

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Jackie Smith, *Social Movements for Global Democracy*. Themes in Global Social Change. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007, 304 pp. \$US 25.00 paper (978-0-8018-8744-4), \$US 55.00 hardcover (978-0-8018-8743-7)

Jackie Smith's *Social Movements for Global Democracy* is an impassioned examination of transnational social movements, in which the author's politics are evident throughout. These politics are avowedly anti-neoliberal, but this does not prejudice Smith's ability to craft a strong conceptual framework for understanding recent developments in transnational activism and offer compelling examples from a variety of case studies to support her argument. Indeed, this book makes a unique contribution to the study of transnational social movements exactly because Smith's personal views are so evident and her counterposing of the democratic and the neoliberal globalizers is so convincing. This book provides valuable insights into the mobilization, tactics, and successes of the democratic globalization movement.

Smith's analytic framework establishes two competing visions of globalization and rival networks as defenders of each vision. First, the transnational neoliberal globalizers promote a globalization that sustains international capitalism and defends economic development and corporate interests above all else. This view feels that economic globalization based on market principles is the clearest path to development and democracy for all. This network consists of transnational corporations, certain governments, the commercial media, and major global financial institutions like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Against this neoliberal position, and in defence of a vision of globalization which has democracy and support for human rights at its core, stands the democratic globalization network. This network is composed of civil society groups, social movement organizations, independent media, and individual activists. The vision of democratic globalization is built upon ideas of strengthening democratic institutions, increasing state sovereignty, enhancing global economic governance, and promoting human rights.

Connecting to existing literature on transnational social movement mobilization and collective action, as well as engaging to a lesser degree with the neoinstitutionalist world society literature, this book ably dem-

onstrates how the two networks compete to set the international agenda, legitimate or undermine international institutions (the United Nations in particular), and mobilize support for their visions of globalization. On the whole, the two networks are portrayed in stark contrast to one another. The transnational neoliberals are — regrettably according to Smith — rather effective at promoting a market-based economic globalization through the use of dominant states and international institutions like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. Despite their successes, this network is inherently antidemocratic because they consistently fight against state sovereignty and any form of democratic global governance which would place constraints on capitalist growth and expansion. In contrast, the transnational democratic globalizers have a more limited scope for action, and appear to be most successful when they seize on key shifts in political opportunity structures.

Smith's research suggests that neither the democratic globalizers nor transnational neoliberals operate as cohesive networks. Despite their overarching visions of globalization, both networks are fragmented, transitory, and only loosely coupled to specific aims or issues. This lack of cohesion appears to be a consequence of the variety and diversity of potential network members. The relatively fluid, ad hoc, and informal structures of both transnational activist networks is one of Smith's most interesting findings.

Another strength of Smith's book is her compelling use of case studies. A very wide range of information and material is mobilized by Smith to reveal the workings of both networks. The material on the democratic globalizers is particularly welcome, such as a valuable case study on the World Social Forum's role in creating a political space within which the democratic globalizer network can promote its alternative visions of globalization and democracy. A chapter on how the neoliberal globalization network has promoted global economic integration and undermined the UN system is also noteworthy. These case studies make the book well-suited for senior undergraduate or graduate course on social movements. One of the few shortcomings of the work is that it does not include enough truly global examples of activism to escape a sometimes America-centric perspective.

On the whole, Smith's book provides a significant step forward in the study of transnational activism. By constructing her competing networks framework for assessing transnational social movements and their struggles over globalization and democracy, Smith creates a strong analytic platform from which future research can embark on how her democratic globalizers aim to counter the neoliberal agenda in their efforts to promote the democratization of international institutions and politics. In

this respect, *Social Movements for Global Democracy* should be read as a rallying call to researchers to increase the attention paid to understanding the collective action of the democratic globalizers, at the same time as it highlights the competing actions of their rivals, the transnational neoliberals. Understanding movements for global democracy in light of this competition appears in Smith's book to make a significant contribution to a fuller understanding of the functioning of transnational social movements on both sides of the globalization debate.

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