists following closely the development of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). There were no immediate constituencies mobilising against free trade agreements (FTAs), a central feature of the neoliberal project under the Washington Consensus. Only when the World Trade Organisation (WTO) became a formal international institution, did clear resistance against free trade emerge. Since its overall mandate was to push for trade liberalisation in all sectors of the economy, Malaluan-Chavez (2006) assert that the international movement saw the necessity to create a strong social base against an increasingly powerful but unaccountable institution.<sup>5</sup> In the anti-WTO movement, the activists' networks put tremendous effort on capacity building and research, because trade policy is seen as a highly technical issue requiring expertise from economists and trade analysts. Before the constituency could be mobilised through visible symbols of resistance like protests and strikes, movement intellectuals needed to create the basis of resistance through knowledge production of counter discourses. Although there were sparks of resistance in various domestic capitals, such as those held during 1994 when the WTO was established, there was neither a cohesive anti-capitalist agenda at the international level nor anti-free trade campaigns at the domestic level.

In 1998, the diverse network of organisations which successfully mobilised against the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) formed a loose grouping of organisations, activists and social movements with the overall aim of "fighting the current model of corporate globalisation embodied in the global trading system [...] committed to a sustainable, socially just, democratic and accountable multilateral trading system," which today is popularly known as Our World is Not for Sale (OWINFS). Whilst it recognises the important role of national campaigns in stopping unfettered trade liberalisation by applying pressures at national levels, OWINFS is a realisation of the need for a global network that coordinates all these efforts to increase available resources, explore new and effective strategies of collective action, and expand the social base of resistance against neoliberal policies. OWINFS members are all part of national and regional campaigns against unfair trade agreements, including the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the *Plan Puebla Panamá* (PPP).

The movement against trade liberalisation in Latin America revolves around the regional campaign to reject the FTAA, a hemispheric-level FTA created in the 1994 Summit of the Americas (SOA) to institutionalise neoliberalism that was supposed to promote "free trade from the Arctic to Tierra del Fuego".

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4 Distinctions are made among transnational advocacy networks, transnational coalitions, and transnational social movements. Transnational advocacy networks are the least formally structured networks, where actors are linked across borders and share common values and discourses. Transnational coalitions have denser social networks with institutionalised mechanisms of coordination and may share common strategies and tactics in achieving their clearly defined goals. They are social movement organisations with collaborative, means-oriented arrangements permitting pooling of resources and crafting of rules in defining goals and membership. Transnational social movements are the most developed, since they follow clearly defined rules, share tactics and strategies, and form a collective identity (Levi & Murphy 2006: 654-656; Khagram et al. 2002, quoted in David 2007: 368).

5 Such social base becomes the foundation upon which networks transform into movements with clear goals, strategies, and targets. For such transformations to occur, participants need to believe in the movement: they must make emotional and material investments—a process best explained by framing and collective identity building.



Grugel (2008) rightly points out that regional level activism is directed towards formalised regional institutions, which indicates the need for a clear target for social mobilisation. Whilst rights-based activism persists in the inter-American system and Mercosur,<sup>6</sup> the FTAA generated resistance from radical civil society organisations and social movements, particularly the *Alianza Social Continental* or Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA). Founded in 1997 to mobilise against NAFTA and all forms of neoliberalism, HSA popularised its campaign as *regionalism with a social agenda*, critical of the formal processes associated with the US-led economic integration project or the reformist strategies of the 'insider' civil society groups engaging with the project.<sup>7</sup> Adding to the dynamics was the proactive role of the state, in which left-wing, democratically-elected governments advocated populist claims to forge solidarity against the 'annexation of Latin America by the US' (Prevost 2005: 370). These include Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and other Mercosur countries. Unlike other transnational advocacies in the developing world, Latin American popular movements had more developed mechanisms and capacity for mobilisation, which serves as social capital for further mobilisation on a variety of issues. HSA itself evolved from being a platform for anti-free trade grievances towards an institutional resource to criticise broader policies of liberal democracy model. Through its extensive cross-border networks, HSA managed to embrace new popular forms of mobilisation, particularly the indigenous peoples rights movements from mid-2000 onwards. Transnational collective action of indigenous peoples in the Amazon had regional organisations working with IGOs, INGOs, and donor agencies to increase pressure for national governments to make formal democratic institutions more "inclusive" (Martin 2003: 120). In Yashar's terms (2005), indigenous mobilisation is creating a post-liberal democratic regime in which resistance is constructed not only on the basis of social class but also based on race, gender, and other categories of marginalisation—a process similar to the 'open spaces' advocated in WSF.<sup>8</sup>

Although anti-free trade protests served as the catalyst to break the fragile consensus around neoliberal governance, the state is central in transforming grievances into concrete political resources in the international arena. The election of left-wing governments, the *Guerra del Agua* and *Guerra del Gas* in Bolivia, and the nationalisation of natural resources in some Latin America countries are systematic responses to the failure of the neoliberal project (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2007). Furthermore, discourses on democracy were changing because of the failure of technocratic, representative form of democracy to deliver social development. However, neoliberal reforms are deeply embedded in mainstream

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6 Mercosur, or *Mercado Común del Sur*, is a regional free trade arrangement that attempts to promote trade liberalisation with a social development component. The key point as regards Mercosur is that it is a state-led regionalism project with limited institutional openings for civil society participation. See Grugel 2008, 2005 for an evaluation of its social inclusion policies.

7 Civil society movements in Latin America with respect to FTAA were divided either as 'insiders' who engage with government negotiators and donor agencies towards a reform agenda (working within the trade agenda) or 'outsiders' who reject outright the government positions on neoliberal policies. The term 'anti-FTAA movement' suits more generally the latter since they have rejected FTAA as a regional agenda. For an in-depth discussion of this split within civil society mobilisation against FTAA, see Korzeniewicz & Smith 2001.

8 This explains the influential participation of Latin American social movement organisations in transnational mobilisation, whether we speak of the WSF, peasant, indigenous or women's rights movements, and even in reshaping the global trade agenda. Indeed, this argues for the need to have formal democratic institutions that allow citizens to take advantage of their enshrined rights to extend them to more substantive inclusive claims of social and economic justice.

discourses, thereby, making protests unsuccessful in radically changing the economic programmes of governments, except in Venezuela and Bolivia. The Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and India have had the liveliest social movements and the most active civil society sphere in Asia (Artner 2004). The pendulum swing from authoritarianism to formal democracy in Southeast Asia since the post-war years has likewise produced social mobilisation, particularly in Thailand and Indonesia. The network of anti-free trade activists emerged around early 2004 in preparation for the 6<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong. With their victory in derailing the Doha Round in Cancún, Southeast Asian activists, primarily Filipinos, Thais and South Koreans joined together in a strategy meeting to mobilise in the 2005 WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong. In particular, regional and national NGOs and social movements sought to empower local trade unions and grassroots organisations,<sup>9</sup> which eventually brought about the “Down Down WTO” campaign through the Hong Kong People’s Alliance on Globalization (HKPA). As early as July 2004, local NGOs and social movements in Hong Kong were mobilising the public, networking with many Southeast Asian and international activists, and coordinating protest days of action for maximum impact on targeted groups. In the process of building an Asian front in the global trade campaign, Southeast Asian NGOs and social movements used several forums at the global and regional level to come up with common views on issues and connect their disparate struggles into the broader global justice campaign.<sup>10</sup> There are two major features that describe the network. First, it has no organisational structure to facilitate decision-making but rather an informal, dense network of activists all over the region coming together in summits, forums, and protest actions to visibly engage pro-globalisation forces. It can qualify as a ‘network of networks’ since the people involved in regional work represent national coalitions, multisectoral organisations, and confederations. Further, these activists focus on certain countries which have already worked together in previous national campaigns. Therefore, the regional network is a by-product of social networks and previous campaign experiences.

Second, the Southeast Asian network serves as an ‘open space’ where NGOs and social movements can share information, experience, and political views that would lead to greater understanding of the consequences of neoliberalism and the free market development model in Asian societies. It lies in between being as fluid as the global movement and as context specific as domestic movements. Activists recognise the importance of not rejecting the free market principle as a way forward to development; rather, they admit the developmentalist role of the state is fundamental in the emergence of Asia as a dynamic region. In a less radical fashion, resistance against neoliberalism focuses on the detrimental effects of unregulated globalisation, as exemplified in the 1997 Financial Crisis, as well as the consequences of simultaneous liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation. Although many NGOs, particularly from the Philippines, would carry the radical anti-globalisation/anti-capitalist frame, they are more nuanced in their positions and are being forced to accept the export-oriented strategy as fundamental to

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9 These include Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), Neighbourhood and Workers Service Centre, Grassroots Development Centre and Sham Shui Po Community Association, which all form the Global Network Hong Kong. In their effort to expand their constituency in the 2005 anti-WTO campaign, they initiated various forums and educational campaigns looking at the impacts of privatisation, neoliberalism, and globalisation on the working class and the grassroots organisations (HKPA 2006: 9).

10 These events include closed door strategy meetings, conferences, and protest actions in international summits. For instance, the Asian Social Movement Assembly, Asian Social Forum, and APEC-related meetings are the major events that bring together national and region-based NGOs and social movements (Malig 2006).

the East Asian Miracle. Therefore, they reject market fundamentalism but not entirely the principle of free trade (Nem Singh 2008).

In Southeast Asia, the domestic arena remains as the most important battleground for political contestation of trade issues. The SNR Coalition of the Philippines and the Thai FTA Watch are some of the important sources of regional mobilisation as they represent the core network of social activism against neoliberalism. These are national social movements which took part in various campaigns related to trade liberalisation. In the Philippines, SNR launched the 2003 and 2005 anti-WTO campaign to pressure the government to reject the trade deal being negotiated in the ministerial meeting. In the post-Hong Kong period, most activists concluded that resistance against neoliberal policies should shift to domestic capitals, especially in that there are no big protest events in WTO or World Bank. There is recognition that the energy of movements must be channelled to where they will have maximum impact, i.e. the state, since they ultimately make the decisions in international institutions (Chavez-Malaluan 2006; Malig 2006). As such, we find domestic campaigns being energised, especially after the WTO protests. In Asia, the target against regional and bilateral FTAs is not regional institutions but governments that negotiate in international forums.

The big difference, compared to the Latin American anti-FTAA Movement, is that this network remains premature as regards transforming itself into a coherent movement. It does not have the traits of a coherent campaign- target institutions, clearly laid down intra-coalition rules, and advocacy goals and alternatives. Whilst the Southeast Asian network remains embryonic, as it only serves to promote information dissemination and solidarity building efforts, the FTAA serves as a critical ground for shared resistance among activists through a defined organisational culture, mechanisms of decision-making, and regulatory political agendas. Since FTAA and SOA are explicitly US-led regional projects, the critiques of neo-colonialism, imperial extension, and/or the absence of a social policy component were the major frames used to launch an anti-FTAA campaign.

### **Political Opportunities for Mobilisation in Southeast Asia and Latin America**

In the domestic social movement literature, research focuses on the effects of structural conditions<sup>11</sup> on protest cycles and social change. Whilst there are objective material conditions that can possibly condition grievances, there is no objective precondition for social mobilisation but only awareness, perceptions and expectations of such conditions (Saguier 2004: 6-8). To explain regional level activism, the key argument is to examine the extent to which regionalism is perceived and used as a resource for activism. Regionalism likewise produces varying opportunities and constraints to social mobilisation depending on the type of advocacy, the power relations around the issue, and existence of alliances to put pressure on the state (Grugel 2008).

### **Regionalisation as Political Spaces in Latin America and Southeast Asia**

Regionalisation is increasingly seen as a contested political process among state and non-state actors towards an institutional arrangement that favours a particular mode of governance. Traditionally, scholars distinguish between 'old regionalism', referred to as a project justifying protectionism and the closed economy in the 1950s and 1960s, and 'new regionalism', referred to as the "creation of frames

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11 Political opportunities can be conceptualised in terms of access of social movements to formal political systems, the possibility of political alignments within government actors, and divisions among the ruling elites, all of which are mediated by the capacity and political will of the State to use repression and control over participants of the movements (Tarrow 1999: 71-89 quoted in Saguier 2004: 6).

for trade and investment at the regional level... [and is] compatible with the trend towards multilateralism", i.e., neoliberal in nature (Grugel 2004: 2; Warleigh-Lack 2006: 753).<sup>12</sup> Although this division is more superficial than was earlier thought to be (Breslin et al. 2002; Warleigh-Lack 2006), it represents elite-negotiated political projects, in which the state remains central in making regional and domestic governance structures compatible—normally called 'regionalism from above' (Grugel 2004; Korzeniewicz & Smith 2005). In contrast, most regional arrangements in developing countries generate resistance from civil society and social movements as a way to re-shape the institutionalisation of the neoliberal agenda. 'Regionalism from below' is the approach to challenge this process that locks in countries to commit to a streak of liberalisation policies. Hence, regional norms are sustained constructions of shared values, ideas and practices among different actors who compete in political spaces to maintain or change the mode of governance in place.

Regionalisation is often associated with state-led agreements that serve as safety nets against the negative consequences of multilateral liberalisation, where the construction of regional blocs become attempts to provide markets and more equal trade relations amongst member countries. Because of the inherent inequality and fierce competition in the multilateral global trading system, trade liberalisation with protective regional arrangements has become the response. In Latin America, there is no single and dominant mode of regional governance. The FTAA and SOA are US/Canadian government initiatives to extend NAFTA to include the Americas. Using the discourse of democracy, elites have co-opted civil society organisations through formal processes, thereby creating the division between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the new regionalism project. On the other hand, the HSA serve both as a regional forum to critically shape domestic economic policies and a coordinating regional actor with a secretariat to mobilise activists around trade issues. Whilst HSA utilised discourses of democracy, transparency and accountability in regional trade agreements, both insiders and outsiders aimed to influence regional and national trade agenda using a variety of strategies. From the HSA viewpoint, the crisis of democracy in Latin America must be responded by the creative imagination of an alternative development paradigm that strengthens democratic principles, promotes a social agenda in a neoliberal regional order, and constructs an anti-imperialist political project (Briceño Ruiz 2007; HSA 1999). And while Mercosur serves as a platform of regionalism with social development agenda, its decision-making structure and institutional weakness to implement its agreements make it a weak source of either political or economic integration (Grugel 2008).

In comparison to Southeast Asia, the mode of regional governance remains in the hands of elites who advocate regional norms and practices that constrain civil society participation. Through the regional organisation called Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) created in 8 August 1967, the ASEAN way—non-interference, consensus building, and informal decision making—has been used by political leaders to justify limited political liberalisation in exchange of sustained, rapid and successful industrialisation. In particular, the non-interference principle (NIP) in place until today prevents outright critique of other member states to state repression and other authoritarian practices in the region. Democratic norms at the regional level will most likely be institutionalised only if substantive domestic political reforms are implemented—a process that cannot be influenced by external pressures. This is manifested by the Asian Values debate in which cultural explanations of *Asianness* are used to justify exceptional growth and limited democratic institutions in place. Civil society movements find it more difficult to influence regional governance when compared to Latin America, which means a closed political opportunity for transnational mobilisation. Transnational advo-

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<sup>12</sup> For an excellent review of the debate between 'old' and 'new' regionalism, see Fawcett & Hurrell 1995, Söderbaum & Shaw 2003, and Warleigh-Lack 2006.

cacy networks remain at the level of information exchange and currently attempt to understand the domestic experiences of other movements in the region. As such, new strategies include inter-regional dialogues to seek support from other networks in other regions to build campaigns around issues of democracy and anti-neoliberalism. A clear example is the strong linkage between the peasant movements *La Vía Campesina* and Southeast Asian NGOs. In conclusion, the regions have distinct experiences in taking advantage of regionalisation as an opportunity for transnational mobilisation. Such historically contextualised processes can shape the political trajectory of civil society movements and consequently the creation of an alternative regional project.

### **From Transnational to Domestic Institutional Structures**

The paper claims that democratisation alters the direction of regional level activism by turning protests inwards more than outwards, that is, increase mobilisation opportunities within national borders rather than enhance opportunities to mobilise at the regional level. Domestic institutions are conventional targets of protests, democratisation can open new spaces for political contestations through formal channels of lobbying and informal relationships between the state and social movements. Since the breakdown of authoritarian regimes in the 1980s, the greater access to political power and resources gave new movements the ability to frame citizenship, identity, and cultural claims as resistance to neoliberalism. Access includes direct links between political parties and social movements, independent political and legal institutions outside executive control, or presence of international/regional pressures for democratic reforms (Khagram 2004; Smith 2004; Khagram et. al. 2002). However, state agents are more receptive to some forms of advocacy than others depending on the level of sensitivity to state agencies of the advocacy issue. For instance, social protests around trade issues represent a more radical critique of economic governance and receive less support from state officials as compared to mobilisation around deepening of liberal democratic norms, such as social rights, or of good governance, such as corruption watch movements.

Trade protests benefit less from the institutional openings brought by democratisation because protesters face fierce opposition from key ministries on economic planning. The political opportunities are confined to limited negotiations and consultations if not outright protests in the streets. However, democratisation gave more resources for rights-based activism such as campaigns on social exclusion, indigenous peoples' cultural claims, and other reforms. The current mobilisation of indigenous peoples is a key example of how cultural claims are used as expressions of opposition to military regimes, exploitation of the capitalist class, and social inequality (Martin 2003; Yashar 1998). When protest actions succeed in increasing the mobilisation capacity of popular movements, activists reaffirm the need for civil rights and political liberties to be guaranteed by the state. Social protests likewise flourish in more democratic societies but democratisation on its own does not generate new forms of protest. Instead, we should recognise that protests can be led by the vulnerable, excluded sector who seeks to expand mechanisms of democratic institutions in favour of marginalised groups or the middle class who seek to protect itself only in times of crisis. Overall, the discontentment over the superficiality of democracy in Latin America, as exemplified in practices of social exclusion, impoverished citizenship, patrimonialism, corruption, and persistence of violence, are the major reasons for civil society organisations to assert citizenship rights and further institutionalise democracy building (Grugel 2007, 2005).

In Southeast Asia, formal democratic institutions must exist because there is a tradition of strong state control over civil society in most Asian societies. The rise of the Asian tigers between the 1960s and 1980s demonstrate the important managerial role of the state in industrialisation but also the need for authoritarian

regimes to keep labour costs low in key industrial sectors. More importantly, there was outright repression of labour movements in Korea, Taiwan and Philippines during periods of dictatorships. The tradeoff between political liberalisation and economic development is implemented through the Internal Security Act in Malaysia and the control of the mass media in Singapore. As such, the key spaces of activism are concentrated in the Philippines, Thailand, and, increasingly, Indonesia, where domestic and regional resistance against neoliberalism are flourishing, with most regional organisations based in Manila, Bangkok, or Hong Kong. Because there have been limited moves to substantively deepen democratic reforms, democratic norms are highly contested and the guarantee of freedoms of expressions remains subjected to state discretion.

Therefore, the extent to which democratisation shapes political protests remains to be further investigated. Rather than seeing democratic norms as an objective precondition for social mobilisation, democratisation is a process in itself that shifts protest politics inwards rather than outwards. While I do not suggest that democratic norms need not be present at the regional level for transnational activism to occur, the possibility of acquiring more allies and political resources that will increase mobilisation capacity is higher in a democratic setting. Democratisation is historically contingent that offers a variety of opportunities and constraints to different social movements depending on their claims. In countries with histories of states asserting monopoly over economic governance, repression, rejection or utter disregard of civil society is not an unlikely response. The anti-free trade campaigns in the Philippines mobilised using the political opportunities offered within a liberal democratic institutional framework by arguing for government accountability in international negotiation arenas and transparency in public policy making. This was not the case in Malaysia where FTA Malaysia seemed to focus on economic restructuring as negatively affecting Southeast Asian economies.<sup>13</sup> The varying experiences of democratisation affect the possibilities for social movements to frame their campaigns to what may seem most effective given the political environment.

Whilst democratisation facilitates conditions for domestic social mobilisation, the absence of opportunities in non-democratic regimes leads transnational activists to focus on 'soft power' to influence policies (Sikkink 2002). In Southeast Asia, activists have focused on knowledge production countering neoliberal discourses in addition to grassroots mobilisation. In the Philippine case, SNR has campaigners specialising on particular trade issues, like investment, non-agricultural market access, and agriculture who claim to be as competent as technocrats. These campaigners participate in international conferences and workshops to sharpen their analysis of WTO developments. Some of these organisations include FOCUS, ARENA, and the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN). These organisations indicate that transnational activist networks are ever increasing in the region and, consequently, in the world. As Caouette (2005: 22) argues, these professional networks and organisations are some of the most established and knowledgeable ones within the global activist networks. Additionally, they are considered to be experts in translating technical issues into less complex, easy-to-understood language for ordinary citizens. In Latin America, grassroots mobilisation is being linked by professional NGOs to transnational groups working in the same area. For instance, transnational NGOs helped

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13 Note that there is variation in domestic campaigns in Southeast Asia. Whilst the Philippine campaign is a domestic anti-WTO resistance and Thailand is a domestic anti-FTA resistance, Malaysia, through the Third World Network (TWN) and other organisations works domestically but focuses its work on research and policy analysis, on globalisation and economic restructuring at the global and Asian economies.

pressure the Ecuadorian government to open a ministry for indigenous affairs and mobilised in Parliament to protect their cultural rights (Martin 2003).

### **Framing Processes and Collective Identity Building in Transnational Social Movements**

The question of collective identity is quintessential in any study of social movements. The transnationalisation of solidarity requires the bridging of differences whether they are of political, cultural, or economic nature. In the neoliberal era, social movements must be reflective of these differences and use their diversity as a tool for resistance against a neoliberal project that pervades various aspects of human life. Collective identity is a product of ongoing processes of negotiation among social actors to view the world in a particular way and forge solidarity, with the aim of building resistance against a global development project laden with racism, inequality, gender discrimination, and profit-orientedness (della Porta 2006; Hardt & Negri 2004). This broad *framing*<sup>14</sup> of neoliberalism as an ideological apparatus—a way of thinking that permeates into various aspects of human and associational life—is fundamental in forging common grounds for resistance despite differences. Collective action is sustained if movement participants have *raison d'état* to support the cause particularly in a globalised context. Melucci (1989) argues that solidarity is forged when participants negotiate their positions as regards to their self-definition of 'we', the targets, and their strategies. In addition, movements must articulate themselves in reference to their past and present mobilisation experiences as well as continue the articulation of their multiple identities in a transnational context (Dufour & Giraud 2007).

I draw a parallelism in the discussion of collective identity using the framing perspective. In order for members to accept the costs of activism, they must adopt similar collective action frames—'schemata of interpretations' used to construct meanings of actions to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, expand membership, attract media attention, demobilise antagonists, and forge collective identity (Snow & Benford 2000; Benford 1997; Snow et al. 1986). In its *strategic function*, collective action frames are *action-oriented*, constituted by the core framing tasks—'diagnostic', 'prognostic', and 'motivational' framing (Snow & Benford 1992). Social movements define the "self", the "enemy", and the "calls for actions", thereby setting the agenda and ways of seeing a policy issue. Diagnostic frames assign 'who to blame' through problem identification and attribution, where the most commonly used is the *injustice* frame (Gamson et al. 1982).<sup>15</sup> Prognostic frames create strategies and specific steps to mobilise action among participants, thereby offering a *solution*. Motivational frames identify the social movement actors to "provide a 'call to arms' or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action" (Benford and Snow 2000: 617).

In both theoretical approaches, there is emphasis on transnational solidarity through definition of collective identity among movement participants. In the FTAA, the HSA defines itself as a 'network of networks' committed to bringing forth social equity, respect for human rights, and democratic sovereignty (Saguier

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14 Framing, a concept derived from the North American social movements literature and defined as the "construction of meanings to locate, perceive and label social occurrences within their life space and the world at large", becomes essential for social movements to act on their grievances (Benford & Snow 2000; Goffman 1974).

15 The *injustice* frame is widely used by social movements since it creates a causal relationship between the current situations (for instance the inaction or ineffectiveness of governments) to the lived experiences of the target audience (public or movement members). Movement intellectuals frame the negative experiences as consequences of a system. For instance, some ecological justice movements use the capitalist project/unfettered industrialisation as the broad cause of environmental degradation.

2004: 11). Created in May 1997 in a meeting parallel to the FTAA Ministerial Conference in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, HSA consists of grassroots organisations, professional NGOs, labour unions, women's movements, and indigenous peoples movements to name a few. HSA members define themselves as:

a forum where progressive organisations and movements from around the Americas can gather, strategise, share information and plan joint actions. As the base and strength of this movement grows, we will be in an even better position to fight for an alternative and democratic development model for our societies (HSA 1999).

Although its material function is to provide an avenue for cross-cultural, multi-sectoral work to mobilise against the FTAA, it has served as a symbolic project to enrich political spaces for alternatives to be created. It is a civil society project that aims to support and complement the activist states in the region to challenge the US-hegemonic model of regional integration. In effect, HSA provided the organisational structure for transnational resistance against neoliberalism and regional integration as political projects.

From OWINFS to the regional activist network down to the national SNR Coalition, movements emphasise their diversity and capacity to call upon unity despite the spectrum of claims, interests, and ideological stance of various organisations. The members of the regional network define themselves as *networks* of organisations, activists and social movements *representing the interests* of peasants, women, migrants, workers, urban and rural poor, fisherfolks, and civil society organisations (from their respective spatial positions) calling to *continue* the struggle against corporate-led globalisation and posing the vision of a global economy built on the principles of economic justice, environmental sustainability, and democratic accountability. Unlike previous social movements whose political identity is based on shared grievances through class, gender or political status, anti-free trade movements celebrate diversity as a source of political identity.

### **Framing Resistance: Comparisons between Latin America and Southeast Asia in the Global Context**

At the global level, various calls are being made by international activists. For instance, the global campaign "Trade for People - Not People for Trade" works to build a movement of people within the churches and church-related organisations to promote trade justice. Using a human rights approach to resist free trade, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance calls for:

- trade rules and practices that further the right to food and sustainable agriculture, and promote greater self-reliance in developing countries;
- global and national policies and trade rules that ensure access for all to essential services as defined by human rights principles; and
- regulation of transnational corporations (TNCs) that ensures that they contribute to poverty eradication, promotion of human rights and protection of the environment.

This is different from OWINFS, which is more fluid and open as it defines itself as "a 'hub' for social movements and NGOs working on globalization issues who are interested in sharing analysis and coordinating action efforts internationally" (OWINFS 2007). Obviously, it defines international institutions promoting neoliberalism particularly WTO as "the other", with its emphasis on the *severity* of the consequences of trade liberalisation to local farmers, workers, etc., and the *urgency* of immediate action to stop further intergovernmental negotiations as motives for action. Although it does not present clear strategies to replace, reform, or simply



disrupt the trading system, the network offers political opportunities and resources to enhance mobilisation potentials of national campaigns. These include:

- Convening regular international conference calls, meetings and e-mail discussions that provide movement leaders with the opportunity to share and develop ideas and strategy;
- Organising delegations of social movement actors to send to Geneva, Switzerland where the WTO is headquartered, to lobby negotiators and to provide them with critical analysis of the impacts of existing and proposed WTO policy; and
- Organising international press conferences, days of action and demonstrations in order to pressure government leaders and trade negotiators to roll-back harmful trade policy provisions, and to cease to craft more agreements that undermine the public interest (OWINFS 2007).

These typical global social movements influence the shape of movement identity at the regional and domestic levels. In fact, these collective action frames are transposed downwards as exemplified in the general framing of the SNR campaign. However, the broadly defined common frames in the global anti-WTO campaigns still are different from the regional and domestic levels. They are narrower, more focused on policy proposals, and more nuanced in the regional context. Table 1 shows a comparison of the frames among the global, regional and domestic campaigns.

There is recognition of the increasing regional economic integration of North, South and Central America with free trade arrangements being pursued by the state-capital alliance. The launch of NAFTA in the 1980s marked the integration of the large economies in the North, while CAFTA and FTAA were subsequent efforts to unite the Americas towards a free market orientation. Outsiders framed the issue of FTAA as “regionalism without societal development” wherein capital exploited labour and natural resources for the sake of profit. In a compelling critique, HSA argues:

Our economies are now wide open to foreign private investment and private corporations have new rights to cherry pick the attractive investments. Meanwhile, our rights and protections as citizens have been dramatically eroded. Wealth is now concentrated in the hands of the few, leaving the vast majority in a devastating cycle of poverty and violence. This new economic model, sometimes referred to as ‘neo-liberalism’ or ‘corporate rule’, is undemocratic and exclusionary. [...] It allows corporations to walk away from the economic and environmental disasters they create. The results have made it clear that we need to take leadership by building an alternative development model and countervailing social force. (HSA 1999)

We can see how corporate-driven globalisation, as analysed by international activists, is placed in Latin America’s historical context. As to principles of human rights, democracy, and sustainable development, anti-FTAA campaigners sought to mobilise transnational support by recognising their differences—their political, historical, and class locations—and building resistance based on respect of differences, i.e. a process of solidarity along the lines of diversity. This is an unprecedented event occurring after the Battle for Seattle as labour unions, women, indigenous people, peasants, rural and urban poor, and youth see themselves as one in changing the regional and global landscape. Therefore, we can say that neoliberalism itself provided the framework for resistance.

Table 1 shows that Asian activists have understood the need to reframe their advocacy towards an analysis of the current socio-economic context of East Asia. Whilst Asia is exceptional in its success story of moving from the periphery to the semi-periphery, it was not spared the negative impact of unfettered globalisation. Although it did not experience the consequences of the debt and oil crises like Latin

America, the lack of regulation of the financial market, together with greed, led to the economic meltdown in many Asian economies. Activists have likewise reflected on the marginalisation process accompanying state-led development, such as the labour and peasants having to pay the price of Asian industrialisation. With a pro-business regional environment and state-promoted free trade regimes, activists' critique of the development model has fewer elements of discourses around democracy and more of the impact of neoliberal reforms as manifested in the 1997 financial crisis. Finally, activists see the most important trends in global liberalisation: the movement away from the multilateral forums towards regional and bilateral approaches to trade liberalisation. This is evident not only in OWINFS but also in regional strategy meetings and in the domestic campaigns in Thailand and the Philippines. A good indication is the increasing critical research among NGOs and think tanks in Asia looking at the negative consequences of the APT processes and Asian regionalism. This embryonic network is comparable to the more developed HSA which rejects the pan-American free trade area, because poorer countries were seen to lose in the liberalisation process. In Asia, the states remain committed to defensive regionalism carrying the free market principle, i.e. the creation of a common market as espoused in the new ASEAN Charter and followed through in the APT free trade model. On the other hand, major states like Brazil and Argentina have led outright resistance against FTAA as they saw the agreement as an anti-development move for the poorer societies in Latin America. This anti-neoliberal position can be traced back to the rise of the populist left all over the region—a backlash of the failure of neoliberal restructuring and social exclusions associated with elite democracy.

It is also observable that the Asian network is aware of the need to support the global anti-war movement, in particular, the events related to US militarism not only in the Middle East but also in Asia Pacific. We can conclude that regionalisation of collective action is largely influenced by the international framing of advocacies of the global social justice movement but it does not mean it is a one-way process where domestic and regional frames do not affect global frames (della Porta 2006; Smith 2004). In fact, most international activists recognise the need to listen to grassroots activists and local communities to contextualise the struggles against neoliberalism. The movements locate their resistance in the historical context specific to the dynamics within the region and within societies. This brings us to the nature of resistance: unlike most Latin American social movements which will reject the neoliberal project *en masse*, Asian activists realise the need to make compromises with respect to the effects of liberalisation in particular, and the free market model in general.<sup>16</sup> Table 2 shows the key actors and mobilisation strategies of HSA.

What are the overall implications of framing on collective identity building and sustaining resistance? The Southeast Asian network has expanded its constituency since it was created. In particular, migrant workers, international women's groups and Korean peasants were very active in the 2005 anti-WTO protests in Hong Kong. Such expansion is aided by the success of the movement to bridge differences and reach out to other sectors of the economy and other social actors marginalised in the process of liberalising the economy. From the migrant workers' viewpoint, for example, there is now greater realisation that the global economic restructuring in the region has led to massive labour migration. Although remittances have brought in additional income for household consumption and human capital investment, migrant families have been forced to adjust and job losses have increased in many places in lieu of the new regional economic architecture (Malig 2006). Further, peasant farmers currently see their disenfranchisement as part of the broader agricultural liberalisation agenda being imposed by the industrialised countries, which is being facilitated by

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<sup>16</sup> It is here that I wish Latin American scholars would reflect on the way anti-globalisation movements in Latin America have framed their resistance. What collective action frames did they use in resisting FTAA? How do they create transnational solidarity and build on multiple identities?

the WTO Agreement on Agriculture. The fisheries sector is integral in the debate on non-agricultural market access (NAMA) where foreign capital would be allowed to tap marine resources at the expense of local and small fisherfolks. Therefore, there are common points for analysis upon which different groups can organise towards coordinated action. To sustain resistance, participants must always see the need to reject WTO, its rules and regulations, and its development agenda.

### **Challenges in Collective Identity Building**

Framing is not an easy task because most activist NGOs and social movements in the developing world are normally associated with anti-dictatorial political movements carrying ideological divides. In addition, the diversity of the anti-globalisation movement becomes obvious when it comes to strategy building and alternative construction. In the WSF, 'open space' means not promoting a specific alternative to globalisation because it is a contradiction to the purpose of criticising grand political projects ambitioned by both neoliberals and Marxists. Collective identity ends in the definition of 'who I am', 'who my enemy is', and 'why I go against globalisation'. Even these questions are difficult to answer if we are speaking of transnational collective identity. Unlike domestic campaigns where the state normally serves as a target, an enemy, or a third party, transnational campaigns against free trade only succeeded in identifying these international institutions as targets. However, the broader critique to neoliberalism remains questionable as to what exactly it attacks—the institutions, the global system, or the policies?

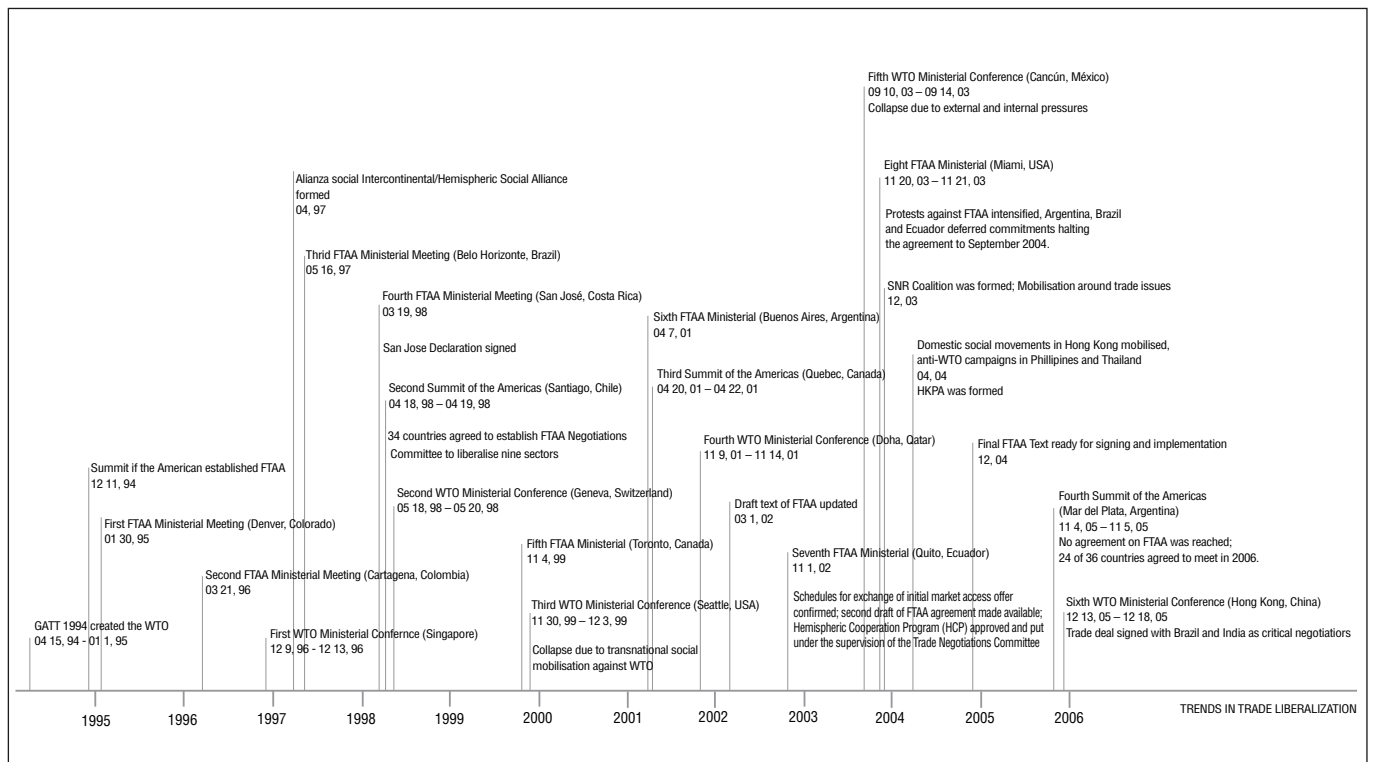
More specifically, I wish to offer a greater challenge that both transnational networks have experienced. Collective identity building is impeded by conflicts within the movement, particularly, by how they resolve issues of resource distribution, position on important political issues, and representation. In Latin American civil society, there is a prominent divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', where the former seek to work within the FTAA framework and the latter reject FTAA in principle. Whilst the business groups and several NGOs denounce the US-centred regionalism project, they likewise see the value of pressure and lobby within government ministerial meetings to add a social development/equity component in the trade agreement. Such position is juxtaposed with the outsiders who see the need for an alternative project outside the US-neoliberal framework. This conflict has implications to coalition strategies on media and public education, positions on policy issues, and whether to engage with the government. In the SNR coalition of the Philippines, this conflict is real as movement participants seek to determine who speaks for SNR whenever they are in public conferences or how funds can be distributed. The latter became an issue when the campaign had to decide about the call for the President to resign. Ultimately, the members agreed through long consultations and finally a consensus that the SNR will stick to the original campaign objectives of derailing the WTO but allow member organisations to carry their pro-resignation campaigns (provided that the committed amount of resources would remain). As for the transnational Asian network, issues of access to meetings and forums on the basis of ideological positions have been discussed, particularly because some NGOs have not worked together beforehand. In conclusion, these issues are exactly the same problems that the global social justice movement faces. Because the movement is built in an unequal global structure, northern NGOs have more access to funding and resources, thereby giving them more voice to speak *for* the people. Such North-South division is obvious in WSF processes and other forums where extensive travelling is needed to become visible in the global campaign. Overall, this conflict within the movement has more impacts to long-term solidarity formation than most activists and scholars believe.

**Table 1: Framing Processes in Social Movements Working against Trade Liberalisation**

| Anti-WTO Campaigns at Various Levels                    | Diagnosis  | Prognosis  | Motivational Frame  |
|---|--|--|---|
| Global Campaign in Cancún and Hong Kong                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nature of WTO as an undemocratic international institution</li> <li>▪ Trade issues are monopolised by corporate power and interests of developed countries</li> <li>▪ Food security, plight of agricultural markets in developing countries, and expansion of WTO mandate in new areas as central policy issues</li> <li>▪ Role of social movements pivotal in the Cancún victory</li> <li>▪ July framework is an institutional coup of developed countries</li> <li>▪ De-industrialisation as a crucial issue due to banning of the use of industrial policies under new WTO rules</li> <li>▪ Fisheries out of negotiations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Join the Anti-WTO Campaign in Cancún</li> <li>▪ Enhance transparency in trade negotiations through NGO engagement</li> <li>▪ Protest mobilisation for visibility</li> <li>▪ Stronger linkages between national and local constituencies necessary for successful mobilisation</li> <li>▪ Reject the July Framework because it is worse than the previous deal in Cancún</li> <li>▪ “No deal is better than a bad deal”</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NGOs and social movements as agents of resistance (stop new trade negotiations)</li> <li>▪ International protest sites as effective means to derail WTO negotiation</li> <li>▪ Strengthen the linkages between national and international campaigns on trade</li> <li>▪ Social movements must work to voice dissatisfaction on trade through public opinion</li> <li>▪ Visibility and protest mobilisation in WTO headquarters in Geneva</li> </ul>  |
| Regional Network in Southeast Asia                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neo-liberal globalisation and militarism go hand in hand. The US Occupation of Iraq and the WTO/FTAs are the key sites of struggle as they symbolise the two faces of “armed globalisation”</li> <li>▪ People of Asia are suffering from the effects of militarism and global capitalism, especially after 1997 when the full effects of neo-liberal policies swept across the region and economies were “restructured” and “liberalised” at the expense of the people</li> <li>▪ Asia is home to a number of military bases, which is crucial for the US to project power in pursuit of its economic and strategic interests</li> <li>▪ Trade liberalisation should not be at the expense of the right to food, agriculture, fisheries, public services, natural resources and livelihoods</li> <li>▪ WTO, free trade agreements (FTAs) and investment agreements are imposing and deepening neo-liberal economic programs in collusion with local ruling elites and transnational corporations (TNCs);</li> <li>▪ Neoliberal economic integration through economic partnership agreements such as ASEAN-China, ASEAN-Korea and the ASEAN plus Three (APT) process is having a negative impact</li> <li>▪ We need to emphasise that women are disproportionately and negatively affected by neo-liberal policies. More than half of irregular workers are women and this makes them vulnerable. Privatisation of services severely limits women’s access to housing, health, and education.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Join the global actions to protest against the legitimisation of illegal occupation in Iraq and Palestine by US</li> <li>▪ Continue to pressure our governments to stop further deployment of Asian troops</li> <li>▪ Block the current negotiations on agriculture and not allow the EU and US to revive the WTO</li> <li>▪ Commit to mobilise in Hong Kong, as well to coordinate our actions, broaden and strengthen our struggles in Asia</li> <li>▪ Mobilise and strengthen our joint actions against all neo-liberal trade and investment regimes; Commit to mobilise in Hong Kong</li> <li>▪ Commit to continue and strengthen our struggle against neo-liberal globalisation, to work together in a more sustained, coordinated, and systematic manner, and to begin the process of building peoples’ alternatives in East and Southeast Asia</li> <li>▪ Focus of struggle is the trade and investment aspects of neo-liberal globalisation, as manifested by WTO, FTAs and bilateral/multilateral trade and investment agreements</li> <li>▪ Recognise the importance of creating strong links, communication and solidarity between mass movement organisations such as trade unions, migrants’ groups, peasants, fisherfolks and women, and social and civic movement groups.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reclaim our rights from the so-called “free trade system” (Severity motive)</li> <li>▪ Joining mobilisation is key to the success of resisting militarism and neo-liberal globalisation (Efficacy motive)</li> <li>▪ Urgent need to tackle every proposed FTA, especially between government and the EU and US, as well as WTO to address the poverty-generating effects of trade liberalisation (Urgency motive)</li> <li>▪ Support the calls for solidarity of La Vía Campesina to commemorate Lee Kyung Hae and the calls from World Social Forum processes to work against neo-liberalism, war, colonialism, racism, and patriarchy (Propriety motive)</li> <li>▪ Necessity of looking into effects of neo-liberal trade agreements on development, particularly on the displacement of workers and society’s right to development (Severity motive).</li> </ul> |
| Stop the New Round Coalition Campaigns in 2003 and 2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Opposition to a new round of WTO trade negotiations</li> <li>▪ Opposition to further WTO trade and trade-related liberalisation</li> <li>▪ Opposition to the incorporation of the “new issues” of investment, competition policy, government procurement and trade facilitation into the WTO agenda.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prevent consensus on the proposed new agreements under the Doha Round</li> <li>▪ Expose the dangers of and stir public debate on the bilateral and regional agreements being negotiated</li> <li>▪ Pressure the government to recast the Philippines’ tariff structure.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Necessity for democratic accountability through increased transparency in decision-making</li> <li>▪ Urgency for an alternative development project outside the neoliberal or developmental state paradigms</li> </ul>   |

Sources: “Why the WTO is Bad for You” Video Series, produced by Focus on the Global South; Call to Action on Resisting Free Trade, November 2007; Reject the Revival of Doha Round, September 2007; Call to Action on WEF, June 2004; SNR Coalition Campaign Reports, 2005a and 2005b (Explanatory textual analysis as the major methodology applied).

Figure 1: Trends in Trade Liberalisation



## Mobilisation Strategies and Cycles of Protests in Anti-Free Trade Movements

When social movements engage in collective action, they make use of old and new repertoires of contention—defined as the ‘specific set of tactics available to a set of actors making such an oppositional claim at a particular historical moment’ (Ayres 2001: 6). These tactics range from barricades, bread riots and labour marches, to wildcat strikes, factory occupations, sit-ins, and email petitioning.<sup>17</sup> Hence, social actors define their mobilisation strategies, organisational norms, and forms of resistance based on available resources, opportunities, and understanding of their historical context. As such, the repertoires of contention of anti-globalisation movements show the cumulative effect of the various tactics developed by popular struggles throughout history, in particular the combination of tactics by old and new movements.<sup>18</sup> In the age of globalisation, where the Internet has allowed for reduced costs of communications, activists have taken advantage of this by adopting protest actions, setting up blockades, and road marches together with internet-based activism and coalition building. Transnational organised protests benefit from the advantages of internet technologies: its speed, accessibility and immediacy of impact to target audiences (Ayres 2001: 9). Because campaigns can reach citizens through the internet easily, campaigns need not rely on conventional means of information dissemination. Rather than perceiving the newspaper and media outlets as obsolete tools for mobilisation, social movements have tapped both sources especially because the users of these media have different demographics.

If we compare the mobilisation strategies at the regional level in Latin America and Southeast Asia, they take several movement practices from their domestic origins. In Southeast Asia, because SNR is linked with major NGOs and social movements and Philippines has one of the densest advocacy activities, the major mobilisation strategies employed by SNR are similarly adopted by the networks particularly the efforts to increase movement visibility. These include media engagement

17 For a fuller discussion of the concept, please see Tilly 1977, 1986; Tilly & Tarrow 2007.

18 By old movements, I mean popular struggles in pre-agrarian Western Europe, where the tactics range from food riots, grain seizures, road blockades, inter-village brawls, and draft riots. The new movements include the identity-based movements onwards, such as sit-ins, strikes, demonstrations, and electoral rallies, and planned public actions against national power holders. Intuitively, the difference is that the latter is national in scope and targets the State either as another claim-maker or an arena for social change (Ayres 2001: 6-8).

with international and domestic newswires and broadsheets, press releases and email petitions on the Internet, and sustained, visible, coordinated protest actions supporting international activist events. The SNR employs the following strategies:

- Public Launch of SNR through press conferences, editorial writing, and public appearances (*Media Engagement*);
- More extensive provincial and regional, island-wide forums/discussions on the WTO and the Hong Kong Ministerial focus on the impacts of the negotiations and the key battles to fight (*Expanding Constituency*);
- Production of popular materials on WTO (*Public Awareness*);
- Dialogues with Executive Departments (DA, DTI, DOLE, NEDA) and participation in government task forces on WTO AoA Renegotiation (WAAR) (*Government Engagement*);
- More active Lobbying in Congressional hearings (*Tapping possible Allies within the Government*);
- National sectoral forums, training of key members as spokespersons, and internal discussions of WTO (*Capacity building*);
- Cultural and media events, which link artists to the ideological battle of globalisation; and
- Sustained and visible protests, especially with international events which intensified in 2005 (Global Week of Action) (Nem Singh 2008: 49).

If we compare these strategies to the HSA, which has a more developed campaign at the regional level and therefore represents a more transnational form of collective action, we find several similarities with the Philippines and, by extension, Southeast Asian repertoire of contention:

- Organise yearly meetings of the Hemispheric Social Alliance;
- Establish a Secretariat for the Alliance to deal with day to day issues and communications;
- Set up a Hemispheric Social Alliance E-mail List;
- Gain visibility, since this is the key to making the Alliance real for the local organisations and their membership;
- Expand the participation of organizations in the different regions of the Americas, e.g. Andean, Southern Cone and Caribbean regions; and
- Promote dialogue with organisations and coalitions from other parts of the world (HSA 1999; Schlobohm 2002).

There is recognition from the FTAA campaign, just like in SNR, that to build resistance is to mobilise beyond summits and meetings of government negotiators. Rather, the tactical approach is to build long-term capacity to resist further efforts to impose neoliberalism whether multilateral, regional or domestic as well as to expand the constituency of the social movements while engaging with as many citizens as possible. In effect, most transnational strategies against neoliberalism are attempting to tap old tactics while taking advantage of new technologies in order to enhance social interactions. However, we must recognise that social networks remain stronger in face-to-face interactions because emotional investment bridges cultural and political differences among activists. Further, the asymmetry in access to technology remains a challenge where the greater technological advancement in industrialised societies vis-a-vis in the South makes equal access to information less realistic. The digital divide is

compounded by the cultural differences that need to be mediated through day to day interactions of movement participants. Hence, although summit protests are not effective in delivering policy changes, it builds gradually the foundations of social capital that is of immense importance for transnational mobilisation.

The popular protests against neoliberal institutions are not isolated struggles but are part of the broader cycle of protests emerging in this historical moment. Figure 1 shows different trade negotiations as moments of mobilisation at various scales. The difference between Latin America and Southeast Asia can be discerned by paying more attention to the politics of location. The anti-FTAA resistance of the outsiders is an intensified mobilisation effort that builds upon the grassroots and transnational protests against neoliberal restructuring. It built its tactics by learning from previous movements, such as the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico; the internet-based activism against MIA; the anti-water privatisation reactions in Bolivia and Argentina, as well as the landless peasant movements in Brazil. The FTAA mobilisation was a systematic inter-American response against the transnational form of neoliberalism, which was absorbed by the WSF processes and other anti-free trade movements regionally and globally. The HSA is an integral alliance in the past four WSF activities and continues to be a focal social network linking various mobilisations in Latin America. We can therefore argue that the cycle of protest in this region is organised at the grassroots level but increasingly linked to international NGOs, supported by the presence of leftist governments and political parties, with the overall aim of constructing a political platform for alternatives to the neoliberal-based development project. Like other transnational protests, it is characterised by repertoires of contention similar to local strategies and framing processes fitting in the global justice frame.

**Table 2: Anti-FTAA Programme of Activists (HSA)**

| Member Organisations/Coalitions  | Major Programmatic Strategies  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC) or Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (Mexico)</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop an alternative social agenda;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rede Brasileira pela Integração dos Povos (REBRIP) or Brazilian Network for a Peoples Integration (Brazil)</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adopt a common strategy which also respects diversity;</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Common Frontiers (Canada)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to develop, discuss and debate, to add and modify Alternatives for the Americas, a document drafted for the Alternative Forum at the 1998 People's Summit in Santiago, Chile;</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Réseau Québécois sur l'Intégration Continentale (RQIC) or Québec Network on Continental Integration (Québec, Canada)</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Map the existing organizations in each country along with the actions they are taking;</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alliance for Responsible Trade (ART) (United states)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Share information and feedback through the Alliance: local – regional – global;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alianza Chilena por un Comercio Justo y Responsable (ACJR) or Chilean Alliance for Just and Responsible Trade (Chile)</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monitor the negotiation process and any positions taken or agreements signed by our respective governments with full dissemination of that information to the Alliance;</li> </ul>                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Congreso Latinoamericano de Organizaciones Campesinas (CLOC) or Latin American Coordinator for Rural Organizations (Regional)</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Launch campaigns at all levels under the umbrella and with the support of the Alliance;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iniciativa Civil para la Integración Centroamericana (ICIC) or Civic Initiative for Central American Integration (Central America)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop labour and social indicators that can be tracked, in conjunction with the Social Watch initiative already underway;</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Organización Regional Interamericana de Trabajadores (ORIT) (Regional)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Raise awareness of the effects and impact of economic integration on the day-to-day lives of our members and the population at large.</li> </ul>  |

In Southeast Asia, the cycle of protests is historically contextualised to the post-World War II developments—the successful experiments of the developmental state, authoritarian control over labour and civil society, and close adherence to the capitalist model albeit in a revisionist manner (Berger 2003). As such, neoliberal resistance became prominent in Asia only after 1997 when there was realisation of the uncontrollable nature of capital as well as a need for the state to continue its regulatory role in the economy. After 1997, Asian states have embarked on defensive regionalism as a way to control short term capital and adjust to IMF pressures of banking reforms (a key industrialisation strategy). Take note that this is also regionalisation from above where foreign ministers and ASEAN leaders do not see the participation of civil society as crucial for effective regional strategies to adjust to globalisation. If we look at mobilisation against free trade, it emerged only in late 2004 (and in 2003 in the Philippines) and this was due to the euphoria activists felt after the victory in Cancún. In addition, it is not as extensive a movement as in Latin America since it has only focused on some countries with professional NGOs and think tanks, which take a coordinating role in many campaigns. Finally, the anti-WTO movements transformed themselves into a broad network supporting resistance against bilateral and regional free trade agreements. In Asia where there is rapid proliferation of FTAs, most Southeast countries have had campaigns, if not coalitions, working on the consequences of rapid liberalisation on domestic economies. Even Malaysia has a campaign, the FTA Watch, led by the Third World Network, Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM). Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines have broad-based national coalitions targeting the new FTAs—AFTA, EU-ASEAN FTA, China-Philippines FTA, Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA), and US-Thailand FTA to name a few. We can say that the movement has died as an anti-WTO movement but transformed itself into a related movement with more specific objectives and targets—regional institutions, free trade arrangements, and governments. The cycle of protest against neoliberalism is just emerging in the region and its impacts on the regional and domestic free market project remain to be seen in the future.

## Conclusions

What can we learn from the comparisons of two disparate, distinct, and historically different regions? First, we can develop a theoretically informed account of the region to identify the distinctive and similar forms of social mobilisation. I have argued that mobilisation strategies are quite similar and therefore repertoires of contention at the transnational level are being diffused and adopted by activists in developing regions. We have also found that most regional strategies are based on success stories of domestic mobilisation, as in the case of trade mobilisation in the Philippines and Thailand. Remarkably, the literature has shown that the Zapatistas, the anti-dam building movement in India, and the transnational indigenous movements are likewise employing similar strategies, especially when it comes to engagement with other actors, notably the media and the State (Khagram 2004; Martin 2003; Muñoz 2006). Second, the paper also showed empirically that framing processes are essential to collective identity building in any movement in order to sustain the campaign. Rather than objective requirements of mobilisation, political opportunities are mediated by the perceptions and/or expectations of social actors. This is exemplified by Asian activists who have perceived the need for a less radical position on trade liberalisation and the effective use of domestic and international activists in Latin America of their shared experiences of adjustment in neoliberal restructuring as a source of critique towards free trade policy in the region. Finally, democratisa-



tion has varying effects to social mobilisation because when opportunities for mobilisation are wider at the domestic level, activists may strategically shift the targets from regional towards domestic institutions. What intensifies collective action are the real and perceived consequences of neoliberal restructuring, transposed at various public spheres through successful strategies of engagement with the State, the mass media, and the public. Democracy provides the institutional contexts so that social movements can easily mobilise for or against power holders, authorities, and elites, whereas activists see the superficiality of democracy in domestic contexts as a push for citizenship claims at the regional level. Likewise, the framing and strategies are influenced by the form of regionalism that historically evolved in Latin America and Asia.

What I attempted to do is to just give a broad overview of these two movements and try to sketch several pathways for future research. More studies of comparative nature must seek to explore activism towards (or against) regional institutions, collective identity-building processes in cross-border mobilisation, whether repertoires of contention are changing in the advent of more experiences of social movement activities in Latin America, and the rhythms and timing of different protests. From a regional area studies perspective, further work must look at intra-regional differences within Latin America and Southeast Asia to examine whether democratic reforms as a structural variable has any enduring impact to broader mobilisation processes both at domestic and regional levels.

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