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Cover image: Dutch cows wear protest signs against the referendum on the EU constitution in Oosthuizen, the Netherlands, 25 May 2005. © Associated Press. Used with permission.

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# Condition

PROTEST DYNAMICS IN AN ENTANGLED EUROPE

THE TRANSNATIONAL CONDITION



Edited by **Simon Teune**

# Individual Surveys in Rallies (INSURA)

## A New Tool for Exploring Transnational Activism?

*Olivier Fillieule and Philippe Blanchard*

### Introduction

Social movement understanding has been dominated for a long time by a legitimist bias that conceived of demonstrators and protest actions as the product of deprivation and abnormal conduct. With the emergence of resource mobilisation theory (RMT), these interpretations have been radically replaced by models that emphasise the costs and benefits of participation in collective action as well as the importance of social movement organisations (SMOs) in mobilising resources and distributing positive or negative incentives. RMT was further refined by the growing importance in explanatory models of the so-called 'political opportunity structure', which helped to stress contextual factors in collective action. To date, structural factors, political contexts, organisations and not the actors themselves, have been at the centre of social movement research for more than thirty years. That direction has been further reinforced by the quasi-exclusive recourse to methods such as organisational surveys or protest events analysis (PEA).

As a result, scholars have certainly gone too far in the rejection of the actors themselves, those who engage in collective action, their social and biological characteristics, their very motivations and their irreducible heterogeneity. Even the more recent developments of social movement theory, by taking into account the cultural turn and further hybridising between US and European research, has left unexplored the individual who actually participates in demonstrations, protest activities and, broadly speaking, social movements.

On the contrary, students of political participation, in addition to studying voting behaviour, have also investigated the so-called unconventional forms of social and political participation. Based on opinion polls conducted in many Western countries, researchers have tried to study political attitudes toward protest. The modes of actions investigated, ranging from signing petitions and lawful demonstrations to damaging property, have since become a permanent item

in many national election studies almost everywhere in the United States and Europe, through World Values Surveys and European Social Surveys. The most significant findings of these cross-national opinion polls can be summed up by the so-called Socio-Economic Standard model (SES), which establishes that age, gender and level of education are the most important factors of protest behaviour (Fillieule and Tartakowsky 2008: ch. 2).

The advantage of population surveys is that they allow cross-national and historical comparisons. But, most of the time, they measure the willingness to protest rather than the actual participation in the protest. As a result, there are no figures on actual rates of mobilisation. Moreover, in these surveys, people are asked about their participation in general, which makes it difficult to distinguish between different protest issues. As Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001: 463) state, 'declared willingness to participate in a demonstration is a poor indicator of actual participation in collective action. "The action potential of individuals reflects not what they will do but what they think they ought to do" (Topf 1995: 59)'.<sup>1</sup> The difference between willingness to act and actual behaviour can be explained by a whole set of factors, among them the relational context, which seems to play a central role (Fillieule 1997; Favre, Fillieule and Mayer 1997). Finally, one should note that even in the most recent studies, which try to measure the actual past participation in protest actions, biases remain since one knows that there can be discrepancies between what people say about what they did in the past and what they actually did.

Coming back to social movement research, one knows that the development of the so-called political process approach has been backed by a parallel expansion of the PEA method, which has the advantage of focussing on protest actions themselves and, as a consequence, on actual participation to demonstrations. Yet, as we just said, PEA was never meant to answer any questions about the demonstrators, but was used more to determine, in a historical sociology and macro-comparison perspective inspired by the work of Charles Tilly, broad trends in protest activity. In any case, since newspaper cuttings have massively been chosen as source materials and, in some rarer cases, police archives, the material gathered is of little interest for those who would try to provide consistent information about the people involved in the protest actions.

To date, it seems that only by interviewing people during protest events can we gather substantial information about participants. However, as Favre, Fillieule and Mayer (1997: 11) stated, we are here confronted with 'a strange lacuna in the sociology of mobilisation'. Before the end of the 1990s, actually, very few students tried to collect individual data directly in the course of protest events.

The central reason for that situation is certainly to be found in epistemological considerations. Having recourse to an individual survey during protest events could at first sight seem paradoxical or contradictory, since the individual survey technique appears incompatible with the situation one wants to explore. As a matter of fact, individual surveys are by nature individualistic: the interviewee

is isolated from its environment and is asked to express an opinion about questions he has not been forcibly informed about in advance. Moreover, answering the questions does not mean he is personally involved in the issue at stake. And finally, expressing an opinion will in no way have any personal consequence for the interviewee. In a demonstration, on the contrary, the interviewee is not isolated at all, since the march in itself is instituting a collective, and also because people usually demonstrate within small groups of friends, relatives, etc. (McPhail and Miller 1973; Fillieule 1997; Drury and Reicher 1999; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001); also, the interviewee is already expressing an opinion by the very fact of demonstrating, he expresses that opinion in a visible manner, which means he is concerned by the issue at stake and ready to assume the possible risks and costs of his acts. From all of these differences, it follows that the recourse to an individual survey in the course of collective events collides with the economists' well known 'no bridge problem' between a micro- and a macro-level of analysis.

As a result, prior the middle of the 1990s, interviewing participants in protest events had only been used in a few studies.<sup>2</sup> Individual Surveys in Rallies (hereafter INSURA) did not enter the social researcher's usual toolkit until the following decade. It was at the beginning of 1994 that Favre and his colleagues conducted such a survey, with the primary ambition of building a solid methodological framework that could be subsequently applied by other researchers interested in gathering representative data on crowd participants (Favre, Fillieule and Mayer 1997).<sup>3</sup> Van Aelst first used their method in 1998 for research on the normalisation of protest in Belgium (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001).

The new century marked a new era in the use of INSURA. More precisely, with the public emergence and tremendous development of alter-global protest events and forums, researchers began to have a recourse to that method that appeared particularly suited to that object of study. In effect, one knows the importance of events as epiphanic moments for the movement, the public debate that emerged around the qualification of participants as mere losers, terrorists or politically unaware people, the debate about the consistency of the ideology of the movement and its constituency (are these people 'rooted cosmopolitans' (Tarrow 2001) or 'modernisation losers?'), and finally, the question about how to measure and assess the heterogeneity of the 'movement of movements', in terms of organisations as well as constituencies. The INSURA technique seems appropriate to answer all of these questions.

To date, and apart from some data on demonstrators collected here and there (e.g., Lichbach and Almeida 2001; Levi and Murphy 2002), the *Gruppo di Ricerca sull'Azione Collettiva in Europa* (GRACE) was the first to launch an ambitious program to survey the so-called 'noglobol movement' in Italy at different settings (e.g., Andretta et al. 2002), followed by Bedoyan and Van Aelst (2003) on an alter-global demonstration that was held in Brussels on 14 December 2001; and our own surveys during the protest in Geneva and Lausanne against

the Évian G8 summit and at the Saint-Denis European Social Forum (ESF) in France (Fillieule et al. 2004; Agrikoliansky and Sommier 2005; Fillieule and Blanchard 2005). More recently, the project 'Democracy in Europe and the Mobilisation of Society' (DEMOS) also included a workpackage dedicated to INSURA (della Porta 2009),<sup>4</sup> and finally, a group of researchers co-ordinated by Stefaan Walgrave has conducted the most ambitious INSURA ever at the global action day against an imminent war in Iraq on 15 February 2003 (see Walgrave and Rucht 2010). The survey was conducted at the same time in some cities of the US, Great-Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium. More than 6,000 participants answered the questionnaires in eight countries and eleven cities.<sup>5</sup> Walgrave and Van Lear (chapter 1 in this volume) also realised a large-scale international questionnaire survey among participants of the ESF in 2006. Currently, they are engaged in a European project on the role of protest issues in determining who will participate in protest events, why they do so, and how they get to do so (Caught in the act of protest: Contextualizing contestation).

After some years of the intensive use of INSURA, one is entitled to wonder whether or not that technique has fulfilled the researchers' hopes. We learned from the past that, in social movement theory, due to an intensive and fertile competition that often drives us to quantity instead of quality, new methods of inquiry have been used at length without always ensuring a sufficient degree of epistemological vigilance and methodological scruple. It is certainly too early to decide whether INSURA will mark a real progress in social movement theory. Yet, some remarks can be made and some questions can be asked.

In this chapter, we use some results of a collective work on alter-global rallies in Évian and Saint-Denis<sup>6</sup> to first answer some basic methodological questions about how to collect data on crowds and then demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of INSURA in exploring the transnational dimension of alter-global protests based on our work.

## INSURA: Technical Problems and Sampling Strategies

Assessing the entire realm of methodological and epistemological questions raised by INSURA would largely exceed the framework of this chapter. We will only deal here with some questions centred on specific problems applied to alter-global events. Three main questions will be addressed: what are the specific constraints of interviewing people at the very moment they are 'expressing' a political opinion? What specific constraints result from the morphology of the covered events, that is to say, how to build a valid sampling frame? We then turn to a more general point about the questions that can or cannot be solved by using that technique.

People attending a protest event or a political rally are in an expressive situation. They actually express their feelings and their opinions, if only by being

there, by chanting and shouting slogans, by raising their fists, by wearing masks or costumes, by holding banners or placards. This results in two consequences. One is that the peoples' willingness to participate in a survey is generally optimal, apart for those groups and individuals who reject poll techniques and sociological surveys altogether as part of the 'dominant order'.<sup>7</sup> The other is that in the case of face-to-face interviews, people will certainly pay little attention to the questions being asked since they are at the same time engaged in a collective action, surrounded by colleagues, friends, relatives and the whole crowd. The influence of fellow protesters will not be developed here. To allow for the turbulent situation, however, questionnaires must be short and too demanding questions, like multiple choice or open-ended questions, should be avoided. Participants might also be asked to fill in the questionnaire at home and to send it in by mail. That solution is very much in favour in contemporary INSURA practices and offers many advantages. However, one has to be aware that the answers will be of a different nature than those gathered in the course of the event, especially when the considered event has immediate consequences (e.g., clashes with the police). In these cases, media coverage of the event, organisers' press conferences and official declarations will certainly have an impact on attitudinal answers. The problem is all the more puzzling if the survey strategy is mixing face-to-face interviews and a mail survey, at least when attitudinal data are not studied separately.

To date, INSURA has been used in four types of crowd gatherings. Outdoor static gatherings, indoor meetings (e.g., the ESF), protest camps or villages, and marches. In each case, constraints differ and adequate solutions must be found to conduct the survey. Most of the aforementioned events that were surveyed combined, more or less, the four morphological situations. It is not possible here to deal at length with technical solutions that have been used in each specific case. We will only deal here with surveys in demonstrations, since it is certainly the most complicated case.

To put it briefly, usual sampling strategies are useless in this context. In protest events, only some people are affiliated to organisations, and the number of organisations makes impossible any proximate to the research population. Since it is not possible to use a sampling strategy based on quotas, one has to use a probabilistic method, that is to say, to guarantee that all possible participants would have an equal opportunity of being interviewed. To achieve that, one must take into account the fact that participants' spatial and temporal distribution in a march is never aleatoric.

For the most part of them, people do assemble at a meeting point, march under a banner, depending on multiple belongings, following a march order that is predetermined by organisers. Others are more erratic, travelling from one group to another, from the very heart of

the demonstration to its margins. These numerous spatial and temporal distributions have a clear consequence: one must use two different methods, depending on which stage of a demonstration is concerned, the assembling phase or the march itself. (Fillieule 1997, methodological appendix)

In the first phase, the best method is derived from Seidler, Meyer and MacGillivray (1976) and Favre, Fillieule and Mayer (1997). The gathering space (generally a square and its adjacent streets) is divided in advance into sectors clearly identified by some spatial distinguishing marks. One generally knows in advance where the different groups are due to their assembling under their banners, carts, etc. For big events, the press will even publish maps that indicate different meeting points. Sometimes, it is also possible to have an idea of the rough number of people per group or cluster of groups in advance. In each cell, interviewers (the number of which is defined depending on the expected density of demonstrators per cell) must randomly select interviewees. At that stage, a fixed number of interviewees per cell can be decided in advance or not, since the length of the assembling process is always difficult to evaluate.<sup>8</sup> As usually in probabilistic methods, the only criterion for the selection of the respondents is randomness. This can be achieved best by relying on a counting system, for example, approaching every Xth person in a group. Two persons who stand next to each other may not both be interviewed. In the case of a refusal, on the contrary, one should try to interview the nearest person in the group.

In the case of alter-global protest events, methodological rigor is all the more important as people usually attend different kinds of events. For some of them, certain activities are mutually exclusive. Villages, zaps and blockades, demonstrations, conferences and meetings can be held at the same time. That is why it is usually very fruitful to conduct interviews in the villages, as some of us did, since it is obvious that the kind of activity influences who participates. People who attend a meeting are not necessarily the same as the people who participate in the demonstration. Yet, both groups of people are and probably see themselves as participants in the same movement.

In the second phase of the survey, questionnaires must be distributed or interviews must be conducted during the protest march itself. Many solutions are available here and we have explored some of them (Favre, Fillieule and Mayer 1997). For technical reasons that will not be discussed here, the best solution is to divide the interviewers in two squads. One is placed at the front of the demonstration and the other at the end of it. The first group starts its interviews at the head of the march and gradually comes down to the end of the demonstration. The second group starts at the end and walks up to the head of the demonstration (Favre, Fillieule and Mayer 1997). Depending on the available resources, it is always possible to multiply the number of squads as long

as they are intervening in a symmetrical way in the procession. Each squad of interviewers is supervised by two head persons, whose mission it is to offer spatial points of reference on each side of the demonstration and to decide who will be interviewed by whom and in what row (that rule could be of an utmost importance, especially if the interviewers are not professional staff or specifically trained personnel). Finally, experience proves that things never go exactly as previously planned. Crowd events are very awkward social phenomena and one must always be ready for alternative solutions.

One more problem to be solved in order to assure the reliability and validity of the data is connected to the response rate. Broad participation in the survey reduces the possibility that the group of respondents is systematically different from the population. Biases due to non-response are well identified in the survey literature. In INSURA, as said before, apart from those who are by definition hostile to any kind of sociological investigation, it seems that whenever activists are able to answer, people do accept the interview. However, one must take every possible step both to limit non-response bias (which means simple and short questionnaires) and, if possible, to understand its dimensions. That is why in face-to-face interviews, the interviewers must systematically register on a separate grid every person who refuses to cooperate or drops out after a while. Adding to that, interviewers should keep track of the spatial location of failed interviews (that will help, for example, in the assembling phase to identify the respective group). By doing that, the researcher can at a minimum determine whether the pool of respondents over-represents particular organisational affiliations, demographics, or any other pertinent categories. This knowledge can improve the validity of the conclusions from an imperfect sample by allowing a more accurate interpretation of survey results. For questionnaires sent in by mail, on the contrary, it is much more difficult to identify the non-response bias, apart from the total number of questionnaires returned out of the total number of questionnaires distributed. Technical solutions to secure that the interviewees' population does actually represent the people composing the crowd are certainly difficult to find, but still possible to attain.

Yet, one more central question remains. What does the crowd itself represent? Four statements could help to find the answer: first of all, INSURA consist of one-shot surveys with actual participants in a given event. A crowd can not be considered as equal to a social movement constituency. Its heterogeneity is far more important and different in nature. In SMOs, a number of empirical studies have called attention to the diversity of beliefs and motivations in the same social movement. In a crowd, heterogeneity does not only refer to that diversity of beliefs and motivations, but also primarily to the fact that only a limited part of the people, in a way or another, are part of the SMOs that organised the event. Moreover, participation in a protest event is generally not submitted to any condition. People do not need to be a member of an organisation, they usually do

not have to register (apart from social forums where you have to pay fees), etc. That means that the reference population, the crowd itself, can be composed of core activists, sympathisers, bystanders, lost people, tourists, and sometimes even opponents of the demonstrators.

Secondly, and consequently, people attending a gathering may be participating for the first time in their life. Ladd and his colleagues (1983) were among the first to stress that point in their study of a national anti-nuclear rally in Washington, DC. They found that half of the sample were participating in their first anti-nuclear power activity (and we know from existing studies of alter-global events that this is usually the case in almost all of the events studied by INSURA). Still, the authors consider that the people interviewed are actually representing the anti-nuclear movement. In their opinion, 'by studying an actual movement demonstration, we are defining social movement membership in terms of participation in collective action' (Ladd, Hood and Van Liere 1983: 269). Yet, it makes no sense to assume that social movement participation can be epitomised in a one-shot participation, especially in the case of the alter-global movement, which is marked by a 'secular, inclusive and non-totalizing approach' and 'tolerant identities' (della Porta 2005), as opposed to the 'totalitarian', or at least organisational, identities of the past, which means that the 'entry costs' for such events or groups are particularly low.

Thirdly, INSURA, by definition, only captures the image of a crowd at one point in time and in one specific location. That very point has crucial consequences. To begin with, one can never assume that those who participate for the first time in a rally will stay involved in the movement, or even remain interested in the cause. Some certainly will, but one knows that all movements are marked by a high level of turnover. That means that newcomers cannot be considered as being part of the movement without further considerations. Only those who declare to have participated in previous alter-global activities (at least once) or to be a member of an alter-global organisation can be considered part of the movement. Furthermore, all INSURA dedicated to alter-globalisation events constantly stress the fact that about one-half of the interviewees are 'local people'.<sup>9</sup> Local people without organisational affiliation can certainly not be easily aggregated to other participants. For them, barriers to participation are significantly lower.

Finally and more broadly, movement participation and mobilisation are processes that evolve over time. Movements expand and contract in phases of mobilisation and de-mobilisation. Here again, it is all the more true in the case of alter-global events that gather people coming in from different countries. In each specific country, the position of the movement along the cycle can be different and submitted to very different contextual factors that affect the level of mobilisation. That very fact inhibits the ambitions to compare different national constituencies in one single event. We will come back to that point later.

## If I Had a Hammer...

In INSURA, the unit of analysis is by definition the individual, not organisations. That means that INSURA are certainly not appropriate tools for addressing all research questions in social movements. As Klandermans and Smith (2002: 13) remind us:

Research that takes the individual as its unit of analysis necessarily restricts itself to the explanation of individual opinions, attitudes and behaviour. It can help us to understand why individuals participate in social movements ... but it can tell us very little about the organisations and actors that stage movement events. ... The supply-side of protest is a different matter that cannot be assessed at the individual level with the individual as the unit of analysis.

In the remaining section, we show that INSURA is certainly well suited to explore the demographics of alter-global events, as well as relational networks of individuals and multiple belongings. We then argue that organisation networks and movement's boundaries are far more difficult to explore through INSURA, a fact that seriously limits cross-national comparisons of movements based on that tool.

### Alter-global Demographics. Fighting Common Sense

The definition of the alter-global movement is without doubt ambiguous and is submitted to strategic consideration. Movement organisations, political elites, governments, journalists and social scientists, are all engaged in a symbolic fight for the right definition of what 'the movement' is, if one can talk about a movement (Sommer, Fillieule and Agrikoliansky 2008). At the very heart of that debate is the identity of those people composing the movement. At a very general level, can one speak of a 'transnational civil society', or an 'international working class' or 'modernisation losers'? At a more specific level, can one identify different kinds of groups involved, with different motivations and social characteristics? Globally speaking, the image of alter-global movements and constituencies is not that clear and is partially contradictory, depending on commentators' vested interests.

For sympathetic commentators, the alter-global movement is comprised of people with multiple geographic origins, being then truly internationalist. As a new social movement developing in the context of a crisis of representative democracy, it would be composed of new activists rejecting traditional affiliations to classical political parties, unions and voluntary groups. That 'political virginity' would be connected with a blurring of traditional class, gender and age cleavages usually structuring social conflicts and organisations. Hostile commentators, on

the contrary, characterise alter-global activists as a bunch of heteroclitite, naïve and unrealistic people rejecting modernisation processes because of their own dominated situation. They are perceived as being manipulated by small groups of political violent agitators, criminals and even terrorists. The development of INSURA, in that ideologically polarised context, has offered an opportunity to build objective descriptions of participants in alter global events.

Our own surveys show that respondents are more often men than women, especially at the No-G8. They are much younger than the average citizen: 40 to 60 per cent of them are less than 30 years old (two to four times more than the population of their respective country) and only 1 to 5 per cent is older than 64 (4 to 12 times less than the average). This goes along with the high proportion of students, especially at the No-G8, and few retired people. As universities and other higher education facilities are located in cities, anti-global activists do predominantly live in cities.

Although many of the activists are still studying, and therefore have not obtained their highest diploma yet, the average duration of studies is very high. Especially at the ESF, many participants have attended higher education and have or have had contacts with the sciences and other intellectual domains: they own a high cultural capital. At the same time, activists' religiosity is weak. Few of them believe in God or practice a religion, be it by praying alone, attending religious meetings or ceremonies, or engaging in religious groups. Activists who are not studying at the university level often work or they are unemployed. They are rarely stay-at-home moms or dads. The ones who work often have a favoured position: professionals, executives, managers and employees. These sociological properties can be summed up as pertaining to the 'middle class radicalism' described by Cotgrove and Duff (1980). Indeed, they place themselves clearly at the extreme left side of the left-right scale, while the distribution in the average population is rather symmetrical. Some of them also refuse the scale rest. What usually appears as a lack of political competence proves to be another sign of a critical approach to classical politics in the alter-global movement, as the examination of the socio-ideological profile of 'no answers' to this question shows.

### Individual Features of Cosmopolitanism... But Rooted Cosmopolitanism

Although more than four out of five respondents come from the countries where the two events took place, they show high levels of cosmopolitanism that is a propensity to keep up links with other countries. Table 9.1 shows that 75 per cent of the No-G8 protesters (respectively 77 per cent of the ESF participants) speak at least one foreign language and 50 per cent (respectively 45 per cent) speak at least two languages. The table also shows that 53 per cent (respectively 22 per cent of the ESF participants) have spent more than one year abroad and most of them keep up professional, friendship or family ties with people living

**Table 9.1. Individual Evidences of Cosmopolitanism (percentages)**

	ESF	No-G8
<b>Foreign languages spoken</b>		
0	23	25
1	32	23
2	30	32
3	12	14
>3	4	6
<b>Spent time abroad</b>		
No	59	22
Yes one year or less	19	25
Yes more than one year	22	54
<b>Keeps up ties with people living abroad</b>		
<b>Professional ties</b>		
Lots of ties	9	10
Some ties	28	29
No ties	63	62
<b>Ties with friends</b>		
Lots of ties	25	31
Some ties	51	51
No ties	24	17
<b>Ties with family</b>		
Lots of ties	17	22
Some ties	31	37
No ties	52	41
<b>Travelled abroad for activist purpose</b>		
Often	5	6
Sometimes	17	19
Seldom	19	20
Never	59	56

abroad; 50 per cent (respectively 41 per cent) have already been abroad for activist purposes. As a result, part of the people at the No-G8 and the ESF come from abroad. These activists already seem to belong to a social class that travels freely across borders and cultures.

Their ideological views seem to be in keeping with their social properties. In accordance with the alter-global label with which most of them agree, their ideo-

logical world is centred on worldly issues and their attacks target international institutions and phenomena. North-South inequalities and the fights against capitalism, multi-national firms and war are the first among the political issues that drove them to come to the events.

The organisational belongings they declare fit with these ideological stances. Some of them belong to international organisations. Several of the most important organisations they belong to aim at political transformations on the international level. Alter-global organisations in the strict sense logically come out first. This seems to confirm the existence of a specific alter-global activist field that would mainly exist at a transnational level. Then, the activists declare memberships to organisations that promote ecology, peace, human rights, in general, and migrants' rights, in particular.

At the same time, alter-globals declare several memberships to national organisations. There were 18 per cent of the No-G8 participants (22 per cent at the ESF) declaring membership to political parties, which seldom develop noteworthy links with foreign parties. Because of the intellectual and academic nature of the ESF, only three per cent of the activists are members of trade unions, compared to 17 per cent at the No-G8 protests. In both events, some people declare to be involved in other rather nationally rooted movements: movements advocating local issues, homeless and unemployed people, or farmers. Their political practice appears to be based on strong local belongings, from which they gain information, competence and access to social networks that are necessary to engage in global politics. As Tarrow (2001) put it, they are 'rooted cosmopolitans' (see also chapters 3 and 4 in this volume for members of the alter-global movement).

This is confirmed by the political integration of the ESF and No-G8 activists. They are much more involved in politics than the average citizen (Table 9.2). More often, they discuss politics or current affairs, which appears as evidence of political competence: they did not come to the events by accident; they know alter-global events are fully political events. Most of them declare that they take part in all ballots, which is noteworthy in countries such as France, where there are six levels of power, and above all in Switzerland, where the number of elections is outrun by the number of federal and local *votes*. Moreover, activists share high levels of conventional and non-conventional political participation. Not only do they take part in large protest events like in Paris and Évian, but they also participate in smaller demonstrations, they go on strikes or sign petitions. A significant share also take part in confrontational actions: resistance to police, occupation of buildings or holding up of traffic. The ESF and the No-G8 look like steps in the continuity of coherent activist biographies, more than exceptional participation in the course of quieter political lives. In this context, one hardly thinks of a new activism that expands to newly open transnational spaces, but rather of a mix of activist generations that are more and more devoted to international issues.

**Table 9.2. Political Properties of Alter-global Activists**  
 Compared to General Population from European Social Survey 2003 when Available.  
 (percentage of all respondents)

	Talking about politics			Means of political action already used		
	ESF	No-G8	ESS CH	ESS F	ESF	No-G8
Never	0	1	4	13	92	95
Seldom	9	7	19	23	90	97
Sometimes	36	32	30	29	76	75
Often	53	55	46	35	68	64
na	2	5	1	0	66	66
<hr/>						
Vote						
Always	76	57			63	56
Often	11	18			56	80
Sometimes	2	6			40	53
Seldom	2	4			34	36
Never	2	7			26	35
Not the right	4	8			10	11
na	3	1			5	12
					2	4
					2	5

### Is Comparison Reason?

As far as the consistency is concerned, INSURA results must be nuanced by some methodological considerations. At least two questions can be asked. Firstly, can INSURA results be interpreted identically year after year and in the different countries where meetings have taken place? Linguistic and ideological contexts should bias answers, all the more so because the proportion of activists from different countries and languages will vary. The cultural and linguistic biases come out again at the event level. Spanish and German demonstrators, for instance, might not understand questions the same. Thus, differences related to the degree of 'confidence in regional authorities', to the wish to 'increase the state's intervention' or to 'break off with present development models' might be over-, under- or misinterpreted. As a consequence, comparisons between results from the ESF and the No-G8 events have to be handled with care. An inquiry based on 83 per cent French respondents, like what occurred in Paris, must encompass severe cultural biases compared to an inquiry based on activists from more diverse origins, even mostly European ones. The education variable, for example, is biased by strongly differing education systems in France, Switzerland and Germany: apprenticeship is unevenly developed and rated by students and employers; higher education is unevenly developed and homogeneous; the researchers share differing representations of what each diploma sociologically means. Our coding scheme, as an illustration, did not match properly with the ESS surveys. This well-known problem of comparative studies proves even more complex for religion, left-right positioning, values or policy opinions.

Secondly, do our results represent the anti-global movement as a whole? Anti-global events are all the more ephemeral because people participating in them are mostly young. Therefore, many participants are newcomers to protest politics, as the age structure shows. Part of them might persist in protest politics and be back at the next alter-global event: they will keep most of their sociological properties and simply move from the newcomer category to a category of older and more experienced activists. But part of them will drop out. They might be replaced by clearly different profiles. The replacement of cohorts reduces the capacity of sporadic surveys to represent a mobilised population in general.

We still do not know much about activist biographies, which have been proven decisive in explaining their engagement (but see chapter 2 in this volume). Tracing the exact succession of employments, family changes, political engagements and associational memberships would require much more thorough questions than what can be done during a street demonstration or a public conference. Biographies are all the more crucial to explain current activism and its transnational aspects. Contrary to general population surveys, social reasons of engagement cannot be considered as mere consequences of objective and subjective class belonging, religious faith and practice, cultural and ideological cleavages and so on; all of these properties are also determined by years of activ-



ist practice – this is a pretty powerful process of secondary socialisation inside political organisations.

The ESF took place near the city of Paris, which concentrates several large universities. It was a rather intellectual mobilisation, made of numerous conferences and debates about globalisation and related topics, while the No-G8 in the Geneva region combined conferences with street demonstrations and other outside performances. Not only are the activists locally rooted, but the events themselves are as well. They also aimed at different audiences, which brings down the possibility of a generalisation of the results. Many respondents declared that they came to the event with an organisation. As collective trips reduce the material cost of participation, a marginal organisation may be overrepresented, while a larger organisation that did not plan any collective travel will be represented by only a few well-off and/or very motivated members. All of these aspects reduce the longitudinal ambitions of event-focussed questionnaire studies significantly: one given survey does not necessarily represent a moment of the history of alter-globals.

### INSURA as a Tool to Measure Multi-organisational Fields

Since the beginning of the century, in the context of a dramatic development of network analysis (Diani and McAdam 2003), social researchers have more and more used individual data on multiple belongings to formulate hypotheses and draw conclusions about organisational networks. Two questions arise here. First, on what ground can we use a measure of multiple belongings to determine an organisational web? Second, can we define a social movement as a network of people and/or organisations, a network that would be turning transnational?

The measure of multiple memberships can be converted into a coincidence matrix, which allows formulating hypotheses about the extent to which organisations and organisational fields are linked by means of multiple memberships, participation or identification. Such reasoning is based on the concept of 'multi-organisational field' (Curtis and Zurcher 1973). Curtis and Zurcher (1973: 53) suggest that:

Organisations in a community setting approximate an ordered, coordinated system. Inter-organisational processes within the field can be identified on two levels, which conceptually overlap: the organisational level, where networks are established by joint activities, staff, boards of directors, target clientele, resources, etc; the individual level, where networks are established by multiple affiliations of members.

With INSURA data, one cannot identify the web of existing relations among individuals since no variable compiles the relationship with other activists, such as, for example, in McAdam and Fernandez (1990). One has to rely on a descrip-

tion of declared proximities or belongings of individuals to given organisations or clusters of organisations (e.g., environmental or human rights movement).

Although our questionnaire design aimed at individual participants to the ESF and to the No-G8 protests, we are interested in understanding the social logics of engagement (Table 9.3). It appears that a majority of the alter-global activists are closely embedded in social and organisational structures. In both

**Table 9.3. Social Embeddings of Participants (percentage)**

	ESF	No-G8
<b>Are your colleagues, family, friends active activists?</b>		
Count of groups that are rather or very active activists		
None	18	17
One	36	33
Two	30	32
Three	12	12
Don't know	4	6
<b>Who did you come to the event with? First answer given</b>		
Alone	32	13
With close friends	23	57
With acquaintances, neighbours	2	5
With colleagues	6	3
With member(s) of your family	8	7
With your organisation, group	23	15
<b>Who or what impelled you to take part in the event? Up to 3 (ESF) or 5 (No-G8) answers possible</b>		
Close friends	25	38
Colleagues	9	4
Acquaintances, neighbours	6	7
Family	9	8
The organisation, group you belong to	52	28
Another organisation, group	12	9
Internet	13	13
The media	14	16
Posters, handbills	7	15
Your convictions, ideals (only ESF)	—	23
Other	19	21

events, less than 20 per cent of them declare that neither their colleagues, nor their family nor their friends are 'rather active activists'. Also, 34 per cent of them declare that two or three of these social circles are overlapping. This structural embedment translates into the concrete circumstances of participation. When asked 'what impelled you to come', 23 per cent mention their convictions (G8 only), but 38 per cent (25 at the ESF) mention their friends and 28 per cent (52) the organisation to which they belong. Although in the end 13 per cent (32) came alone, 57 per cent (23) came (mainly) with close friends and 15 per cent (23) came with their organisation. Social constraints matter much more than forecast by theories of disorganised individuals.

This encourages further investigation about organisational networks. We recorded numerous multiple memberships. In both events, each activist declares on average about 2.5 present memberships, be they active or passive. This result calls for a thorough study of combinations of individual affiliations in order to scheme indirectly the organisational structure of the antiglobal field. This way, we follow the theoretical approach suggested by Doug McAdam (1986) in his study of the Freedom Summer anti-segregation action.

As for the method, both M1 (2,000 individuals x 20 memberships)<sup>10</sup> matrices are converted into M2 (20 x 20 memberships) matrices that are processed by means of ascending hierarchical cluster analysis.<sup>11</sup> Figure 9.1 translates, in the case of the ESF, the main resulting classes into clusters and proximity in the classification tree into two-dimensional spatial proximity. The size of organisational labels is proportionated to the raw total of memberships and the thickness of

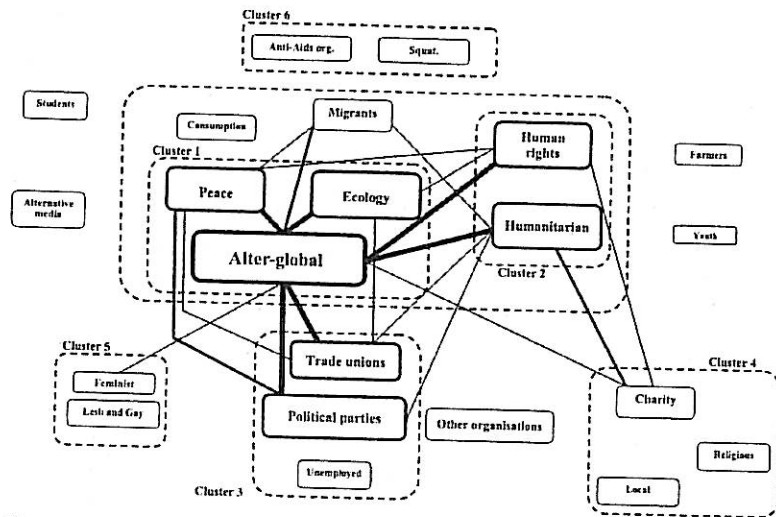


Figure 9.1. Network of Organisations According to Their Constituencies Among 2003 ESF Activists

links between two organisations to the raw number of shared memberships. We obtain what can be labelled schemes of the network of organisations as represented in the events through their (declared and presumed) members.

While some organisations seldom combine with each other, some do frequently, gathering themselves into clusters that share distinct mean socio-ideological properties and distinct mean political attitudes.

The properties of clusters are extracted from their 'cores', namely, the 7 to 16 per cent of activists who represent each of them best.<sup>12</sup> As an example, the main cluster of the ESF organisational structure (Figure 9.1) gathers alter-globals in general, peace and ecology activists. Attac, one of the core organisations of the French alter-global field, logically provides a majority of these activists. They are younger than the mean, not very religious, with many full-time managers, who seldom vote, and, if so, they choose the Greens or the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire. They took part in former alter-global events and identify with this movement.

Table 9.4 compares six ESF organisational clusters according to their degree of cosmopolitanism, an index that synthesises the ability to speak foreign languages and the time spent abroad. This criterion proves clearly discriminating. The cluster most exclusively devoted to (conventional, traditional) politics (cluster 3) reaches a very low (and homogeneous) level of cosmopolitanism: these activists are most strongly rooted in national mobilisations and organisations. The feminist and gay and lesbian cluster (cluster 5) is composed of both very

Table 9.4. Mean Degree of Cosmopolitanism for Members of Clusters of Organisations Taking Part in the ESF (Significant Positive Differences with all Respondents' Scores in Italics)

Clusters and the kinds of organisations they gather	Degree of cosmopolitanism					
	Null	Low	Medium	High	Mean	s. d.
Cluster 1: Anti-globalisation, ecology, peace	15	37	<i>41</i>	7	2.8	2.2
Cluster 2: Human rights and humanitarian	15	31	<i>44</i>	11	3.3	2.4
Cluster 3: Trade unions, political parties and unemployed	37	36	25	2	1.7	2.0
Cluster 4: Charity, religion and local	23	37	33	7	2.5	2.3
Cluster 5: Feminist and gay-lesbian	30	25	20	25	3.0	3.0
Cluster 6: Anti-AIDS and squatters	9	55	36	0	2.4	1.7
<b>All respondents</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.3</b>

strong and very little cosmopolitan activists, which does not contradict its marginal structural coherence. Human rights and humanitarian activists (cluster 2) as well as alter-globals, ecologists and pacifists (cluster 1) are very cosmopolitan, as if international causes would correspond to international activists.

Comparing the mainly French ESF graph with the French part of the No-G8 graph<sup>13</sup>, one would overweigh local, temporal, contingent factors relatively to the system of organisations that irrigates each anti-global event. In both cases, alter-global organisations in the strict sense are heavy and central, which is no surprise. Moreover, ecology, humanitarian, trade unions and political parties are among the largest sub-fields. Unions and parties share a lot of members, as well as feminist and gay-lesbian organisations, or humanitarian and human rights. Comparing the No-G8 graphs according to the respondents' nationality, parties, unions and students compose one stable cluster, but differences are obvious, notably the centrality of French alter-global activists and the more federal looking Swiss graph. This tends to show that the existence of a transnational alter-global field, seen from the organisational point of view, is still a fiction.

Similarly, from the contrast between the two organisational webs (based on information given by French and Swiss activists), we dare not infer differences between national histories of social mobilisation. Several studies have established such differences. But above all, the analysis shows that organisations diversely tangle with the event, according to diverse political contexts. For example, taking part in the No-G8 events must have cost more to the French: the distance was bigger, many people were off during the long Pentecost weekend, and parallel protests concerned a large part of the potential participants.

Another crucial objection lies in the translation from individual multiple belongings to an organisational net. Organisational ties do consist in exchanges through individuals with multiple activities, these exchanges being linked with common ideological mottos, common conceptions of society, common generational roots and common conceptions of engagement. But they also encompass concrete political alliances, historical links, participation to common struggles, leaders working together and so on.

As a consequence, reducing the anti-global organisational field to our graphs would largely overinterpret its institutional value. The underlying assumption of such analyses is that activists' participation in multiple organisations helps foster participation between the organisations, and can serve as a fairly reliable predictor of actual inter-organisational linkages. As Diani (2005: 2-3) writes in a recent piece on the demonstrations on 15 February 2003: 'the web of the connections, produced by these involvements, constitutes the structural basis of the coalitions that promoted the demonstrations.... [It maps] the structure of the ties that linked the different types of organisational actors involved in the coalitions. This, regardless of whether they actually managed to establish publicly visible alliances on those specific occasions'. Such a conception is consistent

with a number of recent studies tending to show that sustained communication and cooperation between people in a given milieu can foster a sense of solidarity and we-feeling, independently from organisational links (Bayat 1997; Ben-nani-Chraïbi and Fillieule 2003). Diani is certainly right to stress 'the possibility that *recurrent patterns of interactions* generate the same type of solidarity and commitment that one experiences within associations. ... it is also likely that a distinct sense of commonality and specific bonds will arise linking people *repeatedly sharing the same experiences*. In this particular sense, it is not unreasonable to think of *sustained involvement in protest activities* as a particular type of group membership' (Diani 2005, emphasis added).

Ultimately, what is a social movement? Contemporary social movement theory lies upon a now challenged definition of the object. The political process perspective defines social movements as 'a sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of repeated public displays of that population's worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment' (Tilly 1999: 257). For more than a decade, that definition, which finds its main operationalisation via protest event analysis, has been criticised for its exclusive focus on interactions between challengers and power holders, its objectivist and simplistic definition of the state (Fillieule 1997; Goodwin and Jasper 2003), its tendency to blend social movements and protest events, and its tendency to treat the former as aggregates of the latter (Armstrong 2002; Taylor and Van Dycke 2004; Fillieule 2006).

The definitional question is all the more puzzling in the case of the alter-global movement, which has large and fluid boundaries that are changing across time and national contexts. That is why the alternative definition of a social movement, offered by Diani (1992, 1995), who suggests that a movement is made up of a network of organisations and individuals with a collective identity that engages in collective action using semi- or non-institutional channels,<sup>14</sup> is widely used by researchers working on the 'movement of movements'.

In our opinion, Diani is absolutely right in stressing the fact that 'a movement is a form of collective organisation with no formal boundaries, which allows participants to feel part of broad collective efforts while retaining their distinctive identities as individuals and/or as specific organisations and at the same time, that collective identities are reproduced through actual or virtual interactions' (2001: 6). Yet, it remains that the belongings marked through IN-SURA do not measure the components of that definition. As we have shown before, most of the respondents are participating for the first time and because they live close to the location of the event. One cannot reasonably consider that the data gathered on multiple belongings accurately picture the web of organisations, except if one sets apart the first time and/or local people to concentrate only on people giving evidence that they form enduring links and commitments within protest activities.

## Conclusion

Research about the transnationalisation of social movements might take two ways: either inquiries about structural efforts by organisations and individuals from different countries to collaborate across borders; or inquiries about particular moments when foreign organisations and individuals mix and combine their actions along common causes. INSURA conducted during international events, like the studies at the ESF and No-G8 presented here, supposedly belong to the second way, through a comparison between individual profiles from different countries, and from different national organisations and international organisations. Yet, this method can repeat, sometimes even increase, the problems met at the national level, that is, problems due to differential participation and relation to social science, differential contexts of mobilisation, differential behaviour during the event, and differential cultural background. Participation changes with distance from home and with the police opinion on their origin. Social science protocols might carry along differing opinions on questionnaire inquiries, varying reluctance to answer and varying liability to lie or distort answers. The ESF and the No-G8 do not have the same meaning and importance for activists from different origins; they do not insert the same way in national long-term mobilisation agendas and in national ideological backgrounds. Sampling obstacles come from different behaviours during the event, possibly tricking the sampling strategies of researchers. Linguistic, cultural and institutional aspects of distinct origins make it all the more difficult to come up with a wording that generates comparable answers for demographics, political attitudes or values; finding the right words comes even more knotty when thin biographical or ideological distinctions have to be made, requiring knowledge of multiple cultures. At the end, if one does not pay attention to all of these obstacles, one may produce 'Canada dry comparisons', that is, research that looks, smells and tastes comparative, but that is actually not.

## Notes

1. See also Favre, Fillieule and Mayer (1997) for a systematic critique of the biases related to opinion polls about unconventional action.
2. See Fillieule and Tartakowsky (2008, ch. 4) for a review.
3. One should note that the design of the methodology as well as the administration of the questionnaires were realised in collaboration with Louis Harris France. All of the interviewers were paid staff and were trained long in advance. The research was financially supported by the CEVIPOF (Science-Po Paris) and by Louis Harris, who had a vested interest in developing a new technique.
4. See <http://demos.iue.it>, workpackage 5, on the ESF in Athens. One should also mention other specific INSURA that have been conducted, more or less in the framework of the DEMOS project, such as Giugni and Bandler's surveys in Zurich

- on 17 January 2004 and for the Other Summit of Davos the same year; Rucht, Haug, Teune and Yang's research on the first national social forum in Germany (Erfurt) in 2005; and Saunders and Rootes on the Make Poverty History march in 2005.
5. If 15 February was not exactly an alter-globalisation event, it remains that 'it was coordinated and staged by an international network of movement organisations, most of which originated within the so-called global justice movement. It was on the European Social Forum meetings of the global justice movement that the protest was set up and organised' (Walgrave and Verhulst 2003).
  6. The '*Groupe de recherches sur l'activisme altermondialiste*' (GRAAL, University of Paris – Sorbonne, France) and the '*Centre de Recherche sur l'Action Politique de l'Université de Lausanne*' (CRAPUL, Lausanne, Switzerland) have undertaken a series of studies about large alter-global protest events, where activists from all countries have recurrently been meeting since the beginning of the 1990s. This chapter deals with two events: the No-G8 protest in the French-Swiss region of Évian-Lausanne-Geneva in June 2003, and the second ESF in the Paris region, in November 2003. For both events, the same research design was applied: a four-language questionnaire (in French, English, German and Italian) distributed to activists who were to fill it in right on the protest place, except for a few of them who sent it back by mail. About 2,000 questionnaires were gathered in each event, without any strict statistical sampling. The research team only aimed at hitting the most diverse profiles in the different places where people met and discussed, demonstrated, lived: conference rooms, camping villages in Évian region, streets.
  7. This means that in alter-globalisation events, a more or less reduced share of the participants will systematically refuse to be interviewed (activists in the black bloc and more generally anarchist activists).
  8. For an alternative method also based on Scidler, see McPhail, Schweingruber and Ceobanu 2006.
  9. That notion is not so evident to define. Nationality is certainly one, albeit insufficient, indicator. Depending on the location of the event, people living abroad can be closer to the event than national residents. For obvious reasons, that was the case for the INSURA in Lausanne and Geneva. Therefore, Bedoyan and Van Aelst's (2003) attempt to identify participation costs at demonstrations in Brussel by nationality is, among other reasons, pointless.
  10. Respondents were asked about *active* or *passive* belongings. We assigned a double rating to the first in M1.
  11. Our cluster analysis maximises the mean between-clusters distance, in order to discriminate clusters in the best possible manner. Distance between clusters  $i$  and  $j$  is the sum of squares of distances between the organisations they respectively include. Profiles of organisations in M2 are centred and reduced to control size effects. Other algorithms have been tested in order to check for stability: instabilities do exist but they reveal local structure, and do not alter the general structure.
  12. For example, cluster 1 is made of 871 alter-globals, 393 ecologists and 376 pacifists, some of these cumulating in two or three of these belongings. The core of cluster 1 is composed of 270 activists who define it particularly well, that is, they belong to at least two of these three organisations, and they do not belong to too many organisations external to this cluster.

13. The graphs related to the No-G8 event are not published here because of a lack of space. The graph for all national origins can be found in Fillieule et al. (2004), or may be obtained upon request.
14. '[Social movements] are networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organisations or not, depending on shifting circumstances. As a consequence, a single organisation, whatever its dominant traits, is not a social movement. Of course, it may be part of one, but the two are not identical, as they reflect different organisational principles' (Diani 1992: 13).

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