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Specifying the concept of political opportunity structures

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Berclaz, Julie; Giugni, Marco

Chapter One

Specifying the Concept of Political Opportunity Structures

Julie Berclaz and Marco Giugni

The Classical Theory of Political Opportunities

A great deal of work on contentious politics during the past two decades has focused on the role of political opportunity structures for the emergence, forms, and, less often, outcomes of social movements. The early work of Charles Tilly clearly played a major role in initiating this strand of research. In particular through the first systematic statement in *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978), the concept of political opportunities has paved the way to a "silent revolution" in the study of popular contention and social protest. From a matter of grievances and discontent, it became a matter of power struggle and political process.

Tilly's legacy was taken up successfully by such authors as Herbert Kitschelt (1986), Hanspeter Kriesi (see Kriesi et al. 1995), Doug McAdam (1999b), Sidney Tarrow (1998b), and many others. In the meantime, the idea of seeing contention as a result of power relations, opportunities, and

threats was elaborated and formally defined through the concept of political opportunity structures for use in empirical analysis of actual instances of contention. First introduced by Eisinger (1973) to study the relationship between the degree of institutional access in American cities and the protests that hit the United States in the late 1960s, this concept was then elaborated by various authors and used to analyze the impact of the political context on social movements and other forms of contentious politics, to such an extent that it became hegemonic in the existing literature.[1]

Generally speaking, political opportunities refer to those aspects of the political context of movements that mediate the impact of large-scale social changes on social protest. Tarrow (1996c: 54) has aptly defined them as *"consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements"* (emphasis in original). As Gamson and Meyer (1996) pointed out, there are today nearly as many definitions of political opportunity structures as there are studies using this concept for empirical purposes. Similarly, Goodwin and Jasper (2004) have stressed the tendency to stretch this concept to cover a wide variety of empirical phenomena and causal mechanisms. McAdam (1996: 27) made an attempt to summarize the existing definitions into four main dimensions: the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity, the presence or absence of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression.

Some of these aspects of the external environment of social movements are rather stable (e.g., the institutional structure of the state), while others are more volatile and subject to shifts over time (e.g., political alignments). Yet they all are of a very general nature and imply a pattern of influence that concerns all kinds of challenging groups in a given political context. In other words, these "classical" political opportunity structures represent a general setting that is assumed to affect all movements in a similar fashion and to a similar extent, as if they could be defined irrespective of the characteristics of specific issue fields and collective actors. This clearly is a major limitation to this model, one that sometimes can lead to inaccurate or—worse—wrong predictions. For one thing, political institutions do not affect all social groups to the same extent. Take the example of migrants. Access to the political system is defined in the opportunity approach by the characteristics of political institutions and their impact on challenging groups. Thus, the strength of the state, the degree of (territorial and functional) centralization of the state, the presence of direct democratic procedures, and so forth provide a mix of opportunities for the mobilization of challenging groups. However, migrants often lack basic citizenship rights allowing them to "make use" of these institutions to mobilize. The institu-

tions that affect their mobilization are (partly) to be found elsewhere, as for example in the citizenship rights that facilitate or prevent their being part of the national community. Similarly, the unemployed, another socially excluded group, are probably affected more by specific legislation pertaining to the welfare state than by such general political institutions as the strength or degree of centralization of the state. Thus, rights deriving from welfare provisions are likely to have an important impact on their mobilization, while they probably play no role whatsoever for other groups and movements. It is this idea that we would like to elaborate in this chapter, starting from what we see as one of the first attempts to specify the concept of political opportunity structure.

Issue-Specific Opportunity Structures

Kriesi et al. (1995: chap. 4) suggested a way to define the concept of political opportunity structures in more specific terms and hence to increase its explanatory power. They proposed a specification based on the idea that political opportunities might be more favorable or less favorable according to the issues raised by challenging groups and the issue fields (policy domains, in their terminology) they address. As a result, instead of being fixed and constant for all movements, hence influencing the whole social movement sector in the same way and to the same extent, political opportunity structures are at least in part issue specific.

Following this line of reasoning, the authors have looked at how political authorities and allies may provide different responses to the challenges addressed by social movements. In this respect, they proposed a distinction between high-profile and low-profile policy domains depending on how members of the polity define them on the basis of their conception of the core tasks and interests of the state.[2] Specifically, issues addressing high-profile policy domains are more threatening for the state than issues targeting low-profile domains or issue fields. The openness and closedness of the political system, according to their argument, varies across policy domains and therefore the system is less accessible to certain challenges and more open to others. In other words, political opportunities are more favorable for certain challenges and challenging groups than for others. In terms of the two dimensions that form the general structural setting for the mobilization of social movements in their conceptualization—the formal structure of the state and the prevailing strategies of the authorities—movements addressing high-profile policy domains, which pose a greater threat to the state, face rather closed political opportunity structures, while movements addressing low-profile policy domains, which are less threatening for the members of the polity, face rather open political opportunity structures.

Similarly, the strategies of political authorities are likely to be exclusive toward the former and inclusive toward the latter.

Kriesi et al. (1995) took antinuclear and ecology movements as examples, respectively, of high-profile and low-profile movements, and showed that the more moderate action repertoire of the latter can in part be explained by the less threatening character of environmentalist claims, as compared to antinuclear opposition or peace activism, which often touch upon the core interests of the state. Their explanation is a bit more elaborated than that, as they relate the high-profile or low-profile character of policy domains to a constructionist argument about the politicization of issues and how the members of the polity define the state's core interests. The main point for our present purpose, however, is that a general and invariant view of political opportunity structures is replaced by a more issue-specific definition that makes it possible to explain both intranational differences and international similarities that would have remained obscure in the "classical" approach.

The idea that political opportunity structures are flexible to different types of issues paves the way for a further development that, in our view, represents an improvement of the political process approach to social movements, in both conceptual and explanatory terms. This development consists in acknowledging that opportunity structures can vary from one issue field to another as well as among types of collective actors. Therefore, it is necessary to define field-specific opportunity structures.

In the remainder of this chapter, we would like to illustrate the advantages of the issue-specific approach to political opportunity structures through two examples concerning two highly contested political fields: migration and employment. In doing so, we take a second idea suggested by Kriesi et al. (1995: chap. 2) but going back to Tilly's (1978) seminal work, namely, the idea of "concrete opportunities" as a way to bridge the gap between abstract political opportunity structures and actual movement behavior.[3] Proposing a motivational theory consisting in a set of derivatives of the political opportunity structures that directly affect the costs and benefits of collective action, Kriesi et al. made an attempt to specify the mechanisms that translate social structures into individual and group actions. Thus, their explanatory model is made of three levels of analysis (see figure 1.1): the general political opportunity structure (the structure of social cleavages, the political institutions, the prevailing strategies of authorities, and the configuration of political alliances), the concrete opportunities representing individual perceptions of these structural aspects of the political system (repression, facilitation, the couple reform/threat, and the chances of success), and the action level (extent and forms of collective mobilization).[4] In our illustration of the issue-specific opportunity approach, we will draw a parallel between this model and the two specific opportunity structures for the fields of migration and unemployment.
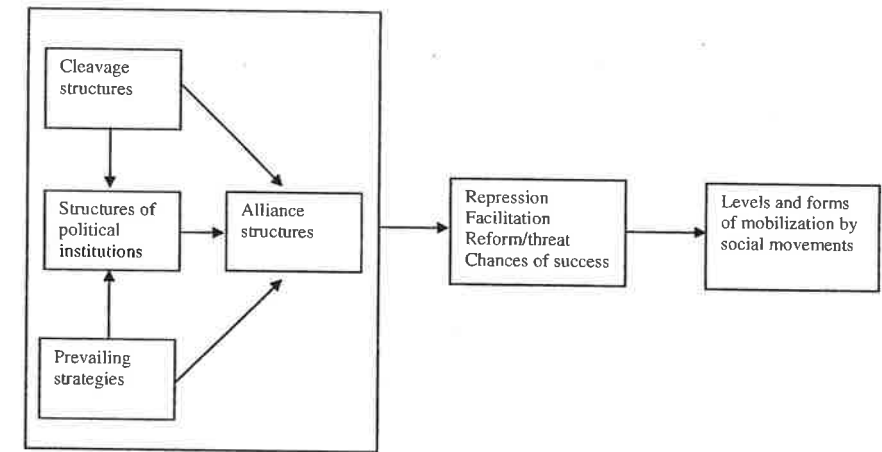

Fig. 1.1. The "classical" model of political opportunity structures
Source: Adapted from Kriesi et al. (1995).

The Case of Migration Politics

The issue-specific opportunity approach was developed in a collaborative effort aimed at studying the contentious politics of immigration and ethnic relations from an opportunity perspective.[5] This research attempts to combine institutional and discursive aspects of the political opportunity structures in the study of migration politics. Unsatisfied with the all-too-abstract approach adopted by political opportunity theorists and following the lead of neo-institutionalist students of citizenship and immigration (e.g., Brubaker 1992), we look at the impact of national citizenship and integration regimes on claim making in the field of immigration and ethnic relations. In particular, we try to explain cross-national variations in the collective mobilization of migrants through the concept of models of citizenship, which in this approach form a specific (institutional and discursive) opportunity structure for the claim making in this field.

Citizenship models are conceptualized through the combination of two dimensions: the formal criteria and the cultural obligations of having citizenship rights (Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2001). On the one hand, citizenship can be acquired on an ethnic-cultural or a civic-territorial basis (Brubaker 1992). At stake here is how and to what extent the state grants individual citizenship rights to migrants. On the other hand, states usually follow two main strategies toward migrants: assimilation to the dominant (national) culture (a monist approach) or recognition of particular cultures and identities of migrants (a pluralist approach). At stake here is how and to what extent states grant cultural group rights to migrants.

The resulting typology yields four (ideal-typical) models or configurations of citizenship. The first, *assimilationism,* combines an ethnic definition of citizenship and a monist view of cultural obligations. Here the state pushes toward assimilation to the norms and values of the national community on an ethnocultural basis and tends to exclude from this community those who are not entitled to share its norms, values, and symbols. Germany and Switzerland are typical examples, in spite of recent changes moving in the direction of expanding the rights of immigrants, especially in the former country.[6] The second type is *multiculturalism,* which combines a civic conception of citizenship and a pluralistic approach to cultural obligations. Here foreigners born in the host country are in principle granted citizenship regardless of their ethnic origin, and minorities are granted their right to ethnic difference. Britain and the Netherlands are well-known examples. The third type is *republicanism,* which combines a civic conception of citizenship and a monist view of cultural obligations. It is relatively easy to obtain citizenship rights, but at the price of giving up ethnic-based identities in favor of accepting the republican ideal of the state. France, with its strongly republican conception of the state, is perhaps the most typical example. The fourth ideal type is *segregationism,* which combines an ethnic conception of citizenship with a pluralistic view of cultural obligations. This model is less common than the other three, at least in Europe.[7]

Differences in citizenship models are seen as determining variations in claim making in the migration political field. In particular, the citizenship model is assumed to impact on the levels and forms of mobilization of migrants. If we draw a parallel with the perspective followed by Kriesi et al. (1995), the causal path can be depicted as one going from models of citizenship to migrants' mobilization (or claim making), via a set of specific concrete opportunities that work as intervening or relating variables: the political legitimacy, public resonance, and public visibility of claims (see figure 1.2). In other words, models of citizenship form a specific opportunity structure that provides varying degrees of legitimacy, resonance, and visibility to claims and the collective actors making them, which in turn affects the extent and forms of claim making. This, of course, is not to say that political institutions such as those studied by Kriesi et al. (1995) are irrelevant, but only that in the specific field of immigration and ethnic relations we must look at more specific aspects of opportunities as well, and often these aspects have a greater impact than the general ones. Furthermore, in addition to the institutional side of political opportunities, we must consider their discursive side, which is the one stressed in the simplified version of this model shown in figure 1.2.

This is not the place to go into a detailed discussion of the findings of this research. However, the example of the mobilization of migrants in France and Switzerland will help us to illustrate the advantages of an ap-
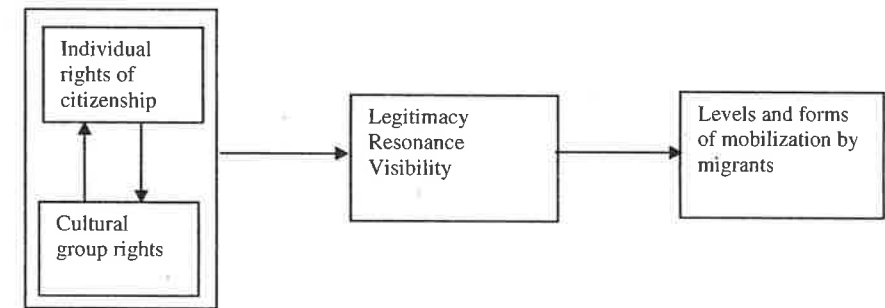

Fig. 1.2. The specific political opportunity structures for the mobilization of migrants

proach that aims to define political opportunities specific to a given political field. Following the classical opportunity approach, migrants should display a lower level of mobilization and a more radical action repertoire in France owing to the lack of access for challengers in this country and the exclusive prevailing strategies of the authorities (Kriesi et al. 1995). The opposite should occur in Switzerland, a country that provides easy access to the political system and tends to facilitate social movements. Indeed, the data provided by Kriesi et al. (1995) confirm these expectations at an aggregate level, that is, for all movements. The data collected in the MERCI project allow us to see whether this finding holds in the case of migrants' mobilization as well.[8]

If we first look at the share of claims made by migrants in France and Switzerland between 1990 and 1998 (see table 1.1), we can see that this does not hold true in this case. Migrants were present to a larger extent both if we consider all forms of claims and if we focus on unconventional actions only. While the classical opportunity approach predicts a stronger mobilization by social movements in Switzerland due to larger opportunities, the mobilization of migrant groups is stronger in France. The differ-

Table 1.1. Presence of migrants in the public domain in France and Switzerland, 1990–1998

	France	Switz.
Share of all claims with migrants present	12.7	6.0
	(3319)	(1695)
Share of unconventional claims with migrants present	31.9	26.8
	(671)	(168)

Note: Includes only claims addressing issues pertaining to immigration and ethnic relations.

Table 1.2. Thematic focus of migrants' claims in France and Switzerland, 1990–1998

	France	Switz.
Immigration, asylum, and aliens politics	26.6	11.7
Minority integration politics	40.7	11.3
Antiracism	21.5	14.7
Homeland politics	5.5	58.9
Other claims	5.8	3.4
Total	100%	100%
N	474	265

Note: Includes all claims.

ence is especially important for all claims, as the presence of migrants in France is more than double that observed in Switzerland.

A closer look at the content of claims gives us a clue to understand why these findings are contrary to the expectation derived from the classical opportunity approach. Claim making by migrants in these two countries varies very much according to their thematic focus (see table 1.2). Here we distinguish between four broad thematic foci: immigration, asylum, and aliens politics; minority integration politics; antiracism; and homeland claims. As we can see, migrants were much more active on issues pertaining to their situation in the host country—that is, on claims relating to the field of immigration and ethnic relations—in France, where only a small number of their claims are addressed to their homeland. The opposite pattern can be observed in Switzerland, where the largest share of claims deals with homeland politics. While this is only marginally attributable to differences in the types of migrant populations in the two countries, the main reason should rather be sought in their distinct models of citizenship. The distinction between an ethnic-based and a civic-based definition of the nation—that is, between a cultural and "ascribed" view of citizenship, on the one hand, and a political and "acquired" view, on the other—is crucial here. Compared to the more inclusive and liberal French conception of national belonging, the more restrictive Swiss definition provides migrants with weaker opportunities to make demands concerning their integration in the host society. The very collective definition of migrants as "foreigners" in Switzerland, as opposed to "immigrants" in France, for example, narrows the legitimacy of these claims and of migrants as actors to intervene in the political process and debates. Therefore, migrants tend to focus on their homeland rather than their rights and position in the host society. One of the consequences of this is a lower political participation of minority actors in Switzerland.

Table 1.3. Forms of action of migrants in France and Switzerland, 1990–1998

	France	Switz.
Verbal actions and conventional forms	49.5	29.0
Demonstrative and confrontational forms	45.1	58.6
Violent forms	5.3	12.3
Total	100%	100%
N	474	268

Note: Includes all claims.

Similar reasoning can be applied to the forms of actions adopted by migrants when they mobilize. Here, too, the findings go the opposite direction from the one the classical opportunity approach would have predicted. If we look at the distribution of the forms of claim making by migrants in the two countries (see table 1.3), we can see how an issue-specific approach leads to completely different results. Here we distinguish between three main forms of claims: verbal and conventional, demonstrative and confrontational, and violent. The classical approach would predict a more radical action repertoire in France and a particularly moderate one in Switzerland. In other words, we should observe a higher share of violent actions in France. The findings, however, suggest that exactly the opposite occurs, as the share of violent actions carried out by migrants in Switzerland is more than double that observed in France, and the proportion of verbal and conventional forms is much higher in the latter country. Furthermore, migrants in Switzerland make use of more radical forms of claims than the average mobilization in the Swiss context (Giugni and Passy 2001). Again, this is largely explained by the prevailing model of citizenship in Switzerland, which tends to exclude migrants from the national community and hence offers them weaker opportunities to mobilize, in spite of the open general institutional setting. Migrants are less affected by this openness than Swiss citizens, as they tend to be deprived of citizenship rights. This produces a radicalization of their action repertoire because of a more closed political opportunity structure.

In sum, this all-too-cursory look at the relationship between national citizenship regimes and the mobilization of migrants in France and Switzerland shows how important it is to specify the concept of political opportunity structures for a given political field. In the case at hand, we have tried to show that migrants in these two countries face institutional and discursive opportunity structures that affect the political legitimacy, public resonance, and public visibility of certain actors, identities, and claims. The levels and forms of mobilization, in turn, are strongly affected by these varying opportunities.

The Case of Employment Politics

The attempt to define issue-specific political opportunity structures is being made in another research project that focuses on the contentious politics of unemployment.[9] Following an approach similar to the one adopted in the MERCI project, this project examines the relationship between political institutional approaches to employment policy and political conflicts mobilized by collective actors over unemployment in the public domain in six Western European countries. It aims among other things to explain variations in the levels and forms of the mobilization of the unemployed both across countries and over time.

The MERCI project inspired the UNEMPOL project in at least two respects. First, the examples above suggest how important it is to define political opportunity structures that are specific to a given political or issue field. This was one of our points of departure in setting up this project. More precisely, we started from the question whether, similar to what occurs with immigrants and ethnic minorities, the unemployed would be influenced by a set of specific political opportunities and, if so, which ones. Second, we retained from the study of migration politics the idea that the mobilization of collective actors in the employment political field is determined by both institutional and discursive opportunities. In this section we propose a way of conceptualizing the specific opportunity structures for the political field of employment and, more specifically, for the claim making around issues relating to unemployment. In particular, we aim to define a specific set of political opportunities that influence the mobilization of the unemployed. Given the limited literature on the mobilization of the unemployed (e.g., Bagguley 1991; Chabanet 2002; Demazière and Pignoni 1998; Maurer 2001; Piven and Cloward, 1979, 1993; Valocchi 1990), this is a very preliminary and exploratory attempt to provide an institutionalist framework to study this subject.

We propose to derive the first aspects of the issue-specific opportunity structures related to the policy field of unemployment from certain characteristics of the welfare state. Esping-Andersen's (1990) well-known typology of welfare-state regimes suggests one way of doing so. He distinguishes between three regimes according to three criteria: the quality of social rights (universalistic, minimalist/assistentialist, insurance), the effects of redistribution in terms of social stratification, and the way in which the state/market is linked to the family. The six countries included in the UNEMPOL project can be placed in different cells of this typology. For example, Sweden is the paradigmatic case of the social-democratic/universalistic regime; France, Germany, and Italy cluster around the conservative/corporatist regime (although they share several features of the social-democratic/universalistic regime), and Britain is an example of the liberal/residual regime. Switzerland is perhaps a mixed case of a conservative/corporatist regime and a liberal/residual regime.[10]
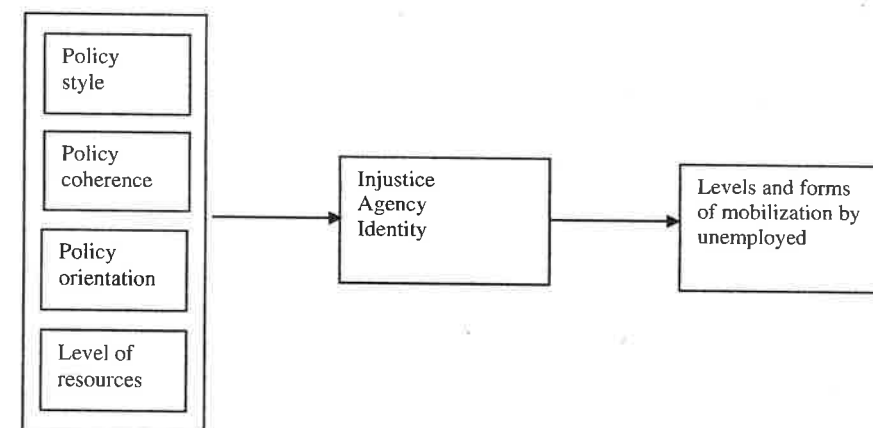
Fig. 1.3. The specific political opportunity structure for the mobilization of the unemployed

Here we would like to go a step further and define a number of aspects of welfare regimes that are likely to influence the mobilization of the unemployed to the extent that they form a specific political opportunity structure for this social group. We think that at least four aspects of welfare regimes should be taken into account in this respect: policy style, policy coherence, policy orientation, and the level of material resources provided by the welfare system (see figure 1.3). These are still quite general concepts, but they can be defined more specifically. To do so, we shall link the definition of policy styles to individual responsibility, that of policy orientation to the distinction between passive and active measures, and that of material resources to the level of social benefits provided by the state.

The first and perhaps broadest aspect is represented by what we may call *policy style*. By that we refer to the "cluster of related symbols, language, images, and algorithms (both implicit and explicit) that can be used to recognize, analyze, and solve social problems and to convince others of one's own solutions" (Jasper 1990: 21; see also Fleck 1979).[11] Thus defined, policy styles are a set of cultural meanings used to generate policy recommendations. In a way, they resemble the concept of citizenship models and they reflect in particular the idea put forward in the MERCI project that political opportunity structures have a cultural and discursive side that affects the formal rules and is in turn affected by them. In the case at hand, these meanings refer, for example, to the ways policy actors define the status of unemployed. In this regard, we may distinguish between a definition of the unemployed as victims of factors that are beyond their control (either ineffective state policies or exclusionary market forces) and a definition of the unemployed as victims of their own mistakes or lack of individual efforts.

These ways of framing the condition of the unemployed are often used implicitly in political discourse to justify one's policy position or to discredit that of other actors. More generally speaking, states are characterized by policy styles that carry a shared understanding and definition of a specific group—for example, the unemployed—that are commonly accepted and have a significant impact on the group's collective identity as well as on its willingness and capacity to act collectively.

When it comes to unemployment, we believe that the question of individual responsibility plays an important role in this respect. Briefly put, the question is, who is to blame for unemployment? The mobilization potential of the unemployed is likely to vary according to the collective answer to this question. People are not likely to challenge the authorities if they do not hold them responsible for their situation. This is why, as Piven and Cloward (1979: 6) have stressed, poor people seldom mobilize: "at most times and in most places . . . the poor are led to believe that their destitution is deserved, and that the riches and power that others command are also deserved. . . . In modern societies, such as the United States, riches and power are ascribed to personal qualities of industry or talent; it follows that those who have little or nothing have only what they deserve. . . . This capacity of the institutions of a society to enforce political docility is the most obvious way in which protest is socially structured, in the sense that it is structurally precluded most of the time."

Since the relationship between citizens and the state is framed differently in different countries, the collective definition of individual responsibility varies from one country to another. Of course, this definition also depends on the actual configuration of power, as the Left is more likely to stress the role of the state, while the Right will probably put a stronger emphasis on individual responsibility. However, following a neo-institutionalist approach, we suggest that, other things being equal, the collective definition of individual responsibility or, more generally, of the state–citizens relationship is country specific.

The next two dimensions bear more directly on the specific policy measures aimed at fighting unemployment. *Policy coherence* refers, on the institutional side of political opportunities, to the degree to which state policies form a consistent global framework rather than a scattered set of independent measures. On the discursive side, it refers to the degree of homogeneity of policy positions and discourses of the power holders in this field. The problem of unemployment can be dealt with in different ways. In this regard, we may distinguish between a global approach and a differential approach (a distinction that bears some similarities with that between a monist and a pluralist view of the cultural obligations imposed on migrants). In the first approach, the state looks for a global solution that may be applied to all cases and hence provide a comprehensive legal framework to fight unemployment. In the second approach, the constituency of the un-

employed is not considered as a whole, and specific groups are treated in different ways, that is, through specific targeted measures. From a policy efficacy point of view, this may lead to a patchwork of measures and sometimes to inconsistent or even contradictory policies.

Policy orientation refers to the specific content of the measures aimed at fighting unemployment. In this regard, we may broadly distinguish between passive and active measures.[12] This distinction is of particular relevance for the collective actors intervening in this field, and it often represents the stake of political debates and contention. Passive measures basically consist of providing social benefits and financial compensation. Active measures aim rather to invest in insertion measures (education, professional training, financial help to start a company, and so forth). The orientation of state policies according to this distinction is particularly significant for the study of the mobilization of the unemployed, because it is an indicator of how the state conceives of this social group, which in turn will affect the group's self-conception and identity. Passive measures are likely to reinforce a negative identity of the unemployed, as they put the group's members in a position of dependency. In contrast, active measures should produce a more positive identity and provide them with opportunities to act, as they feel like subject actors rather than passive objects of state policies. In other words, they acquire a sense of agency.

Finally, the fourth dimension of the specific political opportunity structure for the mobilization of the unemployed that we would like to stress does not refer directly to state policies but, rather, is a result of them. It concerns the *level of resources* made available by the state through its policy measures aimed at fighting unemployment. Of course, resource mobilization theory has pointed to this aspect as a major factor leading to the emergence of social movements (e.g., McCarthy and Zald 1977). Here, however, we use it in a narrower sense and in relation to our constituency. Specifically, as long as social benefits are the only source of income for the unemployed, the material resources available to them depend directly on the state and its policies to fight unemployment. Lacking a minimum level of resources and being dependent on the state for their survival, the unemployed face higher barriers to political mobilization than other groups.

The crucial question at this point, of course, is, what is the effect of these opportunity structures on the levels and forms of mobilization of the unemployed? We propose to model the relationship between the specific opportunity structure and the mobilization of the unemployed in a way similar to the one followed by Kriesi et al. (1995) and in part also in the MERCI project. In this perspective, the general setting formed by the various aspects of the political opportunity structure is one end of a "funnel of causality" with actual mobilization at the other end. In between, a number of intervening variables located at the individual and motivational level allow for specifying "the mechanisms that link the macrostructural level of

political opportunity structures to the collective action of movement actors" (Kriesi et al. 1995: xv). While Kriesi et al. focused on facilitation, repression, success chances, and reform/threat, and the MERCI project stressed legitimacy, resonance, and visibility, we propose to look at another set of motivational factors that have been stressed by the framing approach to social movements.

We believe that the style, coherence, and orientation of policies stemming from welfare regimes as well as the level of material resources they provide to the unemployed affect the ways the latter frame the situation vis-à-vis unemployment. Specifically, we propose to focus on three types of frames (Gamson 1995): *injustice*, *agency*, and *identity*. These can be seen as a set of concrete opportunities that mediate the relationship between the structural setting formed by welfare regimes and the mobilization of the unemployed. Different welfare regimes should determine different sets of frames, which, in turn, should lead to variations in the levels and forms of mobilization or claim making by the unemployed (or other social groups subject to welfare provisions, for that matter).[13]

These framing variables can also be conceived in terms of the changes of consciousness stressed by Piven and Cloward (1979). In this regard, they distinguish between three aspects that may lead to mobilization: the loss of legitimacy of the system, the end of fatalism toward the political order, and a new sense of efficacy. First, the loss of legitimacy resembles the feeling of injustice (Gamson 1995; Gamson, Fireman, and Rytina 1982) and encourages mobilization to change the system considered unjust. Second, the end of fatalism toward the political order conveys the idea that the situation can change owing to the system's own potential for reform (as a result of the system's fragility, innovative leaders, or changes in political structures). Third, a new sense of efficacy gives the unemployed a powerful motivational tool that can push them to mobilize as they anticipate the possible or even likely outcomes of their mobilization. Here we have something similar to the chances of success that have been stressed by Kriesi et al. (1995) as a crucial aspect of the concrete opportunities for the mobilization of social movements.

To these three dimensions of consciousness change we should add a fourth—the sense of responsibility—which, as we said, relates in particular to the most general dimension of welfare regimes, the policy style. We believe that this aspect is particularly important. Indeed, if we are looking for the reasons for the mobilization of a social group that receives state aid, this group's answer to the question of who is held responsible for its situation is crucial to an explanation of its willingness to act. An unemployed person who feels personally responible for her or his situation would probably remain inactive. In contrast, an unemployed person who came to put the blame on the state would be more likely to become involved in some kind of collective action.

Conclusion

There is an increasing consensus today among students of social movements and contentious politics that the concept of political opportunity structures is often defined at a level that is too abstract and too general to be useful in explaining mobilizations regarding specific issues or policy fields. We have suggested a way to redefine this concept so as to make it more specific and hence increase its explanatory power. We assumed that the multidimensional model of political opportunity is flexible and that some of its aspects are specific to a particular issue field and therefore should be defined accordingly. This line of reasoning led us to the hypothesis that these aspects of the issue-specific political opportunity structures are to be found in those features of the state that shape the particular constituency's form of citizenship, that is, the specific form of relationship linking the state to its subject populations. In the field of immigration and ethnic relations politics, these have been subsumed under the concept of models of citizenship, a concept that derives from the combination of two main dimensions: the formal criteria for granting citizenship rights and the cultural obligations for having these rights. The combination of these two dimensions yields four basic configurations of citizenship, which form different opportunity structures (legal-institutional as well as cultural-discursive) and hence channel the mobilization of migrants. Thus, the status of migrants in a given country and their position in the host society help to explain the levels, forms, and content of their mobilization.

A similar line of reasoning applies to the field of employment politics and, more specifically, to unemployment. When analyzing the mobilization of the unemployed, the role of the state is equally important, as it fundamentally shapes their collective identity and citizenship status. In other words, the definition of who is considered unemployed as well as their living conditions is to a large extent shaped by state policies and practices. We suggested looking in four directions to highlight the relationship between state measures to fight unemployment, on the one hand, and the status of the unemployed, on the other. The first direction consists in comparing policy styles, which impact on the development of the identities of the unemployed at the most general level. The second and third aspects also refer to identity formation. In addition, however, they refer to the ways in which the everyday life of the unemployed is influenced by state policies and practices. These two further dimensions are, respectively, policy orientation and the level of material resources provided by the state, which we define here as a measure of the propensity of the state to invest in active measures. While these first three aspects refer to the ways in which the state shapes the status of the unemployed, the last one looks at this relationship the other way around: how the state and the political institutions are perceived by the unemployed and other actors from the civil society.

Here we proposed to use the concept of policy coherence to measure this aspect of the specific opportunity structure for the mobilization of the unemployed.

Parallel to the main argument, consisting in the definition of political opportunity structures specific to certain fields of political contention, we wanted to stress a second development in the literature on social movements and contentious politics: the use of a set of derivatives of the structural opportunities that establish a bridge between the latter and mobilization. No matter how opportunities are defined, the important point here is that we need something that shows how structures translate into action. We started from the idea of concrete opportunities as defined by Kriesi et al. (1995). However, we suggested that these derivatives of the structural setting for the mobilization of collective actors must be defined relative to each specific field of contention. This means that the ways in which political opportunities affect the mobilization of a constituency vary according to both the type of constituency and the type of opportunity structure. For example, the reasons the mobilization of migrants is influenced by the cultural obligations to which this group is subject in order to have access to citizenship rights are different from the reasons that make the level of resources impact on the mobilization of the unemployed. Thus, the intervening variables that link structure to action must also be specified relative to a given political opportunity structure.

Of course, there is much more conceptual work to do in the direction we could only sketch here. This is only a very preliminary attempt to argue for a specification of political opportunity structures according to the political field of contention studied. In particular, our description of the specific opportunity structure for the employment political field is still very rough, especially with regard to the linkages between the structural setting and the three types of cultural frames that form the concrete opportunities. Furthermore, we did not advance hypotheses that link the latter to the actual mobilization of the unemployed. Finally, we could not offer any empirical data to support our arguments concerning this political field. These are all further steps that are necessary to determine whether our approach has some potential for improving existing explanations of contentious politics and the mobilization of certain groups of socially excluded people.

Notes

1. Recent developments pointing to the role of cultural framings, identity, and emotions (see Polletta and Jasper 2001 for a review) are restoring some balance in the social movement literature.

2. See also Duyvendak 1995.

3. See also Koopmans 1995.

4. Using the idea of concrete opportunities, Kriesi et al. (1995: chap. 4) also showed that variations in the patterns of mobilization may be partly explained by a varying relationship between existing political opportunities and certain characteristics that define movement types. The main argument here is, then, that different types of movements do not depend to the same extent on political opportunity structures and that concrete opportunities do not have the same relevance for all movement types.

5. It is the MERCI project (Mobilization on Ethnic Relations, Citizenship, and Immigration), which includes five West European countries: Germany and Britain (study led by Ruud Koopmans, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, and Paul Statham, University of Leeds), France and Switzerland (Marco Giugni, University of Geneva, and Florence Passy, University of Lausanne), and the Netherlands (Thom Duyvené de Wit, University of Amsterdam).

6. E.g., naturalization provisions in Germany have been substantially liberalized in recent years.

7. Historical examples of this model, which sometimes has translated into segregationist practices, are the millet system of the Ottoman Empire (organized along religious rather than ethnic lines) and, more recently, South Africa under apartheid.

8. The data were retrieved by content analyzing one national newspaper in each country (*Le Monde* in France and the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in Switzerland). Claims were sampled by coding every second issue of the newspaper source for the period from 1990 to 1998. We coded claims (speech acts, collective mobilizations, and political decisions) pertaining to immigration, asylum, and aliens politics, minority integration politics (including citizenship), and antiracism. In addition, we coded all claims by migrants, regardless of their relation to this field. Homeland politics is included in this subsample. Finally, we coded all claims by extreme-right actors. For each claim retrieved we coded a number of relevant variables, such as the location in time and place of the claim, the actor who made the claim, the form of the claim, the content of the claim, the target of the claim, and the object of the claim. The coding was done following a semiopen system of code lists that allowed us to obtain as much detail as possible on the variables of interest and at the same time provided a structured scheme of data collection. The information contained in the raw variables was then summarized in a set of variables to be used in cross-national comparisons.

9. It is the UNEMPOL project (The Contentious Politics of Unemployment in Europe: Political Claim-making, Policy Deliberation and Exclusion from the Labor Market), which includes six countries: Britain (study led by Paul Statham, University of Leeds), Switzerland (Marco Giugni, University of Geneva), France (Didier Chabanet, University of Lyon), Italy (Donatella della Porta, University of Florence), Germany (Christian Lahusen, University of Bamberg), and Sweden (Anna Linders, University of Cincinnati and University of Karlstad). The project is financed by the European Commission and the Swiss Federal Office for Education and Science through the Fifth Framework Program of the European Union).

10. We may note that this typology resembles the one proposed by Silver (1994) between three paradigms of social exclusion: solidarity (based on a republican ideology), specialization (based on a liberal ideology), and monopoly (based on a social-democratic ideology).

11. Thus defined, the concept of policy style is somewhat different from Richardson's (1982) well-known definition, which refers to the policy choices that depend on two criteria: the degree of imposition that a government is willing to use to achieve its policy goals and the active or reactive character of its intervention.

12. Following the definition of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), active measures refer to expenditures for administration and public employment service, expenditures for adult vocational training, measures in favor of young people, measures aimed at favoring employment. Passive measures refer to expenditures for unemployment compensation and early retirement financed by private funds.

13. While we conceive of this relationship in general terms (that is, the whole political opportunity structure affects the three types of frames), certain aspects may have a stronger impact on a particular type of frame. For example, the style and orientation of policy probably have a stronger impact on agency (e.g., through the sense of responsibility and the perception of the efficacy of action), the coherence of policy probably affects above all the collective identity of the unemployed, and the amount of material resources probably influences mainly their feeling of injustice.

Chapter Two

Capitalist Law, Relations of Production and Exploitation, and Structured Possibilities for Contention, or Using Three Tillys to Make One Argument

Marc W. Steinberg

The aim of this chapter is fourfold. Three goals concern a partial refashioning of the widely used concept of opportunity structures. First, while analyses of political opportunity structures (POSs) are now commonplace in studies of contention, few if any focus on the law and legal systems. Here I argue for a broadening of analyses to include the law. Second, recently the concept has been substantively critiqued, both by skeptics and by its leading practitioners (Goodwin and Jasper 2004; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), for its static and overly structural nature for analyzing the dynamics of contention.[1] Below I suggest that the concept continues to have analytic utility if we view it more specifically as sets of embedded relations sometimes activated by a critical event. Third, I propose that we refine our