



***IN THE CORRIDORS AND IN THE STREETS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT
CAMPAIGNS IN THE EU***

Louisa PARKS

PhD thesis defence on 9 January 2009

Abstract

This doctoral thesis aims to trace the impacts of campaigns carried out by coalitions of social movement organisations in the transnational arena of the EU. In order to accomplish this task, an original approach to process tracing is adopted using methods used in social movement studies. The internal aspects of campaigns are investigated using a dynamic, cross-time and multi-level, frame analysis, while the contexts of the campaigns are analysed through political and discursive opportunity approaches adapted to the peculiarities of the EU arena. Four case studies, including two campaigns concerned with environmental / public health policy (GMOs and coexistence, and the REACH legislation) and two concerned with broadly defined social policy (the mid-term review of the Lisbon agenda and the Services directive), make up the empirical part of the study.

Drawing on documentary evidence as well as semi-structured interviews with staff members from the core SMOs involved in each campaign at the Brussels level, the processes leading to access, agenda, or policy outcomes (or indeed non-outcomes) are traced using the analytical methods mentioned above. These processes provide the basis for preliminary conclusions on the nature of campaigning in the EU. Elite allies are found to be important in securing desired outcomes in campaigns, as are solid, previously agreed shared frames between coalition organisations. The cases also show that the EU is not an arena where conventional tactics (i.e. lobbying) are always enough – indeed the ability to campaign effectively at multiple levels using appropriate tactics is identified as a major factor in campaigns that saw positive outcomes. This finding challenges the idea that the EU arena is unsuitable to protest actions (e.g. Marks and McAdam 1996). Finally, the study uncovers the beginnings of a divide between ‘technical’ and ‘political’ campaigns in the EU. Stemming from the finding that national contexts still provided the opportunities or threats that appeared most important in campaign outcomes, the cases showed that where campaigns were more ‘political’ - in that they were more ideologically charged - groups were more likely to be able to mobilise grassroots members and secure their desired outcomes. In more ‘technical’ cases, where the European Commission played a greater role, mobilisation efforts were subdued as groups sunk their resources in long cycles of consultation and knowledge production geared to the needs of the Commission.



Jury: László Bruszt (EUI), Donatella Della Porta (EUI) (Supervisor) Carlo Ruzza (University of Leicester), Sidney Tarrow (Cornell Univ.) (by videolink)

Bio

Louisa Parks graduated in French and Politics from the University of Leeds in 2002 with first class honours, having also completed a year of study at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Strasbourg, where she was involved in setting up the multi-lingual current affairs webzine *cafebabel.com*. After graduating she went on to work as a parliamentary researcher in the office of the late Phillip Whitehead MEP at the European Parliament, where she developed a special interest in the role and possibilities for social movement organisations working at the European Union level. She then took this interest and developed it into this doctoral thesis at the European University Institute in Florence, defending her work in January 2009. She has presented contributions at an extensive range of conferences, and has published work to date (December 2009) in two edited volumes, 'The Illusion of Accountability in the European Union' published by Routledge, and 'The Transnationalization of Economies, States, and Civil Societies' published by Springer. Louisa has also translated a number of academic and other texts, from work by Antonio Negri, the speeches of the (ex) Italian Minister Emma Bonino, to texts by Alessandro Pizzorno. She is currently based in Treviso province in northern Italy with her husband and two children.