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Transnational Solidarity in Times of Crises

Citizen Organisations and
Collective Learning in Europe

Edited by

Christian Lahusen · Ulrike Zschache · Maria Kousis

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Editors

Christian Lahusen
University of Siegen
Siegen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

Ulrike Zschache
University of Siegen
Siegen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

Maria Kousis
University of Crete Research Center for the
Humanities, the Social and Education
Sciences (UCRC)
Rethymno, Greece



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Notes on contributors

Pinelopi Alexandropoulou is a sociologist. She received her MSc in Sociology from the University of Crete in 2017. She has worked with newly arrived asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors on the island of Samos. She lives in Sweden, where she currently works as a resource teacher for students with an immigrant background.

Simone Baglioni is Professor of Sociology at the University of Parma, Italy. When working on the TransSOL project, he was based at Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland, where he worked for a decade on civil society, solidarity, social innovation, youth employment, and immigration and asylum.

Rafał Bakalarczyk is a research fellow in the field of social and public policy (PhD, Warsaw University, 2016). His main field of scientific interests are ageing policy, long-term care, disability studies, poverty and social exclusion, and the Nordic welfare state.

Olga Biosca is Reader in Social Business and Microfinance at the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health, Glasgow Caledonian University. Her research focuses primarily on poverty, inequality, and social and financial exclusion. She has written articles on social policy and economic development in advanced and developing contexts.

Manlio Cinalli holds a Chair of Sociology at the University of Milan and is Associate Research Director at CEVIPOF (CNRS—UMR 7048), Sciences Po Paris. He has worked in leading universities and institutes, including Columbia University, the EUI and the University of Oxford. He is recipient of many large grant awards and has written widely on citizenship and political integration.

Carlo De Nuzzo is a PhD student on the history of citizenship at Sciences Po Paris. He is a teaching assistant at Sciences Po and at the Università degli Studi di Milano. His research interests include history of citizenship, history of ideas, Fascisms and history of architecture.

Deniz N. Duru is an assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Media at Lund University and holds a PhD from the University of Sussex and worked at the Universities of York and Copenhagen. Her research interests include conviviality, multiculturalism, diversity, social media, media anthropology, anthropology of Turkey and migrants in Europe.

Eva Fernández G. G. is a scientific collaborator at the University of Geneva and at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland. She works at the NCCR On the Move on a research project on post-retirement international mobilities, transnational lifestyles and care configurations. She collaborated on the H2020 TransSOL and Euryka projects. Her research focuses on immigration, inequality, solidarity and political behaviour.

Veronica Federico is Associate Professor of Public Comparative Law at the University of Florence. Her research interests include African constitutional law, constitutional and democratic transitions, fundamental rights, immigration studies, and solidarity. She has participated in various national and international research projects, including the TransSOL research.

Kostas Kanellopoulos is a research associate at the University of Crete where he currently is the principal investigator of the project “EUROPOLITY – The politicisation of European integration in the Greek public discourse”. His main research interests concern social move-

ments and contentious politics, globalisation, comparative politics and the sociology of European integration. He teaches at the University of Peloponnese and the Hellenic Open University and he is the Secretary General of the Hellenic Political Science Association.

Christina Karakioulafi is Assistant Professor of Sociology of Industrial Relations at the Department of Sociology, University of Crete (Greece). Her main research interests concern trade unionism, industrial relations trends and theory, unemployment and precarious employment, workplace violence and artistic work.

Maria Kousis is Professor of Sociology and director of the University of Crete Research Center for the Humanities, the Social and Education Sciences (UCRC). She was/is coordinator or partner in European Commission or nationally funded research projects. Her publications centre on social change, environmental movements, collective action and crises.

Christian Lahusen holds a Chair of Sociology at the University of Siegen, Germany. His research interests include political sociology, social theories and the sociology of European societies. He has directed and participated in various international research projects, including the EU-funded TransSOL project, which he coordinated.

Nicola Maggini is an assistant professor of Political Science at the Department of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Milan, a member of CISE (Italian Centre for Electoral Studies) and a former Jean Monnet Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre of the EUI (European University Institute). His main research interests are socio-political attitudes, electoral systems, voting behaviour and party competition in comparative perspective.

Tom Montgomery is a research fellow at the Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health, Glasgow Caledonian University. His research encompasses issues of youth employment, labour market issues, solidarity and social innovation. His most recent research focuses specifically on issues of labour market integration and the gig economy.

Anna-Lena Nadler works as a teaching assistant and PhD candidate at the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Geneva. She completed an MA in Public Policy at Georgetown University. In her PhD thesis, Nadler studies policy preferences of immigrants and government responsiveness to immigrants in Western Europe.

Ophelia Nicole-Berva holds a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Geneva. She specialised in political theory and worked on the territorial claims of indigenous peoples, especially in Latin America. She is the coordinator of the doctoral programme in Political Science for the Universities of Western Switzerland.

Janina Petelczyc is an assistant professor at the SGH Warsaw School of Economics. Her areas of expertise are the labour market, social security, especially retirement systems, pensions and investment funds, and international comparative social policy.

Cecilia Santilli is a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Social Work, Lund University. Santilli works in the field of socio-political anthropology. Her interests include civil society, social policies and migration in a comparative perspective. She has also worked on media analysis and anti-austerity activism.

Thomas Spejlberg Sejersen is an assistant professor at the Danish School of Media and Journalism. His research interests lie in film and TV production, fiction theory and the Danish civil society.

Giorgos Soros is a sociologist (BA, Panteion University). He holds an MA in Social Organisation and Change from the Department of Sociology at the University of Crete, where he is currently a PhD candidate researching alternative forms of syndicalism in Greece and Spain.

Ryszard Szarfenberg is a political scientist and professor at University of Warsaw, Faculty of Political Science and International Studies. He is the author of numerous publications on social policy, public policy, social services, evaluation, European and international social policy, inequalities, poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion, as well as social assistance and social cooperatives.

Hans-Jörg Trezn is a professor at the Centre for Modern European Studies at the University of Copenhagen and Research Professor at ARENA—Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo. His main fields of interest are sociology of European integration, migration studies, political sociology, and social and political theory.

Ulrike Zschache is post-doctoral researcher in Sociology at the University of Siegen. Holding a dual PhD in European and Global Studies from Siegen and Lancaster University, she has worked and written with regard to the sociology of European societies, European public spheres, contentious politics, social problems, civil societies and transnational solidarity.

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1

Introduction: Citizen Organisations, Transnational Solidarity and Collective Learning in Europe

Christian Lahusen, Ulrike Zschache, and Maria Kousis

Introduction

Citizen groups and organisations are engaged in acts of solidarity throughout Europe during times of welfare retrenchment and austerity, economic and governance crises. Such acts appear to have increasingly embodied a transnational dimension (Smith 1997; Davies 2014). The field of initiatives and activities is as diverse as the range of problems, hardships and deprivations they address. Their solidarity activities range from service provision and social economy projects to public information, political

C. Lahusen (✉) • U. Zschache
Department of Social Sciences, University of Siegen, Siegen,
Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
e-mail: lahusen@soziologie.uni-siegen.de;
zschache@sozialwissenschaften.uni-siegen.de

M. Kousis
University of Crete Research Center for the Humanities, the Social
and Education Sciences (UCRC), Rethymno, Greece
e-mail: kousis.m@uoc.gr

advocacy and street protests. Organisations involved in transnational solidarity have roots as far back as the early 1900s, while depending on national contexts, many others have just been established under neoliberal restructuring and crises of the past decade (Kousis et al. 2020). Also, their forms of organisation diverge considerably when comparing highly formalised entities, such as philanthropic organisations, charities, welfare associations or workers' unions with informal citizen groups and initiatives, like barter clubs and networks, time banks, cooperatives, citizens' self-help groups or solidarity networks covering urgent needs.

All of these groups and organisations share one common trait. They are part of a highly dynamic field of solidarity initiatives responding to ongoing societal challenges. This dynamism seems to be driven by two elements. On the one hand, solidarity groups tend to react to upcoming and changing societal problems and grievances. This is particularly true when examining the situation in Europe from the time of the global financial crisis (2008) and the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, both of which accentuated the importance and growth of solidarity organisations and their activities (Ataç et al. 2016; Lahusen et al. 2018). Many of these groups respond to mushrooming grievances and needs by providing services and goods, engaging in advocacy and increasing public pressure on state authorities. On the other hand, civic groups and organisations are also involved in processes of collective learning that lead to the identification of unmet problems and risks, new types of relations with beneficiaries/target groups, the promotion of new missions and values and the propagation of new instruments and solutions. Solidarity is a principle that emphasises obvious and hidden forms of injustice and discrimination, engages in the empowerment of deprived fringes of the population, propagates the expansion of political and social rights and calls for new forms of conviviality and societal integration. More often than not, these collective deliberations and learning processes are highly contentious, given that transnationally oriented solidarity groups and organisations have differing priorities and missions, and also diverge in their convictions and values.

Previous research has been interested in the arena of civic solidarity, particularly with regard to specific issue fields. Works on disability-related solidarity organisations provide insights into the national level and the global south (Soldatic and Grech 2014; Hande and Kelly 2015), while scholars interested in unemployment and labour solidarity issues have

dealt with organisations at the global, European and national levels (McCallum 2013; Scipes 2016; Baglioni and Giugni 2014) while disregarding transnational solidarity at the local and grassroots level. New work based on random samples of transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs) in eight European countries offers findings based on quantitative data (Lahusen et al. 2018; Kousis et al. 2018; Kousis et al. 2020). However, there is a noticeable lack of qualitative cross-national studies on smaller scale, locally based, transnational solidarity organisations active during the recent crises period, and their crises experiences, the ways in which they perceive constraints and risks, and describe and assess the potentials for transnational solidarity work.

This book is devoted to the analysis of this field, based on fresh data about existing citizen groups and organisations in Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and the UK, across the fields of disability, immigration and unemployment. The aim is to engage in in-depth analyses that allow us to better understand the patterns and dynamics of service and political oriented transnational solidarity. The book will centre on the local, grassroots level, because this is where pressing needs and grievances make themselves felt (Kousis et al. 2020), where citizen-led solidarity activities materialise and where learning processes evolve in a tangible manner. As will be explained in more depth later, the selection of countries and issue fields was motivated by our aim to grasp the diversity of experiences of transnational solidarity organisations. The findings mirror the realities within different countries and organisational fields during hard times, allowing us to identify similarities and differences in the way transnationally oriented solidarity groups and organisations respond to societal challenges and draw lessons from their engagement.

The contributions to this book allow for a truly comparative analysis, because they rely on the same conceptual and methodological framework that has produced eight national datasets in the context of Work Package 2 of the European research project, TransSOL (Lahusen 2020).¹ At least

¹Results presented in this volume have been obtained from Work Package 2 of the TransSOL project (“European paths to transnational solidarity at times of crisis: Conditions, forms, role models and policy responses”). This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 649435. <http://transsol.eu>. See specifically Work Package 2 Integrated Report, Part III (pp. 120–277 and 336–341) at <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational->

30 in-depth and non-standardised, qualitative interviews, 10 in each field, were carried out with representatives and activists of transnational solidarity organisations (conforming to the same criteria of selection) in each country, offering a comparable base of 247 interviews. On these grounds, the book wishes to provide new insights into at least four areas. First, the contributions to this volume are geared to painting a rich picture of locally embedded transnationally oriented civic solidarity in national contexts differentially experiencing the various crises affecting Europe, primarily by highlighting their perceptions of their missions, activities and forms of collaboration. Second, the chapters aim to provide in-depth analyses that allow us to understand the main patterns guiding such solidarity action by citizen groups and organisations across the three issue fields and the way these patterns are related to societal contexts undergoing welfare retrenchment and crises-related policies. Third, authors highlight the ways in which citizen groups and smaller-scale transnational solidarity organisations at the grassroots level engage in collective learning and in adapting their work to these changing circumstances. Finally, the contributions also identify the extent to which these organisations are enmeshed in transnational networks of cooperation and support, allowing us to reflect on the extent to which they are equipped to meet the challenges of European solidarity.

Organised Citizens and Transnational Solidarity: Mapping the Field Conceptually and Empirically

Solidarity is an area of continuous concern for social scientists, as it is one of the basic components of sociability, social integration and societal cohesion. Research has been interested in various manifestations of solidarity, ranging from forms of social solidarity between individuals that emerge from the informal webs of social relations at the micro level (Bell and Boat 1957; Komter 2005) to institutionalised forms of solidarity

[Solidarity.pdf](#). The diligence, enthusiasm and work of all the teams involved in Work Package 2 are gratefully acknowledged.

at the macro level linked to the welfare state and its policies of redistribution (Baldwin 1990; Arts and Gelissen 2001). Organised forms of citizen solidarity are located between these levels, because they reside in coordinated collective actions and thus transcend the individual level, while being tied back to specific groups of citizens, and thus placed below the level of welfare institutions and public policies. These forms of collective action have been at the centre of attention of various research strands with intersecting debates that have addressed topics such as social capital (Putnam 2000; van Oorschot et al. 2006), volunteering (Anheier and Salamon 1999; Gil-Lacruz et al. 2017), the non-profit or third sector (Evers 1995; Salamon and Sokolowski 2016; Kousis 2017), civil societies (Hall 1995; Smismans 2006) and social movements (McAdam et al. 1996; della Porta and Caiani 2009; Kousis et al. 2018). In particular, the latter three debates provide important insights for our study, because they focus on organised collective action, organisational actors, fields or sectors. Although they have not always addressed their research area in terms of solidarity during hard times, most of their findings are immediately relevant for a better understanding of the specificities of organised forms of solidarity as collective action.

We define solidarity as a disposition and practice of help or support towards others (Stjerno 2012: 88; also Bayertz 1999; de Deken et al. 2006; Smith and Sorrell 2014). More specifically, solidarity transcends the unilateral orientation of concepts such as care, empathy or altruism (Passy 2001), even though it shares some of the same features. In fact, solidarity might be described empirically along different types of orientations and relations: top-down relations of unilateral help refer to philanthropic values or altruistic motives in support of others; bottom-up or horizontal relations of support are governed by principles of reciprocity and mutualism (Uba and Kousis 2018; Kousis et al. 2020; Zschache et al. 2020). However, to grasp the specificity of solidarity, we have to understand the peculiar exigency it imposes, given that it is linked to reciprocal expectations and practices between people expressing sameness, togetherness and inclusiveness, which means that solidarity assumes the existence of (imagined) reference groups with some sort of mutual responsibilities. Solidarity might be restricted to national communities (particularistic solidarity), thus excluding outsiders (for instance, migrants), but more

often than not, solidarity implies a wider community of equals (such as humankind—universalistic solidarity), thus eliminating the distinction between insiders and outsiders. In all cases, solidarity presupposes a conception of shared rights, responsibilities and obligations (Lahusen 2020) to be applied to particular and/or universal groups.

Solidarity groups and organisations by non-state/non-corporate actors are a specific manifestation of these dispositions and practices of support to others (TransSOL 2016; Kousis et al. 2018). They mobilise and organise a certain group of people (members, followers, beneficiaries), employ joint forms of actions, delimit a shared collective identity and rally for a shared mission. In this sense, organised forms of solidarity are the means to stabilise collective action of (unilateral or mutual) support across time and to expand its reach beyond the immediate area of activities of individuals. Organisation (as a resource, an activity and an entity) is an important means of mobilising, coordinating and perpetuating citizens' solidarity actions by providing incentives, action repertoires, facilities, norms and identities. This seems to be particularly important in a transnational context like the European Union, where citizens organise in order to support citizens from other countries and confront shared grievances emanating from welfare retrenchment, austerity and crises which European societies face jointly (Balme and Chabanet 2008; della Porta and Caiani 2009; Baglioni and Giugni 2014; Verschraegen and Vandevordt 2019; Fominaya and Feenstra 2019; Monforte 2014; Zamponi 2019). In order to empirically map and analyse this field, we will thus centre on formal or informal (non-state) groups or organisations that carry out solidarity practices with beneficiaries or participants and raise claims on the improvement of their economic and social well-being and the enforcement of existing rights. This field of groups and organisations involves more formal entities, such as welfare associations, union groups and religious organisations. Since our focus is on the local level, however, the range of organisations needs to be expanded towards a wider range of informal groupings, including, for instance, barter clubs and networks covering urgent/basic needs, credit unions, ethical banks, time banks, alternative social currency, cooperatives, self-help groups and social enterprises (Kousis et al. 2018; Lahusen et al. 2018). The specific trait we are particularly interested in is the transnational scope of these

groups and organisations which materialises in goals and missions, activities and beneficiaries, participants or users (see section Rationale for Country and Field Selection below for details, also TransSOL 2016; Kousis et al. 2018; Kousis et al. 2020).

Research on non-profit sectors, civil societies and social movements helps to better understand the dynamics of organised forms of citizen solidarity at the grassroots level, in particular, because it sensitises us to the fact that solidarity involves civic and political components at the same time. In regard to the civic component of solidarity, we can refer to scholarly writing about the non-profit sector and organised civil society, which has taken a closer look at a wide range of groups and organisations that follow a philanthropic mission, aiming to meet the needs of fellow citizens and/or non-nationals. This approach mirrors an understanding of solidarity that tends to privilege compassion, altruism and care (Skitka and Tetlock 1993; Schroeder et al. 1995; van Oorschot 2000). Action repertoires lean strongly towards the provision of help and support, primarily in terms of services and goods (for instance, food, clothing, shelter, medical treatments, financial assistance, education or training). These action repertoires propel the formalisation and professionalisation of the organisations and their members, given that effectivity and efficiency are important reference points when assessing the performance of solidarity work in terms of service provision. These developments have led to the formation of highly populated non-profit sectors with an extended labour market of paid staff and complementary constituencies of members, volunteers and followers (Anheier and Salamon 1999; Kendall 2009; Gil-Lacruz et al. 2017).

In regard to the political component of solidarity, we can refer to research on social movements, because these studies have highlighted the advocatory element of collective actions. This activism is relevant for a study of political solidarity, because these citizen groups and organisations denounce injustice, discrimination and oppression suffered by specific groups or communities, because they speak out on behalf of their rights and engage in activities geared to improving their situation (Scholz 2008; Bayertz 1999: 16). These groups might be engaged in the delivery of services and goods, as well, but the advocatory element is a more dominant part of their mission and activism, given that they rally publicly in

order to pressure governments, public administrations, political and economic elites and other stakeholders to revise public policies, implement programmes and step up remedial actions. Action repertoires make use of advocacy activities such as public awareness campaigns, consumer boycotts or buycotts, lobbying activities and various and sundry forms of political protests (della Porta and Caiani 2009; Giugni and Grasso 2015). These political orientations and action repertoires are often associated with less formalised and professionalised organisations, given that mobilisation and empowerment are centre stage. In fact, the advocacy mission of these groups builds on the mobilisation of public support and the extended participation of citizens, and this seems to privilege organisational formats that provide more access, incentives and expressive means of participation. Additionally, organisational matters, less linked to questions of efficiency and effectiveness, are more oriented towards issues of legitimacy, thus favouring participatory grassroots structures. Political solidarity thus materialises more often in informal citizens groups, decentralised networks, joint activities organised by broad alliances and in loosely coordinated protest campaigns (Klandermans 1993; della Porta and Tarrow 2005).

The civic and political components of solidarity also coexist. In fact, both components should be conceived of as endpoints of a continuum of potential solidarity orientations, action repertoires and organisational structures. The chapters of this book will provide rich evidence about the variability of expressions of organised transnational solidarity. While many citizen groups and organisations conform to the descriptions of the civic and political type of solidarity respectively, there are also numerous examples of organisations that are committed to both, civic and political solidarity, philanthropic and advocacy action repertoires in the public sphere. These hybrid forms of collective action have been analysed in previous studies (Minkoff 2002; Baglioni and Giugni 2014, Kousis and Paschou 2017; Kousis et al. 2018; Uba and Kousis 2018; Fernández G. G. et al. 2020; Zschache et al. 2020), evidencing the fact that citizens' engagement is more often than not a product of mixed contextual exigencies and learning processes, which call for a combination of service provision and political advocacy as necessary tools to combat social problems and deprivations successfully (see also Kousis et al. 2020; Fernández G. G. et al. 2020).

Organised Transnational Solidarity in Context: External and Internal Drivers

The observations outlined above demonstrate that solidarity engagement varies across time and space. These variations are important, because they raise our awareness of the fact that varying levels and forms of transnational solidarity are not simply given. They are patterned by a number of factors that have been at the centre of numerous studies. Research in the field of non-profit sectors, civil societies and social movements have been interested in identifying conditions, circumstances and drivers of civic engagement and collective action. In this regard, they have highlighted a number of external and internal factors that either are related to the societal context or are part of the internal dynamics of collective action.

External Factors: Do Welfare Retrenchment, Austerity and Crises Matter?

The first set of factors refers to the relation between solidarity organisations and their socio-economic and political environment. An issue that has been widely discussed is the explanatory power of external problems, grievances and deprivations affected by “environmental factors” (McAdam et al. 1996). Is the engagement of citizens and the work of citizen initiatives and organisations a direct reaction to increased needs among the general population and/or specific groups? This issue is of particular relevance to our study, given that our fieldwork was conducted in times of accelerating social problems, welfare retrenchment, austerity and multiple crises. The latter affected substantial number of people, led to considerable commotions of the established order and called the problem-solving capacity of public institutions (e.g., the nation-states, the European Union and the financial institutions) into question. Citizens and citizen groups stepped up their activities in order to confront social degradations in areas confronting a pressing need. This reading of the situation is indicative of organised solidarity being strongly driven by contextual factors and developments.

This book will provide empirical evidence of this responsiveness by taking a closer look at smaller scale, locally oriented TSOs, albeit pushing

for a more nuanced analysis that allows us to conform to lessons drawn from previous research. According to these lessons, it is unlikely that objective deprivations automatically translate to collective actions by citizens. Research on collective action and social movements, for instance, has argued that objective deprivations and grievances might be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for protest action. In particular, they stress that the emergence of social movements requires the availability of resources and the capacity to organise (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Additionally, deprivations need to be perceived as unequal, which means that feelings of relative deprivation (such as between past and present situations, between one's own and relevant reference groups) are the more relevant factor to be taken into consideration (Gurr 1973; Dubé and Guimond 1986). Moreover, recent studies show that solidarity groups are also motivated to struggle against deprivations and grievances experienced by others (for instance, refugees, the jobless and disabled people), thus highlighting the importance of political visions, values and shared identities (Zschache et al. 2020). Finally, current research on the waves of protest mobilisation in times of the economic crisis highlights that socio-economic deprivations are closely associated with political transformations, in particular with the accelerating public debt, the retrenchment of the welfare state, the policies of austerity and the decreasing legitimacy of the established political institutions (see Baglioni and Giugni 2014; Ancelovici et al. 2016; Verschraegen and Vandevooort 2019; Fominaya and Feenstra 2019; Monforte 2014; Zamponi 2019; Kousis et al. 2020). Protest movements throughout Europe have been particularly concerned about the way public authorities have dealt with the Eurozone and refugee governance crisis, thus adding a strong political component to their discourse and activities (della Porta 2015; Kriesi 2016; della Porta 2018).

In this sense, we seem to be witnessing a growing politicisation of solidarity work. Citizen groups converge on the experience of politically induced deteriorations in all fields of activity. Service-oriented organisations lament reduced public spending as much as advocacy groups not dependent on state funds are alarmed by the decreasing responsiveness of the state. As a consequence, the analysis of organised transnational solidarity has to look carefully at the way in which engaged citizens and

activists read and interpret the socio-economic and political nature of the problems they address, and how these readings translate to collective action.

Internal Factors: Do the Activists' Experiences, Organisational Structures and Collaborations Matter?

The qualitative approach of this book will be revelatory, because it sensitises us to the fact that citizen groups and organisations react to the needs and grievances within their social environment on the basis of their own experiences and understandings. This implies divergences and contentions about the accurate definition of what the main problems and challenges, the correct route of action and the preferred solutions are. The qualitative approach provides authentic insights into the experiences of these groups and organisations, and into the patterns and dynamics guiding their collective actions. Based on their accounts, we were able to identify two topics that seem to pattern how solidarity is organised: action repertoires and cooperation networks.

The organisation of citizens' solidarity entails choices about the type of activities they are asked to support. In fact, citizen groups delineate not only the issues, problems and beneficiaries they address but also the type of activities members or supporters (paid staff, paycheck members, volunteers, beneficiaries, etc.) should do on their behalf. The range of activities is considerable when considering the variety of citizen groups involved. Solidarity groups in the area of disabilities, unemployment or immigration are engaged in different activities when providing assistance and goods, advocating for policy reforms or conducting public communication campaigns, because they address issue-specific grievances and beneficiary-related needs. However, the variability of activities has its limits, given that citizen groups do not randomly make choices. On the contrary, research agrees that initiatives and organisations in the non-profit and social movement sector adopt action repertoires in a purposeful, rational and even strategic manner (Rucht 1990; Pope et al. 2018). Their choices are governed by different rationales, which are related to organisational missions and values. In instrumental terms, action

repertoires are adopted and adapted to conform to effectivity criteria. This applies to service-oriented organisations that aim to meet needs and ameliorate deprivations successfully, as much as it applies to advocacy groups that wish to influence ongoing public debates and shape public policies effectively. In expressive terms, action repertoires are moulded so they mirror and convey the underlying collective identities and values of the organisations involved, thus very often implying performative, evocative or creative means of action (Derman 2017).

Due to these instrumental and expressive rationales, citizen groups and organisations privilege some practices while discarding others. Before this backdrop, analysts of social movements have demonstrated that protest groups develop a set of practices (such as street demonstrations, sit-ins, blockades and boycotts) that they share with others, thus forming and promoting specific action repertoires (Tilly 1984) that are widely used by different groups and might also be diffused across time and space (Traugott 1995; Chabot 2000). These action repertoires are exposed to constant change, given that citizen groups and organisations adapt them to new needs, circumstances, objectives and ideas. This is not only a lesson in historical analysis (Traugott 1995; Tilly 2004) but also a finding of current research, which stresses the impact of technological changes on action repertoires. In this context, the internet and social media have strongly altered the way citizen groups act within the public sphere (Cammaerts 2015; van Laer and van Aelst 2010), even though it is important to remember that technology is not the only factor impinging on activities. In fact, historical analyses have insisted on the observation that action repertoires are also strongly affected by the organisational and political contexts within which citizen groups operate (Tilly 2004: 105). Action repertoires are moulded by the opportunities and constraints provided by the nation-state, as corroborated by the study of protest groups (Tarrow 1996; Wada 2016). This observation also applies to non-profit organisations (Powell and DiMaggio 1992; Pope et al. 2018), given that non-protest-oriented solidarity groups tend to adapt to the needs, funding opportunities and standard operating procedures established by the state (Minkoff and Powell 2006), meaning that organisational fields tend to adopt similar practices and streamline their activism accordingly.

For instance, it can be assumed that action repertoires might diverge between organisations active in the fields of disabilities, unemployment and immigration. However, action repertoires should also be exposed to processes of change. As aforementioned, solidarity has been politicised, meaning that TSOs might expand their range of activities towards advocacy and protest. Additionally, solidarity groups and organisations are involved in wider webs of cooperation, which nurture learning processes and make space for social innovations. Solidarity work involves elements of collective learning, where activists evaluate the effectiveness and persuasiveness of established activities and where they experiment with new means and practices of liaising with their beneficiaries, designing services and modelling their advocacy work. While these activities might not in themselves be completely new, there is an innovative element in the way they adopt and adapt them to upcoming needs, their standard repertoires of action and the discourse they share with others in the field.

Transnational solidarity practices do not emanate only from the agency of individual groups and organisations but are in most cases tied back to wider networks of collaboration. In fact, studies of the non-profit sector, civil society and social movements all underscore the fact that these groups are part of complex organisational fields. Even though relations of competition might arise between them (MacIndoe 2014; Soule and King 2008), there is supporting evidence that organisations regularly engage in diverse activities of cooperation (Zald and McCarthy 1979; Hathaway and Meyer 1994), even under conditions of fractionalisation, conflict and competition. These loose networks of cooperation are the backbone of what research calls social movements and/or civil societies. They are of particular importance because they augment the scope of activities of each individual group and organisation, for instance, with regard to the mobilisation of broad popular support (Klandermans and Oegema 1987) and the organisation of effective change activities (Soule and King 2008).

The pervasiveness of cooperation is particularly true at the grassroots level, where opportunities and circumstances seem to increase the likelihood of such collaborations, given overlapping memberships and beneficiaries, recurrent contacts and collaborations in regard to local projects and/or the shared involvement in consultative bodies (Baglioni and Giugni 2014). However, these networks of collaboration are also true for

the national and international levels of activity. Civil society and social movement organisations have opted individually for a “scale shift” (Tarrow and McAdam 2005), according to which they move their centre of operation from the local to the national and supranational levels. In regard to Europe, we have witnessed the emergence of a supranational field of European organisations that have expanded their scope of activities simultaneously to a Pan-European area of operation (Smismans 2006; Balme and Chabanet 2008), and the same is true for the global arenas (Smith 1997; Smith and Johnston 2002). These “scale shifts” have also impacted at the grassroots level, because many of these national and international organisations maintain local branches, contacts and collaborations, thus immersing local spaces of citizens’ engagement into transnational networks of activities (della Porta and Caiani 2009). At the same time, these extended networks have encouraged local groups and organisations to expand the range of their own contacts and activities across borders, by engaging in cross-border grassroots activism (Lahusen et al. 2018).

Cooperation is not only a recurrent feature in the field of civil society and social movements; it also shapes the activities and structures of solidarity groups. Collaboration seems less important in regard to service provision but more so when advocacy work and protest actions are at stake. The effectiveness of advocacy benefits greatly from it, and this is a reason why civil society organisations organise their work along different modes of collaboration (Diani 2018), for instance, by engaging in structured coalitions between the organisations and/or favouring a looser cooperation of individual activists in regard to specific events. However, collaborations are not only a pragmatic necessity to increase the reach and effectivity of one’s own work but also a programmatic goal enshrined in the notion of solidarity: Solidarity means maintaining contact with other groups, engaging in mutual support activities and promoting common goals and identities. Citizen groups and organisations are thus more often than not involved in wider networks of cooperation, at both local and transnational levels. As argued elsewhere (Lahusen 2020), the intensity of cooperation and the forms of collaboration diverge considerably. On one side of the spectrum, transnational cooperation can be highly formalised and centralised in the form of international organisations with

legs in various countries, regions and/or cities; also international umbrellas, federations or platforms would belong to this group of strong transnationalism. These organisations would involve their members in organised forms of transnational service-delivery and advocacy. The organisational fields at stake in this book, however, seem to be placed at the other end of the spectrum. Here, we should expect few formalised networks of local groups engaging in specific activities for specific purposes and using existing means of communication to coordinate their various activities autonomously. Social movement studies have provided ample evidence for this form of loosely coupled forms of (transnational) collective action, emerging from diffusion cycles and mobilisation waves (della Porta and Tarrow 2005). The latter are tied to specific issues, occasions and locations, but they build on wider networks that seem to be particularly strong in circulating news, ideas, claims and practices across borders. In these cases, solidarity work is based on soft forms of transnationalisation that seem to be shorter lived, but have the potential for instigating vivid waves of mobilisation.

Approach and Structure of the Book

This book is devoted to the analysis of transnational solidarity groups in eight European countries. Its scope is strongly shaped by the analytic framework and the methodological choices which guided the qualitative fieldwork and data analysis. Before engaging in a brief presentation of the various chapters and its main findings, it is necessary to address the common research design and its main criteria.

Rationale for Country and Field Selection

Data and findings of this book stem from an international research project (TransSOL) funded by the European Union (Lahusen 2020). The project's main objective was to map and analyse European solidarity in various European countries at different levels of action: at the micro level through an individual survey (Lahusen and Grasso 2018); at the meso

level through a standardised website content analysis (Kousis et al. 2020), organisational surveys and a series of in-depth interviews; and at the macro level through a comparative study of laws and public policies (Federico and Lahusen 2018) and media content analysis (Cinalli et al. 2021). While the organisational surveys (TransSOL 2016) aimed at generating standardised datasets to describe and analyse the structures of the organisational fields in comparative terms across countries and issue fields, qualitative interviews were conducted to grasp the lived experiences of solidarity activism at the grassroots level and thus reach a more in-depth understanding of contextual circumstances, action strategies and networking structures.

The methodological approach was comparative, given that the project aimed at systematically mapping and analysing solidarity during times of welfare retrenchment and crises in eight countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and the UK) and three issue fields (disabilities, unemployment and immigration). The choice of countries was driven by three criteria: different exposure to societal grievances in the wake of economic and financial crises since 2008; different levels and forms of institutionalised solidarity in the form of welfare state policies; and different levels of citizen participation as a measure of differing levels of the likelihood of citizens to engage in solidarity actions towards target groups. The sample ranges from countries such as Greece, with its less-developed welfare state, strong exposure to the crisis, shorter history of civic participation, but more contentious social movements landscape, to countries like Germany, Denmark and Switzerland, with their strongly developed welfare state, lower exposure to the global economic and financial crisis and long traditions of civic engagement, as well as a number of countries with unequal combinations of these criteria (Italy, France, Poland and the UK). The so-called refugee crisis emerged as a significant field of contentions after the start of the project but was proactively integrated into the research design, thus deepening the contextual differences between countries affected by multiple crises and challenges (Greece and Italy), individual ones (Germany and Switzerland) and countries with a more limited (Denmark, France, and the UK) or indirect exposure (Poland).

The three issue fields were selected in order to grasp what previous research had identified in terms of conditional support (Lahusen 2020). In fact, solidarity is a positively connoted value that might not necessarily arouse strong opposition when addressed in terms of general dispositions and practices. Solidarity, however, becomes conditional once we leave the abstract level of principles and move to specific target groups. In this vein, the TransSOL project followed the idea of contentiousness, assuming that solidarity might mobilise as much support as it arouses opposition, once focused on more specific targets. The choice of issue fields was motivated by previous insights into the “deservingness” of various social groups. According to public opinion polls, the elderly and disabled people are generally considered to be the most deserving, followed by unemployed people, with immigrants seen as the least deserving (van Oorschot et al. 2006: 23). Deservingness is an issue to take into consideration, because citizens might limit solidarity to the more deserving targets while making their support more conditional when groups are concerned that seem to be less deserving.

Overall, our selection of countries and issue fields was motivated by the aim to empirically map the arena of civic and political solidarity in its different expressions and manifestations. In regard to our dependent variable (civic solidarity), we opted for identical issue fields across the eight countries, an identical sample of interviewed organisations and joint guidelines to generate comparable data. In regard to contexts, we opted to include very different issue fields and countries in order to empirically map differing levels of solidarity engagement, identify similarities across countries and issue fields and engage in explanatory analyses that relate differing contexts (countries and issue fields) to diverging levels and forms of solidarity.

The analyses of this book are based on a common and rigorous research framework with in-depth interviews drawn from 247 representatives of TSOs in all participating countries across the three fields. Each national team conducted 30 interviews in their own country (with the exception of Germany, with 37) following guidelines that defined the key interviewees, the number of interviews for each alternative structure and the content of the interviews. Each interview partner signed an official consent letter for the use of the data. Based on hub-website retrieval and

Action Organisation Analysis using the organisational websites of the Trans SOL project (Kousis et al. 2018), we extracted a sub-sample of groups and organisations to be interviewed. Organisations/groups were prioritised as follows: (1) informal groups/organisations (e.g., grassroots solidarity initiatives, information platforms and networks, social economy enterprises, cooperatives and unions); (2) non-governmental organisations (NGOs) without paid staff or with very few staff (such as volunteer associations, non-profit professional and formal organisations); (3) local NGOs with few staff; (4) protest-oriented groups (for instance, social protest groups and neighbourhood assemblies); and (5) transnational social movement groups (see TransSOL 2016: 122–123). Teams were asked to assure enough variance in the TSOs to be interviewed: “charity/practical help/service-oriented” and “protest/social movement/policy-oriented”. Given our focus on transnational solidarity, only groups which complied with at least one of the following nine criteria were included in the organisational mapping and the subsequent interview sample (see TransSOL 2016: 32):

1. Organisers with at least one organiser from another country, or supranational agency
2. Actions synchronised/coordinated in at least one other country
3. Beneficiaries with at least one beneficiary group from another country
4. Participants/Supporters with at least one Participating/Supporting Group from another country
5. Partners/Collaborating Groups with at least one from another country
6. Sponsors, with at least one from another country or a supranational agency (for instance, European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund)
7. Frames with cross-national reference/s
8. Volunteers with at least one volunteer group from another country
9. Spatial at least across two countries (at the local, regional or national levels)

The guidelines were aimed to guarantee as much comparability as possible, without decreasing the authenticity and richness of each interview. During the development of the guidelines, we aimed to identify topics

that were relevant in all countries. Guidelines raised topics rather than asking specific questions in order to leave interviewees as much room as possible to define the relevant questions for themselves (Chamaz 2000; Roulston 2014). The guidelines were pretested and adapted in various rounds. Overall, the interview guidelines focused on five thematic groups: (1) information about the group/organisation and the interviewee's level/depth of involvement with the given group/organisation; (2) target groups and activities of solidarity, including social innovations; (3) the field of activism (within and beyond country borders), inter-organisational links (within and beyond country borders), degrees of institutionalisation and public support; (4) discussion of existing laws, policies or court decisions, and related demands; and (5) the societal context, including potential references to various crises.

Based on the same research design (sampling criteria, guidelines and interview instructions), personal interviews were carried out from early summer to late autumn of 2016 in each country, with representatives/participants from TSOs conforming to the aforementioned sampling criteria. The analysis of the interviews focused on each of the five thematic blocks, summarising and paraphrasing the main findings across issue fields for each of the eight countries (Roulston 2014), following precepts of inductive coding stipulated by Grounded Theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Chamaz 2000).

Overview of the Book

The book is devoted to citizen groups and organisations that are engaged in transnational solidarity work under quite diverse socio-economic and political contexts. Each chapter provides insights into the specific way TSOs experience current challenges and problems, which activities they conduct in regard to the various beneficiaries and participants under study and how they portray collaborations. Owing to the importance of the diverging socio-economic and political contexts, the analyses start with the two countries most severely hit by the Eurozone and the so-called refugee crisis (Greece and Italy) and the country most receptive to the dramatic inflow of refugees (Germany), moving only then to those

countries that were less strongly and most often indirectly affected by the dual crisis. In these countries, the experience of policy-driven aggravations stemming from austerity measures, welfare retrenchments and immigration restrictions is a much more notable reference point for grassroots solidarity work, even though this element is also apparent among the Mediterranean countries, as it deepened the effect of the crisis on those vulnerable groups that solidarity groups were committed to assisting.

The first two chapters highlight the dramatic effects the Eurozone and the so-called refugee crises have had on local solidarity work. Kostas Kanellopoulos et al. devote themselves to the Greek experience and show that the dual crisis has exposed the population to dramatic hardships while boosting the development of civil society. Socio-economic grievances and the deteriorating political framework led to the growth of the organisational field that has become more differentiated in terms of issues and groupings, and more politicised in its activities and discourses. As Nicola Maggini and Veronica Federico show, this experience is replicated in the Italian case. Even though solidarity groups are well established in all issue fields, they had to step up their activities substantially in reaction to the dual crisis. While differences in the fields of unemployment, disabilities and migration persist, leading to considerable fragmentation, solidarity groups tend to converge in their attempts to develop new strategies and approaches to increase the impact of their work under conditions of limited resources and opportunities. Also, the German case testifies, according to Ulrike Zschache, that citizens were able to react to upcoming immediate needs under considerable time constraints. Civic engagement is embedded in established fields of civil society organisations, which explain the considerable pace and breadth of the German welcoming culture. Of particular relevance is the dynamism unleashed by the intense mobilisation of public solidarity, given that it encouraged a shared discourse across issue fields that developed a more political and all-encompassing notion of what solidarity is about.

The following case studies provide insights into a societal context less marked by dramatic commotions associated with the various crises. In these countries, organised solidarity is rather exposed to long-standing processes and/or specific moments of policy-driven aggravations affecting

labour markets, immigration and the inclusion of disabled people in social life. Janina Petelczyc et al. demonstrate convincingly for the Polish case that solidarity groups and organisations have to work within a more hostile political environment, marked by public policies of welfare retrenchment, liberalisation of labour markets and right-wing debates of immigration control. Solidarity groups have tended to disengage from overtly political discourses while engaging in new strategies and approaches that strive to increase the range of beneficiaries and collaborations. These adaptive strategies are corroborated by Manlio Cinalli et al. for the French case. Also in this country, the dual crisis is just a momentary element within a longer-standing process of welfare retrenchment that affects citizens and civil society organisations. French solidarity groups deviate partially from the Polish, because they engage more proactively in collaborations as a means to increase capacities and effectivity. However, the focus on service delivery is complemented more forcefully by a political approach of advocacy that develops more formal and professional patterns.

The Danish, British and Swiss experiences evidence considerable transformations within the field of solidarity work, against the backdrop of socio-economic aggravations and welfare retrenchment policies. Deniz N. Duru et al. argue in regard to the Danish case that the long-standing reforms of the Danish welfare state, the more restrictive immigration policies and the impressions of the Eurozone and the so-called refugee crisis have led to a more confrontative relationship between civil society and public authorities, in what traditionally was considered to be highly cooperative forms of welfare service provision. Solidarity groups have become more political in regard to the provision of services and the defence of their social rights, thus entering into conflict with the government. This conflict is complemented by a potential dividing line within the field of solidarity groups, as Simone Baglioni et al. illustrate for the British case. Decades of privatisation and liberalisation policies, welfare retrenchment measures and a more restrictive immigration policy have not only introduced a dividing line between national politics, notably more hostile towards solidarity, and a field of grassroots solidarity groups. At the local level, there is also a potential division between grassroots organisations keeping up with transnational solidarity work and those

groups that adapt to the public–private model of partnership-based relationships with local authorities in an attempt to sustain their operations within a context marked by austerity. Fragmentations are also a focal point of Eva Fernández G. G. et al. when addressing solidarity groups in Switzerland. Their analysis of civic organisations in the realm of immigration and labour issues shows that activities and discourses are still highly patterned along policy domains, public authorities and legal provisions, an element stressed already in the Italian case. While some solidarity groups engage in intersectional debates and activities, thus linking labour and migration issues directly, this still seems to be an exception that has trouble overcoming institutionally established fragmentations.

Overall, national case studies evidence that transnational solidarity groups and organisations operate in quite diverse socio-economic, political and institutional contexts. However, as discussed in the concluding chapter, solidarity activities and discourses exhibit a considerable number of similarities. Activists are concerned almost everywhere about growing social problems and grievances that are nurtured by either periods of dramatic crises and/or long-standing transformations of public policies. Before this backdrop, collective action is more demanding, as it has to address an increasing number of needs and demands within a more hostile environment implying cuts in funds, restrictive policy-measures and public debates stressing the conditionality of solidarity. Ulrike Zschache and Christian Lahusen argue that the activism and discourse of local TSOs tend to develop a number of commonalities. First, solidarity work has become more political in the sense of insisting more strongly on an advocacy, rights-based approach. Second, citizen groups stress the importance of collaboration as an element of increasing the effectivity of their work and as a means to conform to the exigencies of solidarity as a principle of mutual empowerment. And third, TSOs see the need to adapt to changing circumstances, engage in joint learning and promote innovations. Of particular importance is a discourse of solidarity that aims to transcend target specific groupings and engage in a more cross-sectoral and integrated approach. The current crises and policy transformations tend to encourage these debates.

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Part I

Solidarity in Adverse Contexts: Crisis and Retrenchment



2

Transnational Solidarity Organisations in Contemporary Greek Civil Society: Vibrant, Multifarious and Politicised

Kostas Kanellopoulos, Christina Karakioulafi,
Pinelopi Alexandropoulou, and Giorgos Soros

Introduction

Greece has experienced striking growth in civil society/social movement organisations in the past decade, mostly as a result of the serious socio-economic and political impact of the global economic crisis of 2008 the subsequent Eurozone crisis, as well as the refugee crisis of 2015–2016, when the country served as the major gateway to Europe for the largest inflows of migrants/refugees from Asia and Africa in the post–World War II period.

In the 2008–2016 period, the Greek economy lost more than 25% of its gross domestic product, while unemployment rose to 25% and to

K. Kanellopoulos (✉) • C. Karakioulafi • P. Alexandropoulou • G. Soros
Department of Sociology, University of Crete, Crete, Greece
e-mail: kanellopoulosk@social.soc.uoc.gr; karakichr@uoc.gr;
sorosg@social.soc.uoc.gr

more than 60% for the younger generation.¹ Greek society has only faced situations such as those during or after war, but this time, the disaster occurred during peacetime. The implementation of Troika Memoranda and harsh austerity policies to save Greece from exiting the European Union (EU), in spite of a national protest campaign against such policies (Diani and Kousis 2014; Kousis 2016), had severe impacts on the national population. Over a million people lost their jobs, social and health care was minimised due to cuts in public spending and most Greeks became frustrated and desperate (Featherstone 2011; Matsaganis 2014; Matsaganis and Leventi 2014). Traditionally, the Greek family acts as an informal welfare provider, but families and households were also affected by the crisis (Lyberaki and Tinios 2014). In 2013, only one jobless worker in ten had access to unemployment benefits and there were hundreds of thousands of households without any employed member. Against the backdrop of economic disaster, Troika Memoranda/austerity policies and the partial inability of the Greek welfare state to respond, a wide variety of solidarity-oriented groups and organisations surfaced in the country, offering direct support actions aiming to cover basic and everyday needs (see Kavoulakos and Gritzis 2015; Kousis et al. 2018; Loukakis 2018; Malamidis 2018).

In addition to a wide variety of alternative action groups and organisations (Kousis et al. 2018) rising after harsh austerity policies, pro-refugee/migrant groups surfaced across the country to address their needs, especially during the refugee crisis of 2015–2016. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 851,319 migrants arrived in Greece during 2015, whereas starting from 5 May 2016, 155,765 arrivals were recorded.

The interviews we conducted in Greece are very much set in a context of economic turbulence combined with an urgent need for humanitarian support of large numbers of refugees. How did Greek civil society intervene? And furthermore, what effect did the dual crisis have on triggering and shaping local informal and small transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs)?

¹<https://data.oecd.org/greece.htm> (access 26 October 2016).

This chapter pays particular attention to how this vibrant and politicised civil society looks “from the inside”. More specifically, it aims to show how TSOs in Greece have experienced the dual crisis, how they practise transnational solidarity and, even more so, how their scope became transnational and more open to people from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, we aim to link the findings of these interviews with a broader theoretical concern regarding the evolution of Greek civil society during these difficult years.

The chapter is based on data derived from the context of the TransSOL project (TransSOL 2016).² The purposive sample is comprised of 30 in-depth interviews with representatives of informal, locally oriented and social movement TSOs, 10 from each of the three fields, namely immigration, disabilities and unemployment.

Theoretical, Conceptual Issues: Greek Civil Society Organisations and Transnational Solidarity During Hard Times

Based on historical studies and dependency theory, scholars claimed that after the Greek Revolution of 1821 and throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a hypertrophic and in large part ineffective state was formed, leaving too little space for an autonomous civil society to flourish (Tsoukalas 1993; Mouzelis 1986, 1995). Civil society organisations are in large part controlled by the political parties and therefore are vulnerable to state interventions. In a situation like this a hypertrophic state tends to coincide with an atrophic civil society (Mouzelis 2007).

Critics of this view claimed that in terms of authoritative functioning, the Greek state is not ineffective and the Greek civil society is not that weak. Quite the contrary and following a neo-Gramscian conceptualisation, Greek civil society might be seen as a vibrant theatre where the struggle over political and cultural hegemony of various actors is taking

² Results presented in this chapter have been obtained within the project “European paths to transnational solidarity at times of crisis: Conditions, forms, role models and policy responses” (TransSOL). This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 649435.

place (Voulgaris 2006). Other authors criticise the dominant argument for failing to consider the strong role of trade unions and business associations in the definition of civil society (Iordanoglou 2013).

The same conclusion of an actually strong Greek civil society is drawn in social movement studies, demonstrating the recurrent presence and active involvement of citizens in public affairs (Kousis 1999; Simitis 2002; Afouxenidis 2006; Botetzagias 2006; Kanellopoulos 2009; Kandyliis and Kavoulakos 2011; Papadopoulos and Fratsea 2014). Such studies have shown how the strong intervention of Greek civil society not only is independent from the state but has also managed to affect the Greek political system. Mass protests and numerous strikes occurred against the austerity policies and the neoliberal reforms that were embedded in the Greek-Troika “Memoranda of Understanding” (MoUs) (Kousis 2013; Diani and Kousis 2014; Kanellopoulos et al. 2017; Roose et al. 2017). These protests did not manage to change the MoUs’ policies, but they certainly contributed to the realignment of the political system (Kanellopoulos and Kousis 2018; Serdedakis and Koufidi 2018). Additionally, a closer look at the interactions between social movements and political parties in Greece would reveal that these two are historically parallel phenomena and the interchangeable influence of one over the other does not account for an atrophic civil society (Kanellopoulos 2018).

Recent reformulations in the literature include interest groups and social movements in their definition of civil society. Sotiropoulos (2017) argues that Greek civil society had already become stronger and more autonomous from state and partisan control before the eruption of the economic crisis. The crisis accelerated these tendencies. Greek civil society in all its forms, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and voluntary associations, trade unions, local collectives and social movements, have increased their presence and are now more independent from the state and political parties than they used to be pre-crisis (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014; Simitis 2014; Huliaras 2015; Sotiropoulos 2017).

Following a strong national protest campaign against Troika Memoranda and austerity policies, numerous civil society solidarity (direct action) initiatives were created in the decade of the crises in Greece, by a wide variety of groups and organisations to assist natives or migrants, either horizontally or vertically, or both, to cover daily, basic needs (Kavoulakos and Gritzis 2015; Kousis et al. 2018; Loukakakis 2018;

Malamidis 2018). Recent quantitative work (Kanellopoulos et al. 2020; Kousis et al. 2020) based on a comparative analysis of organisational website material shows that transnational solidarity organisations tend to be embedded at the local community level.

They reflect an active civil society evolving outside the clientelistic framework of previous decades and driven primarily by the dual crisis of the last decade. Given the lack of qualitative works on transnational solidarity organisations, this chapter is particularly interested in filling this gap and offering an exploratory account of the drivers of transnationally oriented solidarity organisations in Greek civil society. Have external factors been more important towards their development? Has the refugee crisis exerted more of an influence than the Eurozone crisis and the subsequent harsh austerity policies? Furthermore, as the dual crisis appears to have augmented and accelerated this evolution of solidarity organisations, what other factors have influenced their development? What role did grievances, or previous experience, or collective learning play?

Data and Method

Following TransSOL criteria for the qualitative study of TSOs, our sample consists of 30 in-depth interviews with informal, non-professional groups/organisations, NGOs without paid staff or with very few staff, operating at the local or regional level, or protest-oriented groups/organisations. These involved both “charity/practical help/service-oriented” and “protest/social movement/policy-oriented” groups/organisations (see Lahusen et al. Introduction in this volume).³ More than half of the groups interviewed characterise themselves as protest/policy-oriented (18 out of 30), while the remaining 12 are oriented towards charity/practical help. In terms of organisational structure and transnationality, differences are visible across the issue-fields.

Regarding their transnational and organisational features, in the disability field TSOs tend to have a formal organisation structure and more international collaborations with other organisations compared to TSOs

³For more information on sampling, see: <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

in the other two fields; in the crises period, they offer solidarity to migrant/refugee groups. In the unemployment field, they tend to have a more horizontal, grassroots organisational structure and they largely resemble social movement groups. Although less often than the disability TSOs, they do collaborate with similar groups outside Greece, while they tend to be transnational in their claims and beneficiaries. In the migration field, we interviewed groups both of the more formal type (NGOs) and of the more horizontal one (protest-oriented); in addition to supporting migrant/refugee groups, some also have transnational supporters.

Overall, the most common transnational activity of the TSOs under study—according to the criteria set in the TransSOL project (Kousis et al. 2020)—is the provision of help to migrants/refugees in the three fields. In addition, the unemployment TSOs, most of which are radical trade unions, follow a traditional internationalist discourse. The TSOs in our sample are involved in solidarity actions across fields; they try to help all those who are in need, including migrants/refugees, while directing their claims to the Greek state in a critical manner.

Compared to the other two fields, it was more difficult to find interview partners for the migrant/refugee field due to their extremely limited time, which was the result of increasing, urgent needs in the field. Also, some of the groups in the migrant/refugee and the unemployment fields rejected the opportunity to collaborate with an official institution.

The sections that follow present the main issues that TSOs focus on as their primary challenges during the crises years, the activities they organise and the target groups they offer their support to, as well as their cooperation practices, based on the interview material. The concluding section highlights and discusses the findings in relation to the theoretical framework.

TSOs' Views on the Crises in Greece and the Related Challenges

There was a common understanding among all the TSOs we interviewed that the economic crisis and all the MoUs imposing severe austerity policies in Greece had a negative impact on all social fields. This situation led

most of our TSOs to reorient their action and try to adapt to actions to cover different target groups in need.

The TSO representatives pointed to three main issue areas raising challenges during the crises period: (1) welfare and labour, (2) resources and state policies, and (3) collective learning, raising awareness, openness to others and creation of solidarity groups.

Welfare and Labour

To begin with, welfare benefits for the disabled and state funding to solidarity organisations in the disability field were reduced while the needs were increased since a growing number of disabled people and their families could not afford to pay for certain health care-related services. Additionally, growing unemployment and economic pressures increased the number of people suffering from mental distress and depression. The sharp increase in the number of people living under the poverty line created a population in need, and some solidarity organisations in our sample from the disability field decided to shift their attention and also direct their services towards these people; for instance, organisations helping disabled children also helped poor families without disabled children that approached them.

As expected, a consistent theme across each of the TSOs we interviewed in the unemployment field was the negative impact of the financial crisis and the austerity measures that followed, on both unemployment and workers' rights. The unemployment rate in Greece is now the highest among all EU member-states, but the Greek welfare state was unprepared and ill-equipped to provide help to this enormous current of newly unemployed who soon turned into long-term unemployed. New legislation was passed that lowered the bargaining power of trade unions and facilitated the firing of workers. The minimum wage diminished, all wages were severely cut, working hours became longer, countless businesses were closed down, and hundreds of thousands of employees were made redundant while unemployment benefits were also significantly reduced. According to our respondents, one of the main aspects of the

“Memoranda” terms was the worsening of labour conditions and workers’ rights:

The laws that are voted are increasingly helping collective redundancies and completely dismantling collective agreements and procedures to defend employees, so in reality what is happening is that employers are being given the opportunity to lay off more and more people and to lead more and more people to unemployment. (Unemp1 09/2016)

Due to the severity and the length of the economic recession, the whole population in Greece, to different degrees, of course, was significantly affected.

According to TSO representatives of radical trade unions, trade union membership was reduced and many of the remaining members became inactive during the economic crisis period. One direct negative effect of the crisis on trade unionism is that the closure of many enterprises meant also the closure of the unions that operated within them. As an interviewee said:

When an old enterprise closes and a new one starts, that also means that unionism in the new enterprise has to start from the beginning and under worse conditions since new employees are afraid to get unionised for fear of losing their jobs. (Unemp2 09/2016)

Welfare cuts and worsening conditions on the labour market were also mentioned as important effects of the crisis by most of the organisations from the migration field. Especially during the refugee crisis of 2015, these TSOs had to act and provide welfare precisely due to the deterioration of the Greek welfare state.

Organisational Resources and State Policies

Crisis-led austerity policies affected the funding and operation of civil society organisations, including TSOs, according to many of our interviewees. The sharp reduction in income led to decreased citizen donations to civil society organisations:

Before the crisis, at a simple fund-raising at a hairdresser's shop, we could easily raise 500 euros; now the same event would hardly gather 50 euros. (Disab5 09/2016)

However, in terms of state and intergovernmental funding, TSOs engaged in fighting social exclusion and promoting the integration of refugees and immigrants seem to have benefitted from the dual crisis. Since significant amounts of money were available by the UN and the EU for organisations dealing with refugees, even some small organisations from the disabilities field shifted their aims in order to survive. As an interviewee said:

When the crisis erupted, we thought that we were about to close, but instead our activities and our cycle of work multiplied ten times. (Disab6 09/2016)

Concerning policymaking during the economic crisis, a new law taxing donations made them even more difficult to obtain, by both individuals and private companies. In addition, although new legislation regarding social economy initiatives—that also affect solidarity groups—was implemented, the status of volunteers remains vague. Besides narrow economic claims, what many of our interviewees ask from policymakers is a regulative framework, even at the EU level, and better coordination and allocation of resources for civil society organisations.

Referring to the policies of the Greek state, even though the majority do not completely disapprove of the way it responds to the dual crisis, our interviewees agreed that its actions are not enough or sufficient to cope with the challenges properly:

Coordination of information is necessary because too many actors are involved and many times, some beneficiaries don't receive anything while others receive a lot from many actors. (Disab1 09/2016)

Furthermore, the coincidence of economic and refugee crises has created tensions and significant problems for the operation of some TSOs. As was aptly stated by one interviewee:

All state funding and attention is now going to refugees, which I understand since I was a refugee of war in 1974. I agree, but on the other hand, you cannot let the disabled starve. (Disab10 10/2016)

Collective Learning and New Initiatives

Has the crisis led to raising awareness for labour, disability and human rights? Almost all of our interviewees in all three fields stressed the effect the crisis has had on raising people's awareness and consciousness. The severe economic crisis is raising awareness in the sense that people start to perceive themselves as members of the society and not as isolated individuals. As such, they have human and social rights. Even more so, the social groups that are the most vulnerable and the most affected by the dual crisis, like the unemployed, the disabled and the migrants, have serious problems and rights that have to be highlighted and protected. Especially among the trade unions that lost members, this cognitive effect is regarded as very important. The economic crisis has increased solidarity among employed and unemployed workers since economic strain and worsening working and living conditions are common to both groups.

Another of the few positive consequences of the crises in Greece for the sector of solidarity organisations in all fields is the rise in the number of volunteers. Many young people who are unemployed have decided to devote time to volunteering because this raises their self-esteem while many others feel the need to help their fellow humans in need. The latter was especially apparent during the recent refugee crisis when many Greeks spontaneously offered many kinds of help to newly arrived refugees. But, on the other hand, the number of volunteers who are specialised professionals, and who are especially needed in the disabilities field, has not increased due to lack of time since they have to work more to retain their standard of living.

Furthermore, some of the solidarity groups in the unemployment and migration samples were created during and because of the crisis, while membership in one anarcho-syndicalist group in our sample increased. These groups, regardless of their formal or informal character, were made precisely in order to help unemployed newly arrived migrants and socially excluded people.

Many of our interviewees in the unemployment field also emphasised the positive impact the crisis has had on workers' attitudes towards self-organising. The severity of the crisis and the hostility of the state have made the workers and the unemployed realise that they should self-organise in order to achieve better labour and living conditions. As one interviewee aptly stated:

With the crisis it becomes clearer to the people that only through their self-organisation can they achieve things since legislation is becoming all the more flexibilisation-oriented and against workers. (Unemp3 09/2016)

In addition to the three solidarity-related issues raised by TSO representatives, many of our interviewees observed that the dual crisis has led to an increase in the popularity of extreme right-wing and fascist political parties, creating burdens on the notion of social solidarity and cohesion while making the actions to protect democracy and human rights all the more essential. One interviewer noted, however, that there has been a positive change regarding laws concerning racist violence and equality from 2013 to 2015. But starting in 2016, and with the agreement between the EU and Turkey, there has been a rapid deterioration, and vulnerable social groups, like those of the immigrants, have found themselves in a very difficult situation, in view of extreme right populism.

Activities: Missions and Target Groups

As is expected, issue-fields play a significant role in differentially affecting the related TSOs in our sample. In the disability field, TSOs are comprised of specialised professionals and people who are relatives of disabled people and share a special interest. In the migration field, TSOs involve experienced and long-term advocates of human rights, plus many newcomers who have found employment in the rapidly expanding Greek third sector. In the unemployment field, TSOs involve many radical groups comprised of anarchists and devoted socialists.

The activities of each TSO, depending on the issue-field it is operating in, are closely interrelated with its organisational pattern. TSOs, mainly

in the disability and migration issue-fields, with a more formal organisational structure are dedicated to practical help in the field, raising awareness for the rights and needs of their target groups and influencing policymaking. Those TSOs, mainly from the unemployment issue-field, that apply a more horizontal and anti-hierarchical organisational structure are more protest-oriented and direct their activities and practical help offered across fields. In short, on the one hand, more formalised TSOs are also more specialised with regard to their target groups and are also more service-oriented. On the other hand, less-formalised TSOs target broader, or multiple constituencies, and they are also more politicised.

Besides differences due to their specialisation, the interviewees of the TSOs in all three fields seem to have many attributes in common. They are determined people who believe in civic engagement. They try to offer help to people who are in need without discrimination. At the same time, they are politically active and try to influence policymaking in their field, and even beyond.

Activities and Organisational Patterns

A main finding for the TSOs across the three fields is that they all carried out actions in response to the urgent needs arising in the migrant/refugee detention facilities, but also activities that focus on long-term treatment of these problems, through influence and alteration of policies. More specifically, the activities included collecting clothes, medicine and food through donations and distributing them, mostly in the detention camps with the help of volunteers, to migrants and refugees. These actions of responding to urgent needs were taken by TSOs in all three fields (immigration, disabilities and unemployment).

Migration TSOs focus their actions on providing education to migrants and refugees, to both adults and minors, through teaching foreign languages. In some cases, the teachers are themselves refugees in these facilities. Similar activities include work with children in the detention camps, through creative workshops and organised events (for instance, public documentary viewings and giving lectures in schools) that aim to inform and spread awareness to the rest of Greek society. We also spotted

initiatives like the one started by an NGO located in Athens, where in collaboration with state actors, local people and the UNHCR offer housing, along with the right to legal employment, to refugee families, for the period of time in Greece, while their cases for asylum or family reunification are being processed.

Migration TSOs also take several actions of a more indirect character that focus on the task of providing information and spreading awareness about the problems that migrants and refugees face in Greece, but also focus on pressuring the policymakers, in order to achieve alterations in migration-relevant policies. This process is mainly conducted through writing reports that are submitted both to the relevant state actors and to the Council of Europe. The ultimate goal of these actions is to solve the problems that migrants have to face, policy-wise, and a gradual policy shift into a more anthropocentric and solidary form.

Finally, migration TSOs use protest-oriented action, like occupation of public property in order to provide shelter for refugees and migrants, as well as rallies that aim to protest against border closure, where Greeks and migrants/refugees aim to put pressure on the responsible state actors to achieve swift alterations to relevant policies.

Disability TSO representatives involve parents or relatives of disabled persons in some cases while depending on volunteers in various sectors who have helped in the past or who have expressed a high commitment to volunteering and community help. As one interviewee stated:

...I did it before but with the crisis and all that you are saying to yourself: here you have to help. (Disab4 09/2016)

The main activities of disability TSOs vary from mental health and social care provision, support of people living with HIV/AIDS and genetic disorders, food provision and provision of prognostic medical tests, support of children's rights and children in need and psychiatric reform to support of people with disabilities, victims of social exclusion and victims of racist discrimination. Most of the TSOs employ a primary activity, but they also employ some others since in times of crisis, needs often intersect. As our interviewees said:

Volunteerism doesn't have borders or sectors. (Disab4 09/2016)

You may have a family with a grandmother who has health problems, a mother who has psychological problems, a kid facing learning problems at school and a father who is unemployed... (Disab1 09/2016)

Most of these interviewees stated that their groups are actively involved in a dialogue with political institutions at all levels. One group contributes to multiculturalism in a poor neighbourhood that is “controlled” by far-right groups. Another group deliberately fights discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS. Almost all groups press for the expansion of state expenditure on health and social care and, in a way, ask for justice for those in need:

Injustice is a big issue. These are wounded people. (Disab6 09/2016)

Unemployment TSOs, but sometimes also disability and migration ones, address unemployment issues by providing practical help and some sort of services to their members, whether they are employed or unemployed (as well as to refugees and immigrants). In contrast to charities and practical help or service-oriented organisations, these TSOs adopt a rather political orientation. Hence, the dominant features of their activities remain political intervention and organising political action. In fact, most of the unemployment TSOs have a radical orientation, and they usually engage in protest events and social movement campaigns. They intervene in labour disputes, but their members are committed not only to protecting and advancing their organised and sectoral interests but also to advancing labour and working-class rights, including migrant and refugee rights, regarding them as the most vulnerable part of the working class and therefore in need of support.

(Multi-)target Groups and Solidarity Action Repertoires

An important shift has occurred since 2009 when Greece entered the economic crisis. Until 2009, the basic recipients of the activities of migration solidarity groups were homeless people, undocumented immigrants,

drug addicts and Roma. After 2009, as a result of the crisis, these target groups expanded to include increasing number of Greek citizens. Many of the migration TSOs providing support to migrants have become multi-target organisations helping a broader spectrum of beneficiaries. As migration TSOs stated, starting from 2010, they came across a shift in their target groups, since a large number of Greek citizens, suffering the consequences of the financial crisis, were added to the existing recipient groups. Moreover, since 2015, massive migration inflows brought to the surface the urgent call to provide help to a large number of migrants and refugees in Greece. Informal solidarity groups, as well as NGOs, mostly fulfilled this role.

Most of our interviewees across the three fields made it clear that their target group was not something static, but it was in a state of flux depending on the needs and the problems that were arising in Greek society. Irrespective of their field and focus of activity, their main goal was to play a supplementary role to that of the state when it comes to providing help to the most vulnerable social groups. In most cases, TSOs in the three fields are open to individuals who live under precarious conditions and seek their help:

We are open to groups that come to us, because you don't need to make an appointment to come to the organisation or the day shelter. You knock on the door during the shifts and you come. So, in a sense, it's not us who choose the target group, but it's the people who come to us, seeking help. (Migr1 09/2016)

The openness towards diverse target groups and people in need is also well exemplified by unemployment TSOs in our sample, most of which are grassroots-level unions. They are deliberately trying to represent the growing number of unemployed during those years of the economic crisis, and defend their rights. Another target group of the unions are the immigrants since most of them do not have full civil rights in Greece. Many are precarious workers and very few are unionised. Therefore, the aim of most of our unions is to unionise, come closer and represent the working rights of the immigrant population.

Regarding the repertoire of TSO actions, most interviewees pointed to the learning processes they went through during these actions. The main reason why TSOs had to expand and/or experiment with new activities was that Greece and Europe found themselves in *terra incognita*, especially when it came to the refugee crisis, and this led the people involved to experiment with different activities in order to provide the best possible help.

Some of the actions that our respondents perceived as innovative included the aforementioned housing programme for refugee families, but also pressuring state actors for policy alterations. These had successful outcomes and gave the recipients of this innovative action the right to legal employment for as long as they stayed in Greece.

It's very innovative! Think about it! Asylum seekers that come from a country where there is war...they apply for asylum, come to Greece and we give them a key to a house to call their own! And since we were trying to avoid benefit policies, we collaborated with other groups and the law has now changed, so these people are entitled to legal employment for as long as they stay here! (Migr1 09/2016)

Other TSO activities involve the development of special shelters for unaccompanied minors, away from the detention camps, in order to keep them safe from trafficking and other problems that they could possibly face, and also initiatives that aim to help migrants and refugees come together through the calling out for participation in several rallies, meetings, and the occupation of public buildings. What is new here is the fact that protest groups translate their callings and information sheets concerning their actions into languages like Arabic or Farsi, with the help of migrant volunteers.

An important activity held by one TSO is the operation of a school for immigrants inside the detention camp:

It's a school that runs from 9:00 to 22:00. We have been there for five and a half months now; there are 1400 minors. We got to help all the refugee teachers there to coordinate and teach...Following meetings we had with the parents, where we told them how kind and smart their kids are and

how essential it is for them to get educated, we had 50 more subscriptions the following day. The same parents asked us to create another class for adults, to teach them Arabic and also a class for folklore music and knitting. (Migr2 07/2016)

A rather innovative approach, at least in the Greek context, is taken by a TSO that mediates between those enterprises and individuals that are willing to offer food (for instance, from weddings, celebrations and the like) and those institutions that need food to offer to beneficiaries (municipalities, church, etc.). The goal is to reduce food waste and also reduce the cost of doing it since this organisation, unlike food banks, does not store or carry food. This practice has received attention from large food banks in New York and has been presented in the European Parliament. As one of the group's founders stated:

It is need that makes you innovative. (Disab2 09/2016)

Other practices considered innovative by the TSOs are the “expert by experience” techniques. In these cases, people who have themselves suffered from a disability and have received help or mediation now offer help and mediation out of their experience and training. These practices are used by groups that provide support to people living with HIV/AIDS and people with mental diseases like depression. Some TSOs like those dealing with genetic disorders and children's rights consider their services innovative because they offer knowledge to a general public that becomes better informed about these issues.

When asked about the innovative character of their work, most TSOs mention some of their activities and the broader campaigns in which they are taking part. Namely, two interviewees mentioned the open call of the company unions to the consumers to boycott the products of their respective companies during the periods of industrial conflict. Trade union TSOs consider the operation of the bottom-up/grassroots “coordination of first-level unions”, which mobilises workers and surpasses the inertia of secondary- and third-level confederations, as an innovation in Greek trade unionism. Other innovative actions they mention include the issuing of unemployment cards to all the members of the unions in order to

get some discounts, the provision of insurance coverage to those working as self-employed, the entrance of precarious workers to public sector unions and the on-the-spot surveillance of employers to ensure that they do not hire workers without insurance.

In practice, informal TSOs linked to neighbourhood initiatives, name as innovative the delivery of foreign-language and philosophy classes to the unemployed. The interviewee who represented the NGO in our sample from the unemployment issue-field mentioned as innovative the holistic approach they have adapted towards the provision of help to the unemployed with mental illness. According to this approach, the NGO provided psychological support along with classes to help them acquire new skills and technical support in finding a job.

Horizontalism, bottom-up labour mobilisation and direct democracy are among the practices most of our TSO representatives promote and consider as innovative. The workers of one of our groups who occupied their factory that was about to shut down have carried out a practical implementation of the above principles. They are practising mutual help by self-managing the factory, by not employing any hierarchical structure and by distributing and selling their products through social movement channels and not through the market:

In February 2013, we began production with self-management. Here, everything is decided by the employees' assembly, the council of the union has a formal role, it does not have an essential role, everything is decided in the assembly and there are no hierarchies either managerial or otherwise; we are all equal and the endeavour is also to switch all roles either in the production process, or in the representation when needed in some political, social movement type processes. (Unemp5 09/2016)

Of great importance is the fact that, even though the TSOs recognise that refugees and migrants are in the spotlight lately, they all agree that this should not, on their behalf, lead to further segregation of other vulnerable groups. The majority of these TSOs see their activities as supplemental to those of the state, but also as their duty, to denounce policies that lead to further segregation and pauperisation of vulnerable social groups. At the same time, TSO representatives believe that the future of

solidarity lies in the awakening and action of civil society, against policies that undermine human rights, and also the rallying of groups and individuals against fascist and extreme right phenomena both in Greece and in Europe in general.

Cooperation: Forms, Reasons and Rationales

The TSOs in all three fields are in general in favour of solidarity, but they understand and practise transnational solidarity in different ways. The more informal groups tend to share few transnational ties due to limited time and resources. It is the NGOs from the three fields that share these kinds of cross-national bondages. Mostly through partnerships with organisations from other European countries, these NGOs share knowledge, participate in international projects and try to attract EU funding. The protest-oriented TSOs in the migration and the unemployment fields perceive transnational solidarity in a more political manner. It is especially the unemployment TSOs that are in favour of a classic labour internationalist orientation, whether or not they have the opportunity and the resources to get involved in any transnational collective action or not.

Concerning the main supporters of our TSOs, this depends on the group's hierarchy and characteristics. More specifically, the NGOs in all fields depend largely on financing from official state actors, the European Commission, UNHCR and a series of European funding programmes, in general. Groups of a different, more protest-oriented and informal nature mostly depend on help from volunteers and donations while they organise activities and bazaars in order to gain funding that will allow them to continue their work.

Clearly, the publicly funded NGOs stressed that the EU was very relevant and involved in their field of action since it was their main source of funding. At the same time, this direct connection to the EU made it easier for these groups to find themselves in dialogue with official state actors and the European Commission, regarding policies that concern their main field of actions. In contrast, the groups that were leaning towards a more protest-oriented and informal character deemed the EU as playing a non-pivotal role in their field of action, out of principle. They

tend to follow more combative ways (namely through rallies, the establishment of informal solidarity activities and the occupation of public buildings) to criticise EU and national policies that are relevant to their activities. In particular, most of the interviewees from the unemployment TSOs expressed a negative opinion towards the EU. They have argued that the EU is functioning against the interests of the working class. One interviewee said that her group supports exiting the EU from an internationalist, but not a nationalist, vantage point. Most of these interviewees said that the struggle should be against the local bosses. One argued that:

The crucial point is not whether Greece should be inside or outside the European Union, but the position of the workers regardless of whether Greece is inside or not. (Unemp4 09/2016)

TSOs in our sample, however, depend more on the support and donations of ordinary people. Both NGOs and more protest-oriented TSOs agreed that ordinary people are the main supporters of their actions through their participation in and response to their activities. They have also agreed that the state is either inefficient or unable to cope with the challenges regarding the financial and migrant crises.

With the exception of the few TSOs that participated in the research but rejected in principle the possibility of collaborating with the state and state actors, the others are involved in some kind of collaboration with the state, depending on their activities. This collaboration included cooperation for the needs of a project regarding migrants and refugees, collaborating with the district attorney or the police in order to protect unaccompanied minors, or the attempt to gather donations (mainly material goods, like desks or blackboards) for group activities.

When asked about the challenges of transnational collaborations, and collaborations in general, one TSO representative responded that in their group, they employed some criteria in order to start a cooperation:

These criteria are the existence of ethos, respect and transparency: Without these, you cannot help, therefore you cannot collaborate. (Disab3 09/2016)

Transparency is an important criterion for one more organisation that has also raised serious doubts about the possibility of effective

collaboration between organisations because, according to their experience, many times organisations that operate in the same field develop antagonistic attitudes. But the most intense doubts about transnational collaborations were raised by one interviewee, who has herself been a high-ranking EU official in the past and who represents a solidarity organisation that is very active in transnational projects:

We are living a colonialisation by the big foreign NGOs and the UNHCR...these people are managers...solidarity [for them] is a new business, an innovative business. (Disab6 09/2016)

With regard to beneficiaries, the activities of Greek TSOs across all three fields involve transnational target groups within Greece. This means that their activities involve tailor-made advice and support for beneficiaries with migrant/refugee background in need of help within the country. In contrast, only very few and mostly charitable groups are involved in solidarity activities with individuals living in other countries. However, most of our interviewees perceive solidarity as something that has to be applied on a global level, with the cooperation of organisations and individuals, in order to achieve the best results.

It was clearly stated by all TSO representatives that the collaboration among different solidarity groups was something that was both desired and essential. Many expressed a desire to get involved in broader solidarity networks since this involvement has three main positive outcomes: Firstly, at the practical level, through collaboration, the solidarity actions and the offer of practical support are extended, allowing for the provision of help to a bigger part of the targeted groups. At the same time, collaboration often gives status and the ability to be heard on national and international levels and effectively puts pressure on the policymakers. Lastly, the transnational collaboration that many of the selected groups aim or aimed to achieve gives the people involved in all these groups the ability to be better informed and aware of matters that concern migrants/refugees, the unemployed and the disabled throughout Europe.

In general, the idea of transnational collaboration is something that all the selected groups are open to, although most of them have not actually tried it on a broad scale yet. The main difficulty mentioned by the interviewees regarding collaboration with other groups, on both national and

transnational levels, was the large effort that is needed in order to coordinate such initiatives. Therefore, TSOs choose to collaborate with groups that share the same philosophy and similar principles as them (e.g., an NGO collaborating with other NGOs, protest groups collaborating with other protest groups that belong to a broader network).

While most TSOs lack the capacity to put transnational solidarity into practice, there are some that are actively committed to it. For instance, there is one TSO operating a factory occupation that is also very active at the transnational level since it is related to other factory occupations and self-management projects and cooperatives in Europe, Latin America and North Africa. Another interviewee mentioned the participation of his group in a transnational collective action against the operation of Sunday trading. As he said:

We are buying books on weekdays and we are reading them on Sundays.
(Unemp2 09/2016)

Conclusions

The interviews we have conducted with TSOs operating in the fields of migration, disabilities and unemployment have provided interesting insights into Greek civil society as it has emerged and developed during the economic and refugee crises. Of course, some of the TSOs existed before the dual crisis. The older ones in all three fields deployed a higher degree of competence and knowledge to implement and advocate better conditions for immigrants, the disabled and the unemployed. But the durability of both crises and the inability of the Greek state to adequately deal with them made the appearance of new civil society groups, especially in the fields of immigration and unemployment, necessary. The newer groups are more prone to innovation, have fewer resources and depend more on volunteerism. Innovation is wanted either because of the lack of resources, due to the economic crisis, or because of the growing need for effectiveness. Some TSOs are operating without any cooperation with the Greek state or EU authorities, and most of them advocate bottom-up solidarity and counterpose it to top-down charity.

However, we have to note here that the differences between the older and the newer TSOs of our sample are not very significant. The people who created the new TSOs were not new in the migration, disability and unemployment fields. In most cases, they were already active in relevant civil society organisations and social movements (Kavoulakos and Gritzias 2015). It seems that the eruption of the economic and refugee crises in Greece caused an increase in the number of participants in civil society and a transformation of its activities (Tsakatika and Eleftheriou 2013; Vathakou 2015). The dual crisis created new needs and an already vivid civil society tried to cope with them, but without altering its main endogenous characteristics.

The examination of our TSOs shows that both older and newer groups are rather small organisations, unlikely to become large NGOs. Regarding their transnational linkages, it seems that some of them, especially from the disability field, hold weak ties with transnational bodies, while others opt for transnational discourse on more political terms. Overall, their transnational solidarity activities are mainly directed towards migrants and refugees in need of help inside Greece.

The breadth and range of solidarity in Greece appear to have expanded and shifted towards a more transnational one due to external factors, namely the Eurozone and refugee crises. The findings of the interviews with TSOs testify that a vibrant before-crisis Greek civil society became also more multifarious and more politicised as a result of internal factors as well. The newly imposed grievances at the backdrop of a deteriorating political framework, previous experience as well as collective learning, led to the growth of the organisational field (more volunteers and new groups) and more voices in regard to issues and demands, as well as openness towards diverse target groups and people.

The expanded solidarity activities are directed at a variety of target groups and are not confined to a sole primary target group. TSOs appear to be very flexible, more open to others and adaptive to new conditions and urgent needs. Additionally, an impressive finding out of these interviews is that Greek TSOs tend to be highly politicised. From mainstream NGOs to informal collectivities, from radical trade unions to small charitable groups, all the TSOs in our sample are “talking politics” while being totally autonomous from the Greek political parties. Either in the form

of claims' making to the Greek state, or in criticising and trying to influence the policies of any given Greek government, or in referring to internationalism and the need to overthrow capitalism, our TSOs are deeply concerned with and active in politics, thus offering no evidence for those claiming a lack of civil society in Greece or a weakness thereof. Under the dual crisis conditions, our interviewees have also provided some provisional policy recommendations. Namely, they are asking for (1) the Greek state or the EU authorities to intervene more effectively and coordinate some actions especially when many groups overlap in one field, (2) a better and updated legislation regarding volunteerism, (3) more funding and tax exemptions on donations, and (4) the facilitation of smaller groups to operate in the field of refugees since large and transnational NGOs are out of touch with local stakeholders' needs.

The economic and refugee crises have posed, and are still posing, serious challenges to the social cohesion of Greek society. The interview data we have presented in this chapter illustrate the efforts of these TSOs across three issue-fields to meet these challenges. They intervene by employing a variety of means that aim to achieve solidarity. One might assume that through their intervention, these groups develop a transnational dimension that also fits well with the transnational dimension of the challenges they face. This intervention may prove insufficient, but at least it testifies for the evolution and efforts of a vibrant civil society. Contrary to supporters of "the weak civil society" argument, the groups we have interviewed are not controlled by political parties and are strongly criticising the Greek state for its policies regarding the economy and migration. Furthermore, our findings contribute to recent work on alternative solidarity organisations by shedding light and offering new knowledge on them and their transnational dimension.

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3

Civil Society Activism in Italy Across Different Fields: A Multifaceted Picture of Solidarity in Hard Times

Nicola Maggini and Veronica Federico

Introduction

In Italy, the global economic crisis had a devastating impact on fragile populations. It created new important waves of unemployed and worsened the conditions of those who were already suffering from unemployment. Especially during the 2010–2013 period, it led to severe cuts in welfare services, which negatively affected the most vulnerable sectors of society, such as people with disabilities. Furthermore, since 2014 the refugee crisis has dramatically and suddenly raised the number of migrants, thus increasing the areas of intervention, especially in the field of political asylum. Despite this difficult context, a web of civic engagement sustained by civil society organisations has been working on

N. Maggini (✉)

Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute, Fiesole, Italy
e-mail: nicola.maggini@eui.eu

V. Federico

Department of Legal Sciences, University of Florence, Florence, Italy
e-mail: veronica.federico@unifi.it

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a daily basis to mitigate the impact of economic breakdown and austerity policies, taking the form of both advocacy and a service provision. Therefore, civil society engagement has been functioning to complement the welfare state, a most essential role for the most vulnerable people (Baglioni and Giugni 2014).

Austerity and cuts led not only to anti-austerity protests but also to resilience and social ingenuity, deployed through a range of civil society organisations, social movements and social innovations according to empirical studies on solidarity initiatives both in Italy and in Europe (Andretta and Guidi 2014; Forno and Graziano 2014; Grasseni 2014; Kousis and Paschou 2017; Oliveri 2015; Kousis et al. 2018; Lahusen et al. 2016). Furthermore, as stressed by some of these studies (Forno and Graziano 2014; Bosi and Zamponi 2015), during the crisis many Italian social movement organisations and activists altered their repertoire of actions at the local level in order to achieve social change. They seem to have abandoned the tactics of large protest events, as they did in previous years, and started to focus on small-scale everyday solidarity activities in order to transform society from below.

Moreover, the refugee crisis has accentuated the importance and growth of transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs) (Ataç et al. 2016). Older movements, such as the disability movement or the unemployment/labour movements, also illustrate the importance of transnational solidarity and the impact of the economic crisis. Indeed, the increasing importance of transnationalism has been noted by the development of transnational-focused disability critical literature (Shildrick 2009; McRuer 2010; Soldatic and Grech 2014).

Against this backdrop, this chapter is devoted to monitoring, analysing and assessing practices of Italian transnational solidarity organisations, such as citizens' initiatives and networks of cooperation among civil society actors (for instance, NGOs, churches, voluntary associations and cooperatives), in response to the crises, focusing on three fields of activity: disability, unemployment and migrants. The aim is to investigate the relationship between the organisational field and its environment (the crises), and the level of contentiousness, innovativeness and transnationalism of each issue-field. In this regard, we focus on differences and similarities among migration, disability and unemployment TSOs in terms of

approaches followed (such as top-down vs. bottom-up) and type of solidarity provided (e.g., help/service-oriented TSOs vs. protest/policy-oriented TSOs), aims and perceptions of the economic crisis and the spread of international linkages.

Our main hypothesis is that solidarity in the three policy domains is strongly determined by the very field of activity, since policy domains influence TSOs' perceptions of the economic crisis, their approaches and their level of contentiousness and transnationalism. Solidarity is domain-bounded (Warren 2001). Secondly, we postulate that the economic crisis may represent a vector of innovation (Bosi and Zamponi 2015) and of transnationalism, pushing Italian TSOs to look for new strategies, approaches, collaborations and geographical perspectives. Prior literature has discussed whether unexpected events, such as a crisis, are opportunities for organisational learning (Carley and Harrald 1997). In this regard, a study concerning the impact of the crisis on civil society organisations in the European Union (EU) (Shahin et al. 2013) has shown how the crisis implied particularly severe financial constraints for civil society organisations in Southern Europe. Indeed, the huge cuts in government spending have affected them directly, given that they were traditionally dependent on government funds. As a reaction to this changing environment, Southern European civil society organisations have expanded their collaborative networks (particularly in the field of social services) or acceded to EU funds (by participating in projects) as a means of ensuring steady funding.

The chapter elaborates on the data gathered through 30 in-depth interviews (10 from each target group) with representatives of innovative, informal Transnational Solidarity Organisations (TSOs) (Kousis et al. 2018) in Italy, carried out mostly in September–October 2016, under the TransSOL project (TransSOL 2016).¹ When compiling the sample,² we sought to take into account regional variety across the country. However, it transpired that mostly TSOs from the centre and the north of Italy were willing to participate in this study, while TSOs from the south of

¹ This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 649435.

² For more information on sampling, see <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

Italy were very difficult to convince.³ As regards the type of TSOs selected, most of our interviewees belong to voluntary, non-profit organisations with no or very few paid staff, followed by local or regional branches of religious organisations, and (mainly (un)employment-oriented) cooperatives and a trade union. Finally, we also interviewed a representative of an informal grassroots movement and an alternative media network (see also Maggini and Federico 2016).

The chapter will first provide a general overview of a variety of challenges TSOs have had to face in Italy as a consequence of the economic and refugee crises, looking at how the TSOs describe the legal and policy context in which they are embedded. Secondly, it will investigate TSOs' activities, focusing on TSOs' approach, missions and target groups, innovativeness, type of solidarity provided, detecting differences and similarities between policy domains. Thirdly, it will explore forms, reasons and rationales of TSOs' cooperation with other civil society organisations, with public authorities and, finally, with foreign or international actors. In conclusion, we will discuss the two assumptions the present chapter is based on through the lens of our analysis.

TSOs' Descriptions of the National Context with Its Core Challenges

The economic and refugee crises have had a tremendous impact on Italian TSOs' activities across the three fields. All interviewees highlighted the difficulties created or exacerbated by the economic crisis. Reflecting on the consequences of the crisis for both the beneficiaries and the organisations themselves, they mentioned welfare cuts, a reduction in public funds and donations, a reduction in employment levels and so on, but some added interesting insights, unveiling less patent implications⁴:

³We could postulate that the reluctance of Southern Italian TSOs might be due to the fact that Southern Italy may be described as a typical low trust society, where the scarce presence of social capital engenders a low level of "trust in others" (Banfield 1967).

⁴Several interviewees mentioned the cuts to the "National Fund for the Non-Self-Sufficient" (in 2011 this fund was reduced by 75% due to budget cuts and only in 2015 was the fund brought back to its original 400 million euros).

Independence and autonomy are linked to the economic situation ... The disabled person has daily needs. The life of a disabled person's family is also affected economically. Disability may create difficulties also from a professional standpoint ... In addition, the disabled often have to buy new houses for their needs ... The disability or illness in itself has a differentiated impact depending on the economic situation of the disabled person's family. The crisis broadens these inequalities. (Disab5 10/2016)

Austerity policies enacted in the EU are generally strongly criticised:

In Europe, the contradictions between countries have led to the wrong policy of austerity, unlike the US whose economy has grown. (Unemp2 09/2016)

The rigour of the EU has failed. (Unemp6 10/2016)

The Italian approach presents critical aspects, too, for instance, with regard to the lack of provision of a basic income⁵ and the absence of a "serious, robust industrial policy".⁶ Moreover, the pursuit of flexibility, the fragmentation of the labour market and the dearth of investments to boost research were also pointed out as Italian weaknesses.⁷ To sum up:

The measures were not sufficient enough to cover the surge of new forms of poverty generated by the crisis. The interventions are too sectoral, and we lack a systematic approach. (Unemp7 10/2016)

Nonetheless, some interviewees mentioned the positive effects brought about by the enforcement of new policies and legislation like agribusiness protection, the reduction of taxes on social cooperatives and the part of the "Jobs Act"⁸ that fiscally favours permanent contracts.

⁵Unemp10 10/2016.

⁶Unemp6 10/2016.

⁷Unemp2 09/2016.

⁸The Jobs Act is the name of the labour market reform undertaken to face the crisis. It consists of two framework pieces of legislation (Law Decree no. 34 of 2014 and Law no. 183 of 2014) and a number of additional law decrees have radically redefined the legal framework of the labour market with the purpose of simplifying, revising the regulation of employment contracts and improving

Against the backdrop of a generalised, obvious perception of the economic crisis as the cause of worsening socio-economic conditions, TSOs' understanding of the context they are embedded in varies largely along the policy domain they are active in. Disability TSOs stressed the coherence of the legal and policy framework, but they highlighted that the economic crisis had aggravated policy and law implementation and contributed to a decrease in available funds and the related capacity to deliver services for disabled people. In this field, very few were the voices claiming the crisis as a challenge to innovate and induce positive transformations. In recent years, some new and important legislation has been enforced. Of particular relevance is the law *dopo di noi- after us*, taking care of severely disabled persons after the death of their family members, and the reorganisation of the third sector, which has an indirect but strong impact on services. However, all the TSOs asserted that the problem does not lie with legislation's deficiencies but mainly lies with its sound implementation.⁹ Interestingly, some assert that Italian devolution in the health sector has produced inequality of treatment:

The Region of Tuscany recognises twice as many rare diseases than the rest of Italy. We are lucky. But those who live in other regions, especially the poorest ones, are disadvantaged. (Disab4 10/2016)

Some interviewees also highlight a specific failure by the Italian legal framework to guarantee job placement for disadvantaged workers:

the work-life balance. Among other things, passive and active labour market policies have been reformed, a new form of a permanent contract with increasing protection levels has been launched and a new unemployment benefit scheme has been put in place. Article 18 of the Workers' Statute, imposing restrictive conditions for workers' dismissal, has been radically reviewed, eliminating the system of compulsory reintegration in case of unjustified dismissal for workers employed under the new contract system. Increased levels of job protection depend on seniority and are based on monetary compensation (instead of compulsory reintegration). Opinions on the Jobs Act are, however, controversial: Some (especially the cooperatives) accept flexibility if accompanied by social protection and active labour market policies, while for others (specifically the unions), the flexibility is absolutely negative, as it leads to dismantling workers' rights.

⁹Disab5 10/2016.

It is an outdated law, ill-suited to favour and guarantee the employment of disadvantaged people. It is based on a medical definition of 'disadvantage', certified by health services, and this is a very resizing approach. (Unemp3 09/2016)

In comparison, TSOs active in the unemployment field severely criticise both a fragile and inadequate legal and policy framework and a weak industrial and economic infrastructure. However, in contrast to disability TSOs, many interviewees from unemployment TSOs also perceive the crisis as an opportunity to innovate the welfare system and to develop a solidarity-based local economy. And this was perceived as a positive legacy of the crisis:

Many people have rediscovered agricultural and handicraft activities, with the effect of making the economic system stronger at the local level. (Unemp5 10/2016)

I am not pessimistic. Not everything depends on us, but a good deal! (Unemp6 10/2016)

At the same time, it is within the unemployment TSOs that there is the highest variance in the perception of the Italian government's policy responses, with a clear contraposition between cooperatives and social enterprises more open to consider some positive aspects of policy reform, and trade unions and left-wing organisations fiercely against those same measures. In fact, optimism is not shared by everyone. Reflecting on rights protection and enforcement, especially socio-economic rights, one interviewee from a more critical TSO observed that: "Crises always lead to regressive phenomena" (Unemp2 09/2016).

In the immigration/refugee domain, our interviewees underline that the crises, and especially the "refugee crisis", brought to the forefront the legal weaknesses of a very fragmented, fast-changing legal framework. At the same time, the "refugee crisis" altered the funding opportunities for TSOs. Since the beginning of 2016, there has been a significant increase in both the number and the funding of projects and tenders, mainly concerning services for immigrants and refugees. In fact, the creation of the

Italian Agency for development aid in 2016 and the increased funds for international cooperation were also mentioned as important innovations.¹⁰ Nevertheless, most interviewees emphasise that the Italian legal framework in this field is deficient. There is no clarity on quotas and regulations, and laws are often not enforced. Legally entering the country is difficult; thus, many migrants turn to criminal organisations, and asylum applications are often abused as they are perceived as the sole measure to enter Italy legally.

In particular, interviewees strongly criticise the EU-Turkey Agreement on refugees with no guarantee of human rights' respect,¹¹ the prohibition of monitoring the hotspots' system by activists to oversee the procedural correctness,¹² the lack of a real common migration policy at an EU level and the lack of solidarity among member states as regards the relocation of refugees.¹³ Conversely, some judgements of the European Court on Human Rights are considered as positive (for instance, the prohibition of collective expulsions of aliens has been extended to migrants intercepted at sea). The problem highlighted by the interviewees is that often courts' judgements remain on paper and are not implemented. The attitude of the then centre-left Italian government under Matteo Renzi is perceived as more positive than that of Eastern European governments. Particularly appreciated is the operation of migrants' sea-rescue.¹⁴ However, interviewees denounce the lack of a strategic and coherent plan to receive migrants and the slowness of the asylum proceedings.

In terms of public opinion attitudes, our interviewees generally do not perceive hostility towards immigrants in their local contexts,¹⁵ except in a northern city:

¹⁰ Migr6 10/2016.

¹¹ Migr6 10/2016 and Migr8 10/2016.

¹² Migr8 10/2016.

¹³ All interviewees.

¹⁴ These considerations pertain to the government of the time of the interviews. The entering into force of a new executive, after March 2018 general elections, radically changed the migration policy. The closure of ports for non-governmental organisations' rescue missions and push backs became the flagship measure of the new government immigration policy under the coalition of the Five Star Movement and the right-wing party The League of the time.

¹⁵ It is crucial to point out here that since the interviews, the political and public opinion climate has changed dramatically. The large consensus obtained by the xenophobic party The League in the

Here, there is hostility towards immigrants. And after the terrorist attacks, even fear. (Migr5 09/2016)

Some also emphasise the importance of breaking down the walls of distrust and promoting solidarity, to mobilise local communities and to build a multi-ethnic society. In comparison, others highlight the risk that the weakness of the Italian welfare state could trigger a struggle among the poor.

In contrast to these field-specific context conditions, some important similarities of the three fields have emerged from our interviews. Beyond the criticism and the dire socio-economic conditions, the economic crisis is depicted by several interviewees in all three domains also as an opportunity, in particular as an opportunity to reconsider their views and to retrain and increase cooperation between associations. For instance, in the disability field, many interviewees say the crisis pushed them to develop new strategies based on networks of solidarity and to overcome the excessive particularism and parochialism that has long characterised the field dominated by highly disability/disease-specialised organisations.¹⁶ In fact, it was exactly the lack of funding that triggered many TSOs to collaborate with other civil society organisations in their field in order to share resources. Similarly, the crisis opened the door for unemployment and refugee TSOs towards new horizontal relationships among TSOs, driving them to engage in tighter and more effective cooperation in order to face the new challenges in times of crisis. In addition to inter-organisational coalition building, the crisis has also forced associations and public authorities into tighter cooperation to compensate for the lack of resources and to minimise costs. However, these new opportunities are not easy to grasp, and state intervention is still considered necessary:

Where there is a vacuum, there is always an opportunity, but it is difficult in practice. NGOs should not replace the state. (Migr6 10/2016)

2018 general elections and in the 2019 European elections on a political platform based on “Italian First” policy is a clear marker of this change in public opinion.

¹⁶Disab9 10/2016 and Disab10 10/2016.

Our motto is: We are born to die. Our aim is to oblige the institutions to do what we do today. (Migr4 09/2016)

In this regard, some interviewees in both the unemployment and the disability fields stress the importance of subsidiarity. This does not mean that civil society organisations should replace the state. Instead, TSOs advocate for a fruitful collaboration between the state and the third sector, especially in welfare services' delivery:

The future is subsidiarity, however, the state must implement measures to promote job placement. (Unemp3 09/2016)

In other words, a new civil society activism should not be an excuse for public authorities to negate their responsibility by not providing welfare services. Moreover, "if the state has less money, you could activate solidarity from below. But this happens only where there is a favourable cultural substratum" (Disab5 10/2016).

Activities: Missions and Target Groups

Against the backdrop of common overarching, broad goals of the interviewed TSOs in the three fields under review (combating discrimination, helping others and promoting social integration), we have observed a certain variation in terms of the type of solidarity provided and approach followed depending on the policy domains, detecting differences and similarities. The pattern of differences and similarities is neither regular nor homogeneous across the fields.

TSOs' Approach

In both the unemployment and the disability fields, most of the TSOs choose the top-down approach of providing goods and services to their beneficiaries, but at the same time, they offer solidarity activities based on mutual help and support between groups (especially in the disability

field). Indeed, almost all TSOs in the disability sector are formed of disabled people and their families (and one of them was originally a self-help group which turned into a non-profit organisation). Thus, many interviewees either are disabled people or are relatives of people with disabilities:

I decided to join the association to seek answers. My daughter is afflicted by multiple sclerosis. (Disab3 09/2016)

I joined 26 years ago for personal reasons: my son has spina bifida. The association has filled an absolute void that we as parents experience [...] It provides real opportunities that allow us to work not only for our child, but also for others, and this is gratifying. It is a healthy selfishness. (Disab4 10/2016)

Similarly, mutual help characterises many TSOs within the unemployment field, especially cooperatives and trade unions. Conversely, only one of the migration TSOs provides solidarity activities based on mutual help, a migrants' association that pursues the promotion of Arab culture and intercultural exchanges to raise awareness of Moroccan culture among the second generation of immigrants and to defend women's rights. This difference with respect to the other fields can be explained by the fact that most of the TSOs in the migration field that have been interviewed are formed by Italians, not by immigrants. In this regard, scholars have stressed the contentious and thus political nature of many solidarity movements across the globe that address refugee and migrant needs (Ataç et al. 2016). Thus, it is unsurprising that belonging to migration TSOs is driven, above all, by political-ideal motivations rather than by mutual help between people of the same ethnic background.

TSOs' Mission

A large majority of interviewed TSOs tend to combine services providing and advocacy and public awareness raising, but the level of engagement in the two activities, the kind of services and the type of advocacy are different in the three policy domains.

Predictably, the picture of services offered to their beneficiaries is quite diverse among and within each issue-field. As regards migration TSOs, they offer services of first and second reception, legal advice, medical care, training and job placement, Italian language courses, Arabic courses for second-generation speakers, information activities (conferences, seminars, reports, videos, radio) and activities to increase public awareness of migrants' rights, lobbying and influencing, projects promoting fair trade and international cooperation, social communication projects, training for lawyers and social workers, intercultural dialogue and exchanges, and so forth.

Similarly, disability TSOs provide a rather diverse range of services: personal services (home support, counselling, home physiotherapy, sports and Shiatsu massages for the disabled), information activities (conferences, seminars, magazines, websites) and activities to increase public awareness, training of volunteers, conferences and seminars for doctors, donations to research, specialist training, specialised libraries and disability resource centres, school and job placement, selection of technological aids, fiscal services, calculation of pensions, legal/medical advice, support for the aggravation of a disease and its legal recognition, information points in hospitals, and so forth.

Finally, the typical activities and services provided by unemployment TSOs are disadvantaged people's work placement (e.g., through the collection and supply of medical mobility devices, the production and sale of organic fruit and vegetables), political and union workers' representation, political and union cooperatives' representation, business services (such as legal and financial services), staff retraining, job training, information campaigns and political mobilisation through the radio, and the like.

When the analysis moves to the balance between service providing and advocacy activities, an interesting difference emerges between disability-related TSOs on the one hand and TSOs within the unemployment field on the other. While in the disability field TSOs are focused more or less equally on both service delivery and lobbying, in the unemployment field there is a clearer distinction between organisations that prioritise either help and service orientation (religious organisations and social cooperatives) or protest and policy orientation (e.g., an alternative radio network,

a trade union and a league of cooperatives). The former are more interested in providing services to their beneficiaries, whereas the latter are more concerned with lobbying and political issues, having also more general aims linked to social change, economic democracy and social justice.

Between these two poles, there is the migration field, where some organisations are more help-oriented (especially religious organisations and social cooperatives), whereas others are more policy-oriented and reflect a more contentious approach (especially the informal grassroots group and, to a certain extent, some non-profit organisations). However, even those more help-oriented organisations are interested in lobbying and advocacy, and those more policy-oriented ones also provide concrete help to migrants and refugees.

Here again, the field of activity does not simply influence the kind of services provided by TSOs (and this is predictable), but it also influences the blend of services and advocacy and, finally, their approach to lobbying and advocating.

Beneficiaries

Across the three issue-fields, TSOs' beneficiaries are mainly local and regional residents and, to a smaller extent, national ones, even in the migration field, with the exception of a few TSOs that are also very active abroad, caring for migrants and refugees in other countries (or in their country of origin).

Unsurprisingly, TSOs' solidarity actions are oriented towards beneficiaries belonging to their issue-field: For unemployment TSOs, the target groups are the unemployed (both in general terms and within special groups of unemployed), workers and (in one case) cooperatives; within the migration field, the target groups are, obviously, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and persons in need of international protection, and finally for disability TSOs, the target groups are disabled people and their families.

Nevertheless, there are some beneficiaries crosscutting issue-fields. This especially affects TSOs within the unemployment field: Among the disadvantaged unemployed, there are physically and mentally disabled,

drug addicts and detainees. Moreover, most of the interviewed TSOs in the unemployment field have foreign people among their beneficiaries, and a local chapter of a religious organisation deals with migrant job orientation and training. Within the migration field, some organisations also deal with victims of torture, female victims of trafficking, unaccompanied minors and ethnic minorities (Roma and Sinti). Most of the TSOs are not focused on a specific ethnicity, with the exception of the aforementioned migrants' association founded by Moroccan women. In short, its solidarity actions are not exclusively directed towards members of the association:

We are open to everybody: men and women, both Italian and of Arab culture. (Migr9 10/2016)

Conversely, in the disability field the target groups are only the disabled and their families. Nonetheless, (almost) all the TSOs of our sample have foreigners as beneficiaries, members or volunteers. Foreign people with disabilities face additional problems and difficulties (such as claiming for family reunification). Interviewees recognise that disabled migrants come to Italy because in their country their right to health and to a decent life is not guaranteed. This is particularly true for migrants afflicted with rare diseases. Many interviewees also stressed that foreigners are often single women showing an untrusting and diffident attitude, revealing an instrumental approach towards the association:

They take everything they need and then disappear. They hardly take part in the life of the association [...] This is because they think that one day we can ask back what we have offered [...] They are not aware of their rights. (Disab4 10/2016)

Very interestingly, only a few TSOs are involved in solidarity activities towards disabled people as such, whereas most of TSOs are focused on specific disabilities: the blind, people with hydrocephalus and spina bifida, people affected by multiple sclerosis, people with SLA, maimed people. This reveals a strong specialisation and sectorialisation, increasing the risk of the fragmentation of disabled people's interests. Harsh

competition for private and public financial resources is another serious consequence of this fragmentation. Many activists are conscious of these dangers:

In Italy associations in the field of disability are still highly fractioned along pathologies and forms of disability. This is quite obvious on the one hand, but problematic on the other because it tends to prevent the establishment of a strong group of interest, whose voice could be louder in the public sphere. If we were less divided, we could achieve more strategic goals. (Disab1 09/2016)

There is the risk that everyone just thinks of his/her own backyard with a war among the poor. (Disab6 10/2016)

There is the danger of particularism and ‘trends’, if each association focuses on its own benefits and backyard [...]. This is a problem for true solidarity. (Disab4 10/2016)

In terms of solidarity, what is interesting, however, is that the sectorialisation of disability TSOs does not match with a chauvinistic “pro-members” attitude: In most cases, these solidarity actions towards people with (specific) disabilities are not exclusively restricted to the association’s membership (although members sometimes receive special treatment).¹⁷ Membership is not very important in terms of financing (membership fees are often nothing more than symbolic). Membership remains relevant, nonetheless: “The members’ weight is of crucial importance in lobbying and campaigning” (Disab3 09/2016). Moreover, “membership is important to develop a sense of belonging to the group” (Disab4 10/2016). But “some members instrumentally join the association for individual goals rather than for collective ones” (Disab2 09/2016).

Innovativeness

Regardless of the issue-field, the majority of interviewed TSOs developed innovative practices as a response to societal challenges such as the

¹⁷Disab2 09/2016.

economic and refugee crisis, austerity measures and welfare retrenchment. Most of our interviewees across the three fields say that they have produced innovative solutions to meet the increasing needs of their beneficiaries in terms of content, communication and kind of help offered, as highlighted by several interviewees in the unemployment field:

Our organisation was created around the innovative idea of providing medical mobility devices at a controlled price meeting a local need. (Unemp3 09/2016)

The most innovative project is a business project of local farming products that are marketed on a web portal [...] It works pretty well. (Unemp5 10/2016)

In response to the crisis, we support the transformation of workers from companies in financial crisis into co-operators, that is, into collective entrepreneurs. (Unemp6 10/2016)

Innovativeness in solidarity activities has been fostered by the crisis also in the disability field. Only two interviewees explicitly affirmed that their activities do not present any innovativeness, whereas another interviewee maintained that innovative activities occur at the national level (for instance, the organisation's headquarters elaborated very detailed reports on the disease and the related rights), but not at the local level.

Innovativeness is perceived either in terms of content or in terms of communication: petitions, videos, awareness campaigns with the support of national newspapers and social networks, promotional tours and theatre performances for children and so forth. Among the innovative practices: a "wheelchair tour" visiting the places where major accidents at work took place was organised by a victim of an accident at work to raise awareness of safety; the *Ice Bucket Challenge* largely adopted as a fundraising and awareness campaign; and a new approach to services for disabled people based not on what can be offered but on the real needs of the person. Sometimes, innovation lies in the methodology: The disabled are not simply beneficiaries, but they actively participate in every aspect of the association's life. This entails no asymmetry between helper and receiver according to a rights-based approach to foster empowerment and

capacity building. Moreover, in one case, the very association rooted its origins in innovativeness, namely the idea of creating a documentation centre on disability 30 years ago when there were no documentation centres on disability:

Three guys thought: What can we do for society? ... and not just: What can society do for us? (Disab6 10/2016)

Most of the interviewees within the migration field also stated that their group produced innovative solutions to meet the increasing needs of their beneficiaries in terms of content, communication, kind of help offered, capacities (expressly, the launch of new practices and the development of transnational ties) and processes (especially non-institutional means). Among the most interesting and original examples are a system of diffused hospitality, where migrants are hosted in small apartments with the purpose of reducing the impact on local communities and encouraging dialogue and social inclusion, and counter-information campaigns to document the dramatic dis-homogeneity of the reception centres.

Moreover, a TSO has an interesting project to encourage entrepreneurship among migrant women in the wake of a fair trade project already developed in Morocco with the collaboration of an Italian university. The idea is to create a cooperative of women based in an Italian city that will run a “Moroccan-style Hamman” using cosmetics (especially the famous Argan oil) produced by a partner women’s cooperative in Morocco. Finally, a group of independent journalists and activists launched an innovative political and social campaign along the migratory routes in the Balkans and in Greece (for instance, in the refugee camp of Idomeni) to install parables providing access to Wi-Fi for migrants to communicate with their families, submit asylum demands and mobilise from below.

From past experience, we have understood the importance of communicating for migrants. [...] Surely this campaign has been a novelty. [...] We want to build a policy agenda from below to advocate for the enforcement of fundamental rights for everyone. (Migr8 10/2016)

This campaign is a clear example of how actions can assume different features in terms of innovativeness: as new activities resulting from a learning process, as new supporting communication and networking activities, as new activities geared to empowering, activating and integrating target groups to enable self-initiative, self-representation, self-reliance.

Cooperation: Forms, Reasons and Rationales

Cooperation with Other Civil Society Organisations

Interviewed TSOs are active at the local and regional level/s or are local branches of national organisations. In the local context, they have developed collaborative relationships with a variety of other organisations: non-profit/NGO/voluntary organisations, trade unions, cooperatives, religious organisations, grassroots movements and activists. In general, our interviewees recognise the importance and benefits of cooperation: “It is useful to work in a network perspective” (Unemp7 10/2016).

Interviewed TSOs collaborate mostly with other organisations that operate in the same policy domain. The specificity of migration TSOs emerges here: Most of these associations deal with migrants, but there are also interlinkages with other organisations like Emergency¹⁸ and trade unions, with international cooperation NGOs and with associations focusing on battered women and minors (namely Save the Children). Here, a clear difference between *charity/practical help/service* TSOs and *protest/social movement/policy-oriented* TSOs emerges. The latter cooperate regularly with informal groups, grassroots movements and squats, whereas the former cooperate primarily with formal voluntary organisations and NGOs, trade unions, cooperatives and religious organisations. This distinction relies on the fact that policy-oriented TSOs have a more contentious and political approach than charities and “practical help” TSOs.

¹⁸One of the most famous Italian independent organisations providing medical treatment to the victims of wars, landmines and poverty worldwide.

Most of the disability TSOs are local branches of national organisations, and their collaborations often involve associations caring for similar disabilities. This seems to confirm the trend of the thematic specialisation of disability organisations that we discussed earlier and its inherent risk of particularism. Rarely do these associations develop collaborative relationships with organisations active in different policy domains, that being so, only one respondent disclosed their collaboration with migrant associations: “We share the theme of diversity” (Disab6 10/2016).

The exceptionality of this association is not accidental: It is one of the few organisations working on disability in general, boosted by a robust and broad understanding of solidarity, based on rights and not on charity, which may justify the interest in collaborating with entities active in different policy domains.¹⁹

Cooperation with Public Authorities

Our respondents, regardless of the issue-field, are also inclined to collaborate with public authorities, primarily municipalities and regions, as these are the government levels primarily responsible for either service delivery or policy-making in the relevant policy domains. For instance, they participate in tenders funded by local authorities aimed at providing social services, training, and job placement, and they are part of local discussion fora, bargaining tables, community services and training of caregivers and so forth. Furthermore, some migration TSOs are involved in the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) that ensures “integrated reception” activities to asylum seekers and people entitled to international protection. The SPRAR Central Service was

¹⁹We might be tempted to assume that a broader scope mission would entail a larger organisation’s network and more frequent collaborations with partner organisations. However, we learn from literature (Alexander 1995: 317) that the relationship between mission scope and network characteristics is more complicated than a simple observation, since the way the mission scale and type affect the collaboration network in both quantity and quality is complex and multifaceted. Our sample is too small to inquire into such complexity, and further, a more in-depth research is required to draw reasonable conclusions. Yet we cannot abstain from observing that this seems an interesting analytical perspective.

established by the Ministry of Interior—Department of Immigration and Civil Liberties—entrusting the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) with its management.

In general, our interviewees claim to have good relations with the local institutions (“They need us because they cannot meet all the needs they should care for, and we want to be part of the game to try and change the status quo”²⁰) with a few interesting exceptions, especially regarding the migration area. Here, there is a clear cleavage between help-oriented TSOs, which show a more collaborative approach towards public institutions, and protest and policy-oriented TSOs, which have more confrontational and conflictual relations.

The quality of the relationship with public authorities heavily depends on the authorities’ political connotation, and this is easily understandable. The most political TSOs tend to have very conflictual relations with right-wing authorities.

Having good relations with public institutions is not surprising as for TSOs within the disability and unemployment area. In these two policy domains, the cleavage between help-oriented and policy-oriented is not very relevant. In both cases, TSOs are involved in lobbying and advocacy campaigns and are not heavily politicised (with the exception of the alternative radio network that has a radical and contentious approach, based on communist ideals) and have a pragmatic and collaborative approach:

Our association is not only assertive, but also proactive. It is important to cooperate with the institutions. (Disab5 10/2016)

Interestingly, the trade union has both collaborative and conflictual relationships with political institutions, and this is in line with the typical approach of this specific union (which is a “traditional” trade union with a clear left-wing political vision) at both national and local levels.

Beyond factual collaboration, the interdependence with public authorities lies also in the fact that across the three fields, most of the interviewed organisations are financed by public money through income-tax donations (a specific measure of the Italian fiscal system designed to

²⁰ Migr1 07/2016.

support civil society and religious organisations). Noticeably, however, public funds are not exclusive and in several cases not even the most relevant forms of financing, such as banking foundations' donations, membership fees, fundraising events (in the disability and migration area), crowdfunding and participation in public tenders (in the migration field, with the exception of one interviewee who stated that they refuse to be funded by public authorities, preferring to maintain their independence) are concurrent sources of funds and resources. Finally, most of the TSOs in the unemployment area (especially cooperatives) support their activities through the market.

Transnational Cooperation

Systematically collaborating with foreign or international entities is quite rare among the interviewees. Indeed, few TSOs have stable international linkages (except those in the migration field), but most have participated in ad hoc European/international projects or have indirect linkages to European/supranational networks through national organisations to which they belong. Small TSOs have more difficulties in developing international activities. The most important factor for supranational connections seems to lie in the TSOs' size and not their institutionalisation: Indeed, one of the most active TSOs at the international level is a large informal grassroots group. Curiously, despite their inability to maintain stable transnational collaborations, all the TSOs acknowledge the importance of transnational solidarity (especially in the migration field).²¹

As was the case for the large majority of the analysed aspects, each issue-field shows its specificity for transnational engagement. TSOs in the migration area are those that have more stable international linkages: Most of the organisations cooperate in a structured way with organisations based abroad; they participate in projects in other European or non-European countries, or they belong to transnational organisations. The international collaborations are developed with diverse foreign partners:

²¹ "The problem is European and it is important to create European networks to exchange information and best practices, to share responsibilities [...]. Although sometimes there is no unity in terms of claims and political vision" (Migr8 10/2016).

NGOs, cooperatives and Caritas, transnational NGOs such as “Doctors Without Borders”, grassroots informal groups and platforms like “Welcome to Europe”.

Conversely, small voluntary non-profit organisations have only occasional exchanges with foreign partners (or some of their members participate individually in international activities), or they are included in international networks through umbrella organisations of which they are members.

Solidarity in itself is conceived in international terms in the field of migration, as the European level is perceived crucial for any policy-oriented mission.²²

The local level is important because integration takes place at the local level. The European level is important for orientation, information exchange, advocacy, exchange of good practices. (Migr7 10/2016)

We have to start from the local level, but then we need to take action on several levels [...] Solidarity must be transnational [...] Freedom of movement for all. (Migr4 09/2016)

TSOs in both disability and unemployment areas do not cooperate in a structured manner with foreign organisations. Occasionally, they participate in ad hoc projects in other countries or, in the case of the most institutionalised organisations, have indirect international linkages through national organisations to which they belong.

Those who have directly participated in European projects stress the importance of transnational solidarity interlinkages:

The idea of exiting the ‘already known’ is important. It was positive to capitalise on our experience by creating partnerships with foreign experiences. (Disab6 10/2016)

Even if most of these TSOs are not directly active abroad, they recognise the importance of transnational cooperation, claiming that solidarity

²²“The sole local and national levels are not sufficient. European campaigns on migrants are needed” (Migr6 10/2016).

with disabled people or with the unemployed and workers should not be restrained to local or national levels, but should also take place at the European and international levels. In the two domains, the supranational dimension as an arena for policy advocating is much less relevant than in the migration field.²³ For disability and unemployment TSOs, having transnational networks represents, first of all, a source of exchange and lesson-learning occasion:

Through comparison with other countries, it is possible to improve what is done locally ... for example, what concerns the architectural barriers... (Disab5 10/2016)

It would be better to develop international collaboration to have better knowledge of neighbouring regions and to share information on best practices. (Disab7 10/2016)

It is important to create networks of solidarity and action at an international level [...]. The cooperative movement is grounded in the value of solidarity. (Unemp6 10/2016)

However, many TSOs are small associations and this is a problem for the development of strong transnational solidarity networks:

A transnational network would be useful, but our cooperative is too small. (Unemp5 10/2016)

They all, regardless of their policy domain, emphasise that the path to international solidarity is still very long and hard (and some maintain that this is the case at the national level, too).

²³ But with some interesting exceptions, as “Unity is strength. ‘A nut in a bag does not make noise’” (Disab8 10/2016), and “National policies are fundamental, but it is necessary to have more and more transnational regulatory mechanisms” (Unemp2 09/2016).

Conclusions: Main Findings and Implications

The disability TSOs we spoke with are more help/service-oriented; even though many of them are also interested in lobbying and advocacy, they mainly follow a top-down approach of providing services to their beneficiaries while creating solidarity relations based on mutual help and support. In this policy domain, the internal variability is lower than in the other two fields and especially, if compared to the unemployment field, where there is a clearer distinction between help/service-oriented TSOs and protest/policy-oriented TSOs. In the unemployment area, unions (of workers or cooperatives) are focused more on lobbying than on help, whereas social cooperatives and religious organisations are help/service-oriented.

Contentious TSOs are present in the field of both unemployment and migration but absent in the field of disability, where a more pragmatic, non-politicised approach prevails. A clear left-wing orientation emerges, conversely, among some TSOs in the unemployment and migration fields. In the former, some TSOs explicitly aim at social justice, intergenerational mutualism, equal opportunities, economic democracy and labour empowerment. In the latter, many TSOs present a universalistic conception of solidarity—“solidarity for all human beings” (Arendt 1972; Brunkhorst 2005)—based on social justice and rights vindication.

All our interviewees stress the negative consequences of the crisis in terms of cuts to the welfare state, reduction of funds (also from private donors) and increasing inequality. Most of the interviewees strongly criticise the austerity measures enacted to face the crisis, with severe consequences, especially for disadvantaged people. Furthermore, the crisis resulted in cuts in public investments and investments in innovation: Entrepreneurs were not willing to take the risk of innovation and this had a devastating impact on the labour market. Moreover, the crisis has led to short-term political intervention for reasons of consensus, at the expense of longer-term goals:

But innovation requires a longer time-span than the five year mandate of the mayor! The crisis could have been the occasion for a radical re-

foundation of our society, but unfortunately, it has not happened.
(Migr3 09/2016)

And yet, most of the TSOs perceive the crisis as an opportunity to reconsider their views, to innovate and to increase cooperation between associations. As regards the latter aspect, the crisis incentivised, for instance, TSOs in the disability field, to collaborate and share resources, thus overcoming the excessive parochialism that has long characterised the field dominated by highly disability/disease-specialised organisations. Services offered to disabled persons have also become much more oriented towards their actual needs. Moreover, in several disability TSOs, the disabled are no longer treated as passive beneficiaries. Instead, they are increasingly involved as active participants in the various aspects of the association's life. This development suggests a shift from a top-down charity perspective to more equality- and empowerment-oriented relations "at eye-level". Sometimes, the crisis also led to solidarity-based practice innovations, like the "pact" between some Italian and Greek social movements: material support and help in exchange for a new repertoire of actions and fresh information. The crisis, to a certain extent, has been a trigger and an opportunity for organisational learning and for expanding collaborative networks between civil society organisations (also Carley and Harrald 1997; Shahin et al. 2013).

The in-depth interviews confirm, therefore, our principal assumption that solidarity attitudes, practices, discourses and actions are strongly influenced by the policy domain in which the TSOs are active. Despite a number of similarities, our data suggest that the field of activity strongly determines TSOs nature and activities (see also Warren 2001). These field-specific differences might be explained in a threefold way. Firstly, the type of vulnerabilities and beneficiaries is important in itself: It makes a difference whether one is disabled (with a specific deficiency) or unemployed or a migrant in terms of approach and type of actions that TSOs have to adopt to deal with specific needs and differentiated demands for social protection. Secondly, field-specific differences are shaped by the historic legacies of TSOs within different organisational fields. For instance, path-dependency is clear as regards the more fractionalised history of disability TSOs, or the higher degree of politicisation of

unemployed TSOs: The former potentially stems from the tradition of disabled self-help groups, whereas for the latter, the role played by unionisation is key. Thirdly, across-field (and sometimes within-field) fragmentation is strengthened by public policies framing fields of activity externally. In this regard, political opportunity structure literature (Kriesi 2004; Tilly and Tarrow 2006; Cinalli and Giugni 2011, 2014) has stressed how civil society organisations' activities do not occur in a vacuum; conversely, they are likely to be influenced by specific characteristics of the context (including public policies) in which they operate.

In contrast, our findings provide a more mixed picture as regards the second hypothesis about the crisis being a vector of both innovation and transnationalism. According to the insights we gained, these two aspects have to be treated in a more differentiated way. As previously mentioned, the research results clearly show that the crisis has obliged the TSOs we spoke with to change: either extending their range of action or increasing the number of their beneficiaries, either searching for different solutions to new needs or modifying their repertory of actions, as stressed also by other studies (Forno and Graziano 2014; Bosi and Zamponi 2015). Our interlocutors have defined these changes in terms of innovation; therefore, we shall conclude that the crisis led TSOs to search for new strategies and new approaches, even though innovation does not necessarily lie at the centre of all our TSOs' interests. Discussing whether these new strategies and approaches are truly innovative per se is more complex, and it is beyond the scope of our research at this stage. In any case, our results are in line with those of several empirical studies on solidarity initiatives both in Italy and in Europe that have stressed how austerity and cuts led not only to anti-austerity protests but also to resilience, social ingenuity and social innovations (Andretta and Guidi 2014; Forno and Graziano 2014; Grasseni 2014; Kousis and Paschou 2017; Oliveri 2015; Kousis et al. 2018; Lahusen et al. 2016).

In comparison, effective transnational solidarity actions remain marginal, even if transnationalism is recognised as the appropriate dimension for solidarity strategies, practices and policy-making. In fact, very few interviewees affirm that they regularly collaborate with foreign partners. The large majority of interviewed TSOs lacks the resources and skills to develop international partnerships and does not go beyond mentioning

the theoretical importance of transnational solidarity and supranational responsibilities. In times of multiple domestic crises, responding to local and regional needs and demands has top priority, leaving little room for engaging in more far-reaching transnational activities. From this perspective, our study suggests that the crisis was not an effective vector of transnationalisation of Italian civil society activism in the three analysed fields of vulnerability.

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4

New Challenges and Changing Opportunities: The Differing Responses of Transnational Solidarity Organisations in Germany

Ulrike Zschache

Introduction

Transnational Solidarity in Challenging Times

The late summer of 2015 was the momentum for a new wave of transnational solidarity in German civil society. In view of the exceptionally high inflow of refugees and migrants from Syria, other regions of the Middle and Far East and Africa, established civil society organisations and innumerable new citizen groups, initiatives and volunteers came together to assist the

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U. Zschache (✉)

Department of Social Sciences, University of Siegen, Siegen,
Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

e-mail: zschache@sozialwissenschaften.uni-siegen.de

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newly arrived asylum seekers. Since August 2015, the German government had temporarily suspended the Dublin Regulations. It opened the borders for people arriving along the Balkan route via Greece and Hungary and abstained from sending asylum seekers back to the countries of their first entry to the European Union (EU). As a result, about 890,000 people applied for asylum in Germany by the end of 2015. Before the backdrop of the difficulties of the German authorities to cope with the situation, a new civic engagement emerged in the name of the so-called new German “welcome culture”. Both existing and new civil society groups committed to the provision of direct practical help in response to immediate and urgent needs, providing, for instance, food, shelter, clothing, basic goods, medical assistance, assistance in dealings with the German authorities and orientation and language courses. Transnational solidarity was practised in manifold forms, not only with refugees and asylum seekers in Germany but also with refugees in the European border regions most visibly affected by the new migrant and refugee movements (for instance, in Greece and Italy), along the travel routes (such as the Mediterranean Sea) or in transition countries outside Europe.

On the one hand, these acts of solidarity might be understood as part of a longer tradition of charity and humanitarian help for refugees, especially with regard to the established civil society and welfare organisations and local, often church-related initiatives and groups (Aumüller 2016: 2; Schroeder and Kiepe 2019; Speth and Becker 2016: 13). On the other hand, the perception of the recent challenges as a so-called “refugee crisis” has led to the creation of many new and often informal citizen groups and initiatives, as well as the commitment of large numbers of volunteers, many of whom either became active for the very first time or had previously been engaged in other sectors. Civil commitment for refugees was, thus, no longer confined to faith-related or left anti-racist groups, but it also involved many ordinary citizens from the socio-political centre of society (Karakayali and Kleist 2016). In addition, the newly arising “culture of welcome” created momentum for the self-conception of Germany as an immigration country and strengthened the awareness that integration of migrants needs to be actively promoted (Hamann et al. 2016; Linnert 2018). Against this backdrop, the new engagement for refugees has brought about substantial change and innovation in the area of refugee help, breaking with traditional approaches and principles in the field (Aumüller 2016: 5; Schiffauer 2017: 19). The so-called refugee crisis,

thus, seems to have opened up a “window of opportunity” (Kingdon 1995) for the mobilisation of new actors, ideas and practices in the area of organised transnational civil solidarity on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers.

According to newer institutionalist and social movement theory, civil society organisations can be regarded as institutional entrepreneurs that try to shape and recalibrate the myths, rules and ideas of fields (DiMaggio 1988; Fligstein 2001; McAdam et al. 1996). Through strategic collective action, institutional entrepreneurs seek to delegitimise prevailing approaches, values and beliefs and infuse and establish new views and concepts (Rao et al. 2000: 240). The success of their efforts depends decisively on their capacity to mobilise resources, recruit and activate group members, gain support and build new coalitions. Moreover, they have to be able to frame issues in such a way that their ideas and aims appear meaningful, acceptable and appealing to broader constituencies (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008; McAdam et al. 1996; Fligstein 1997; Rao et al. 2000; Hardy and Maguire 2008; Leca et al. 2009).

Institutional entrepreneurship is facilitated by certain conditions that create momentum for agency and change (Leca et al. 2009: 7). In particular, situations of crisis, conflict and new challenges can provide windows of opportunity for institutional entrepreneurs in order to erode the status quo and introduce change (Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996; Fligstein and McAdam 2011). Crises can disrupt existing routines and evoke uncertainty about the usual courses of action. Such moments of uncertainty and destabilisation constitute “critical junctures” (Collier and Collier 1991) that foster the emergence of novel actors who might contest the role of established actors in the field, seek to delegitimise existing approaches and introduce their own, potentially innovative ideas and concepts. Moreover, crises and uncertainty may lead to change because the prevailing problem definitions and solution approaches are no longer considered suitable enough to cope with newly arising issues and challenges. These circumstances allow collective actors to reframe the situation, to implement alternative beliefs, values and ideas and to build new alliances (Fligstein 2001; Fligstein and McAdam 2011).

Against this background, I am interested in exploring in more detail the strategies, practices and guiding ideas of transnational solidarity

organisations (TSOs) (Kousis et al. 2016) that contributed not only to the new wave of transnational solidarity with refugees in Germany but also to the transformation of established principles, values and beliefs in the field. What is more, I wish to expand the focus of this chapter and compare the experiences of German refugee TSOs with experiences of German TSOs in other fields of vulnerability. On the one hand, I will use unemployment TSOs as an example of an area that has been affected by the economic crisis of the past decade. On the other hand, I will look at TSOs in the disability field as an example of an area that has not witnessed the severe impact of recent crises. Both fields will serve as contrasting cases to better understand the specificities of TSOs in the field of refugees, as well as to identify those traits of refugee TSOs that are applicable to other fields of transnational solidarity work. Eventually, the aim is to elucidate how and under what conditions TSOs use crises as windows of opportunity to promote change in their field of action.

Insights into Civil Engagement and Organised Solidarity from Previous Research

Existing research provides indications that the three fields under review used to be characterised by distinct approaches, which, however, have been subject to various changes in the past decades. Previous civil refugee help used to be characterised by a clear division between charitable service-provision and political (protest) action (Speth and Becker 2016: 39). Until recently, support action for refugees was mainly carried out by the established major charity and welfare associations (Aumüller 2016: 2; Kühne and Rübler 2000; Schroeder and Kiepe 2019; Speth and Becker 2016: 13). Their refugee help activities focused mainly on the provision of accommodation, care and support services, advice and counselling, but also involved lobbying and advocacy (Rada and Stahlmann 2017: 15–19; Schroeder and Kiepe 2019: 166; Rehklau 2017: 306–312). Since 2004, integration activities have become a relevant part of their work as a result of the reformed German citizenship and immigration policy and the growing public recognition of Germany as a country of immigration (Rehklau 2017: 306; Schroeder and Kiepe 2019: 178). Next to the

welfare associations, immediate, practical refugee help was provided by a few local church-related groups and other local initiatives (Speth and Becker 2016: 39). These mainly comprised people already affiliated with welfare and other associations, who were “predominantly anchored firmly within the Christian-denominational milieu” (Kühne and Rüsler 2000: 195) and had a “strong humanitarian conviction” (Aumüller 2016: 2). Political activism and protest action on behalf of refugees were, in contrast, mainly organised by groups and initiatives from the left, anti-racism milieu (Twickel 2016; Karakayali 2018: 15). These politically active groups were mostly, though, not committed to direct forms of practical support (Speth and Becker 2016: 39).

At the time of their emergence in the 1970s and early 1980s (in former West Germany), unemployment initiatives aimed at political awareness raising, mobilisation, claims-making and social and policy change in the face of rising mass unemployment (Baumgarten 2010: 23; Rein 2013: 43–46). Since the end of the 1980s, however, there had been a growing shift in focus from political action towards socio-political service-provision and employment projects (Rein 2013: 47–48). In the following, many unemployment initiatives and organisations dedicated themselves primarily to the provision of socio-legal advice, psychosocial counselling, the facilitation of social exchange, support in terms of job seeking and application, and socio-political education (Voigtländer 2015: 28). In comparison, interest representation and other forms of political work and mobilisation have played only a secondary role for many of the unemployment organisations while constituting the major focus of work for a politicised minority of initiatives (Baumgarten 2010: 24; Voigtländer 2015: 28). Yet, to a certain degree, the process of depoliticisation has been encountered by the rise of new politically active (protest) initiatives in the context of the so-called Hartz reforms of 2003–2005 (Baumgarten 2010: 25–26; Lahusen and Baumgarten 2010; Rein 2013: 58–66).

In the field of disability, there are three types of civil society engagement: large charity and welfare organisations that are guided by the traditional ideas of religiously or humanistically motivated charity and care, the political disability movement and self-help groups (Matzat 2010; Tesch-Römer et al. 2017: 655–656). During the 1960s/1970s, disability-related civil engagement became more politicised as concerned groups

started to raise their voice in public discourse and to make political claims against the widely existing barriers and societal disadvantages (Köbsell 2019: 25–28). In the 1980s, the emerging disability movement started to criticise the charity approach of established disability and welfare organisations and of policy-making in the field, which were guided by the top-down, object-oriented rationale of compassion, neighbourly love and responsibility for disabled people, rather than by the notion of rights or self-determination (Köbsell 2006, 2019). In the following years, the German disability movement developed in two different directions: Some groups started to focus on the establishment of an infrastructure for people with disabilities, like assistive services. Others specialised in political agency, aiming at (self-)representation, self-determination equal participation and anti-discrimination (Köbsell 2006; Maskos and Siebert 2006). Yet, while in their early years, these political groups used to be small, informal and quite confrontational and radical, they are nowadays mostly institutionalised, professionalised and more pragmatic and follow a cooperative approach towards the large, charity-oriented disability associations (Köbsell 2019: 30; Rohrmann 1999).

Data and Methods

This study is based on qualitative interviews with representatives of 37 German TSOs in the fields of refugees, unemployment and disability that stood out because of their pronounced transnational profile (see Kousis et al. 2016: 32).¹ In order to retrieve information about the concrete activities and practices of TSOs at ground level, we selected civil society initiatives, groups, organisations, organisational branches or networks that are rather informal and/or non-professional or that only have a few paid staff and operate at the local or regional level. Moreover, we sought to include a balanced mix of TSOs that engage in immediate practical help and political activism in order to account for the various

¹The interviews were carried out between August and November 2016 and were conducted mostly face to face, while a few were done via videoconferencing or over the phone. For more information on sampling, see Introduction to this volume and <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

forms of organised solidarity. Finally, we chose organisations from different regions in Germany in order to reflect the regional variety in the country as much as possible. The whole selection of relevant organisations made use of an IT-assisted, web-based mapping of transnational solidarity organisations in Germany (see Kousis et al. 2018; Kousis et al. 2016; Kousis and Paschou 2016).

Based on transcriptions of all 37 interviews, “summarising content analysis” (Mayring 2004: 268) was applied to those sections of the interview material addressing the dimensions of relevance for the purpose of this chapter. This approach implied an inductive inference of ideas from the transcribed interview material and involved an interpretative, gradual and recursive procedure following the “grounded theory” method (Glaser and Strauss 1967). At the same time, notes were taken about particularly illustrative expressions and typical metaphors.

TSOs’ Perception of the National Context with Its Core Challenges and Opportunities

Crises can provide a particular impetus for change. The question is, therefore, to what extent and in what way recent crises have constituted relevant reference points for the actions of the interviewed TSOs and their activists. In Germany, the “refugee crisis” was of enhanced importance in this respect, but it had different repercussions across the fields and was accompanied by other crisis experiences. In the field of migration and asylum, the so-called refugee crisis led not only to an increase in public and political attention and a massive growth in volunteers but also to a surge in private donations and funding, as well as a growing number of political support schemes for civil solidarity activities in the field. Against this backdrop, a large number of new, often locally embedded and rather informal initiatives, groups and solidarity networks emerged across the whole country, which is well illustrated by the following interview statement:

Last summer, autumn and winter there was this exuberant readiness to help [...], this widespread sentiment of panic that ‘we have to do something right now’. [...] Our initiative would not be conceivable without this

so-called crisis. We emerged out of it. I would never have come up with the idea of committing myself to female refugees before these events. [...] Never in my life had I been engaged in volunteering; and now I am committed to such an intensive volunteering activity. [...] [One has to see] the social engagement that has recently emerged in this city. What kind of people are now volunteering who had never done such thing in the past. [...] What an unprecedented number of people is now actively committed to doing something in order to change and influence society. (Migr2 09/2016)

In addition to the immediate impact of the “refugee crisis”, activists highlight that the increase of organised solidarity with refugees also has to be understood as a response to growing populist and right-wing anti-immigration mobilisations with the aim to prevent a further rise in anti-immigration sentiments among parts of society. In particular, it is a reaction to the emergence of xenophobic and Islamophobic movements such as HoGeSa, Pegida and their various local equivalents that accompanied the steady increase in refugee arrivals before 2015. Thus, the perceived need to stand up to racism and to shape a migration-friendly societal environment constituted an important starting point for the mobilisation and collective organisation of civil solidarity with refugees.

The “refugee crisis” was less influential for the unemployment and disability fields. However, it had a certain impact on civic organisations in these two areas, too. Due to the shift in political and public attention and financial resources to the field of refugees, organisations in the fields of unemployment and disability witnessed a certain drop in public awareness for their own concerns and, consequently, a decrease in private donations, funding and volunteers. Apart from the constraining effects on their practical activities, the “refugee crisis” sharpened the awareness of civil society actors that their work is considerably shaped by issue-attention cycles and the need to compete over visibility, limited resources and capacities. This is seen as a general problem of civil society organisations, particularly when it comes to ensuring sustainability and long-term support. To some extent, the arrival of refugees also changed the composition of beneficiaries and the challenges TSOs have to cope with because of the overlapping target groups. For instance, new tailor-made forms of support became necessary because of the increased arrival of disabled

refugees in Germany. In consequence, disability TSOs are now dealing with new issues, such as cooperation with translators and legal experts who are acquainted with asylum law and its implications for rights and entitlements in terms of the provision of disability services and medical aid.

Apart from the effects of the “refugee crisis”, representatives of unemployment and disability TSOs point to other contextual conditions that are more specific for their fields. In the unemployment field, it was particularly the impact of the international economic crisis that brought about new challenges to German unemployment organisations. Interestingly, these challenges were quite different from those of their counterparts in many other European countries. Initially, the short stagnation of the German economy between 2008 and 2009 helped to increase public awareness of unemployment during that period. Against the backdrop of a more widespread fear of job loss, people became more sensitised to the structural, societal and economic causes of unemployment. Consequently, there was a growing understanding that unemployment is not an individual fate. Yet, due to the economic recovery and growth in Germany since 2010, unemployment has dropped off the public radar again. What is more, unemployment organisations witness a growing social divide between groups in society that have benefitted considerably from the recent economic growth, on the one hand, and the group of long-term unemployed and precarious workers with low-wage, temporary or service contracts that are left behind, on the other. For them, a major concern is that the issues of unemployment and poverty tend to vanish from political agendas and media coverage, thus contributing to the erosion of solidarity towards these groups in society. As one interviewee puts it:

Since about 2011, we have continuously growing official employment figures. In my view, this leads to a decrease in solidarity because the public is under the impression that the problem has resolved itself. [...] And for those who are still jobless, it must certainly be their own fault. (Unemp1 08/2016)

In addition, unemployment organisations are concerned that the influx of young and well-educated, skilled workers and professionals from other European countries during the international economic crisis has removed the pressure from the German government to invest in activation and re-integration measures that would help the long-term unemployed and low-skilled temporary workers to (re)gain access to the labour market and/or better working conditions. At the same time, they observe that sanctions and restrictions for Hartz-IV benefit receivers have been continuously tightened and express the fear that this will contribute to weakening the solidarity principle of the social welfare state and to cementing the social divide and isolation of their target groups.² What is more, a decade after the implementation of the Hartz-IV system, unemployment organisations find it increasingly difficult to reach out to and activate their constituencies because of a growing resignation among the long-term unemployed. Against the backdrop of the various direct and indirect effects of the “refugee crisis”, the economic crisis in other European countries and the economic and political developments at home, many unemployment TSOs see themselves confronted with the challenge of how to mobilise attention and support in times of a remarkable decrease in public and political awareness for their concerns. This is particularly true for those initiatives and organisations that aim for social and political change. In comparison, for service-oriented organisations, the recent developments created some new opportunities, particularly with regard to new European and domestic funding schemes and activation programmes that are geared to tackle youth unemployment in Europe or the integration of migrants and refugees into the labour market.

For disability organisations, the recent crises had, compared to the other two fields, the least impact according to the interviewed TSOs. Instead, a crucial challenge in this field is the full realisation of equity and inclusion of people with disabilities in society. A major change in their opportunity structures has been the adoption of the UN Convention on

²In November 2019, the Federal Constitutional Court declared harsh Hartz IV sanctions as unconstitutional (BVerfG 2019). In consequence, Hartz IV benefits cannot be cut down by more than 30% by sanction measures. In this context, a larger reform of Hartz IV regulations is planned for 2020.

the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its ratification by Germany in 2009 and the European Union in 2010:

After the establishment of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities conditions have changed. It is no longer a charitable act to do something for the most disadvantaged, but instead, [inclusion] has been enshrined in the political system. (Disab3 10/2016)

On the one hand, the ratification by the national government and the EU helps the field to raise claims and lobby for the comprehensive adoption and implementation of these rights by national and European law. On the other hand, the UN convention requires disability organisations to reflect upon and adjust their own approaches and practices because it implies a fundamental paradigm shift from the idea of charitable, compassion-based and object-oriented help and care to the notion of self-determination, equal participation and the exercise of rights.

Activities, Missions and Target Groups in the Fields of Migration, Unemployment and Disability

Migration

The various challenges and changing context conditions had significant effects on the practices and activities of TSOs in the three fields. The most fundamental repercussions can be found in the migration field. The sharp rise in the arrival of refugees, which culminated in the so-called refugee crisis, not only fostered the emergence of many new grassroots initiatives and solidarity groups but also decisively changed the nature and range of their activities. Looking at the practices reported by the TSOs under review, it becomes clear that local, small and mainly non-professional, volunteer-based organisations assumed a broad spectrum of direct help, care and assistance activities that formerly used to be provided either by large, professional charity and welfare organisations or by the state itself.

Due to administrative overload and policy restrictions, civil society organisations and private initiatives stepped in to fill the gap—for instance, when it comes to providing food, clothing and items for personal hygiene in reception facilities, arranging medical treatment, offering education and integration services or organising civic sea rescue in international waters between Africa and Europe. One example among other similar statements underscores this point:

In principle, we assume a task that is originally the job of the state. [...] What we aim for is to make ourselves redundant. What we really want is that state authorities will finally assume this genuine state responsibility. This is their job and actually there are clear rules for this. (Migr7 17/2016)

And another interviewee explains:

[The Mediterranean Sea] is a new place or space for networking. [...] Where the military of different national entities operates. This is a space where suddenly civil society is present because [...] otherwise people would die. [...] this space is being civilised. [...] It is simply a new place that civil society and civil society groups are about to appropriate. (Migr3 9/2016)

In more general terms, practical help and support action on behalf of refugees includes, for instance, the provision of help in initial reception facilities; the organisation of donation activities for basic needs supply; German language tutorials; arrangement of free and anonymous medical assistance for undocumented migrants; socialising, cultural, educational and sports activities; information about the German educational and employment systems; preparation for the job market; mediation to find private accommodation and flat-shares; preparation for asylum procedures; and arrangement of legal assistance and advice.

Secondly, it is striking that the work of all interviewed TSOs is more or less openly or subtly embedded within a political mission. Some of the organisations aim explicitly for policy change and have a clear focus on awareness raising, campaigning, lobbying and political activism, including participation in demonstrations, political protest and strike support action. Furthermore, some of these groups advocate for their

beneficiaries' rights, for instance, through arranging legal support and assisting lawsuits in exemplary cases. Many of the interviewed TSOs are committed to both practical and political activities to a similar extent. Often, pragmatic forms of solidarity are explicitly linked to political aims and awareness raising and, depending on the organisational capacities and degree of politicisation, also to political claims-making and protest action:

Of course, we as volunteers realise that we take over tasks from the state [...]. But currently there are very many protest movements and initiatives in Germany and events [...] where civil society addresses politicians with concrete demands. [...] It is not the case that the volunteering field would approve a leaning back of the state. No! Our activism goes along with many, many demands. [...] All initiatives that I know work actively, but at the same time they make [political] demands. (Migr1 09/2016)

Some of us offered to accompany [refugees] to the local authorities. Others have organised and accompanied child-care or mother-child-areas. And we were cooperating with emergency shelters. [...] And what is of course always very important to us is to draw attention to existing grievances and to have a political voice. (Migr5 10/2016)

In comparison, other TSOs are primarily dedicated to providing immediate practical support to refugees and caring for urgent needs. They are not directly or openly politically active due to limited capacities or because they aim to appear neutral in order to attract a broad spectrum of volunteers and supporters. However, even those organisations focusing on practical activities emphasise that they understand their work as a political statement in itself to demonstrate solidarity with refugees and to send a signal against restrictive European and national asylum policies and/or populist, right-wing and in part xenophobic developments in society:

That we have a political agenda is self-evident for everybody who is a little interested in our work. But the focus should be on helping. Awareness raising. [...] But we actually don't do that on a political level. [...] I want that

people help because they want to help. [...] And not because of a [certain] agenda. [...] It is better to do that with a soft method [...]. (Migr2 09/2019)

As regards the question of political influence, it is for sure highly frustrating to know that we are providing humanitarian help, but can actually barely shape anything. [...] As long as we spend all our resources, financially and also in terms of manpower, on safeguarding [those in need] in order to achieve our primary objective, there is little space for advocacy and political lobbying. [...] The action itself is a political statement; and the question is how to frame this political statement officially. [...] We believe there must also be organisations that do not do that so offensively and are therefore more compatible to win even more people as supporters, [...] seeking broad societal consensus. (Migr3 09/2016)

At a closer look, it emerges that particularly the practical direct help activities and services are characterised by a great variety of new approaches, experimentation and innovation. This applies to both older and newly established TSOs, as both of them have assumed completely new tasks in the context of the “refugee crisis” and have had to respond to new challenges and demands. Not surprisingly, the commitment to try out novel approaches and activities is particularly pronounced in the young TSOs, working with new activists and volunteers from various societal backgrounds. Many of the interviewees emphasise that their offers are not predefined or ready-made. Instead, organisations follow a bottom-up strategy and take the actual needs and ideas but also reservations, uncertainties or timidities of beneficiaries as a starting point and develop their support activities along these new and often changing inputs in very flexible and dynamic ways. For instance, one project developed a mentoring programme for minor refugees that helps them participate in cultural, sports and other leisure activities:

When we started [...] with summer camps [...], we discovered a gap, or better, a need that these young people have. [...] I see a lot of innovation in our concept with regard to the fact that we always seek to adapt ourselves to the requirements of the young people. Thus, the projects that we initiate are almost always new. (Migr1 09/2016)

Moreover, some projects have developed new ways of offering tailor-made programmes for female refugees, including, for instance, German lessons, mentoring and women-specific information and advice. Most importantly, all of these activities are carried out by female volunteers and are exclusively offered to women. The various activities take place within the reception facilities. This approach is motivated by the observation that female refugees take part neither in activities outside the reception centres nor in mixed-group activities:

Many women [...] did not use the German language offers. [...] They did not have the courage. Here we simply saw a need and have created offers [...] where women teach women in order to reduce their inhibitions. [...] And we were faced with the challenge of mobility, which these women simply do not have. [...] This means we are in the initial reception facilities. [...] We want to provide the women with a protected space [...] where women can be among women. (Migr2 09/2016)

Unemployment

In the unemployment field, the interviewed organisations deal with a variety of activities concerning unemployment, qualifications and (re-) employment, protection of workers' rights and the improvement of working conditions, social exclusion and poverty. Some of them are merely service-oriented and barely politicised. The most service-oriented TSOs are typically those that offer qualification and training activities geared to improving employability and job market chances of their target groups, or provide supported employment opportunities. This type of TSO is often involved in public funding programmes and takes a neutral, pragmatic stance towards social and activation policies. For several of these TSOs, activities are embedded within European funding schemes such as the ESF, Erasmus Plus, the European Voluntary Service as part of Youth in Action or regional programmes aimed at the integration of migrants and refugees. Taking a transnational approach towards target groups, transnational cooperation with organisations from other European countries and offering activities for migrants and refugees at

home are practices that are certainly facilitated by the related possibilities to get access to additional funding opportunities. The activities and services that are part of these programmes are explicitly geared to tackle current challenges. For instance, they are directed at preventing or mitigating youth unemployment in Europe or promote the preparation and integration of refugees and migrants into the domestic employment market.

In contrast to the few purely service-oriented TSOs, most of our interviewed unemployment organisations engage in various political forms of solidarity action. Among the politicised TSOs, there are some with a predominantly political agenda, engaging mainly in awareness raising, demonstrations, political protest and strike support action. The majority, though, combines political activism, campaigning and lobbying with practical support services. The practical dimension of their work involves, for instance, social and legal advice, counselling, mentoring, social groceries and kitchens, clothing and item provision and collecting donations and social, cultural and educational activities. Overall, the activities of most of the interviewed TSOs point to a remarkable (re-)politicisation of solidarity action on behalf of the unemployed. Since the introduction of the Hartz-IV scheme more than a decade ago, unemployment organisations have observed how the individualisation of the issue of unemployment led to increased feelings of powerlessness and helplessness and a lack of perspective and, in consequence, to resignation, a withdrawal into the private sphere and declining political resistance of the affected people. In the context of the recent European economic crisis, their isolation and marginalisation have even been aggravated. In times of a prospering German economy that benefitted from national recovery programmes and severe economic difficulties in other European countries, it is a widely shared experience among TSOs that (long-term) unemployment and precarity have become more and more stigmatised as a matter of individual fault and fate, leading to a further decrease in societal solidarity, while the regulations of the Hartz-IV scheme have been further tightened. Against this backdrop, many of the TSOs' political activities aim to overcome the widespread resignation and marginalisation, enforce the rights of the unemployed more effectively, achieve a renewed politicisation and mobilisation of unemployed persons and reinvigate their

self-confidence. However, in so doing, they are also required to apply new strategies, as the context conditions for successful political action have become more difficult due to decreasing societal awareness on the issue of (long-term) unemployment in Germany. In response, politically oriented TSOs seek to achieve their aims more effectively by bridging the divide between different social groups and uniting them in larger solidarity communities that act jointly for a common cause. They aim to overcome the representation of particular interests in competition with other social groups and are opening up their well-defined target groups to a larger circle of people enduring economic and social pressure:

For me, a crucial approach is to identify the common interests of different groups. If we walked around in a shirt claiming 'more money for long-term unemployed' [...] this would poorly meet with approval. Highlighting interrelations helps much more. [...] To simply ask: Who is benefitting from this policy? Who is losing out because of it? And then it would be helpful if the losers unite and try to enforce their interests in solidarity. [...] We already had such a cooperation model where we aimed to make such a link: [...] Fair prices, fair wages and fair social benefits. (Unemp1 08/2016)

The promotion of a solidarisation process does not only occur across different societal groups, but also occurs across countries. In view of overlapping and interconnected issues, unemployment organisations engage in new forms of collaboration and joint campaigning with different groups, such as farmers, ecologists, precarious workers, the working poor, refugees, migrant workers or workers in crisis-ridden countries such as Greece or Italy. Solidarisation involves, for instance, social benefits at subsistence level for all persons in Germany, be they unemployed natives, EU migrant workers or asylum seekers. Another aspect is the interrelated problem of low social benefits, on the one hand, and the payment of dumping prices for agricultural products on the other. In this regard, another interviewee explains:

In the discussion about the standard rate of welfare benefits, it was a completely new approach to say that these rates are also bad for farmers in

Germany and outside Europe. [...] To make seemingly impenetrable inter-relations visible. That is important. (Unemp2 09/2016)

Disabilities

In comparison to the more politicised refugee and unemployment TSOs, the disability organisations under review tend to be largely help- and service-oriented. The activities of the analysed TSOs are typically directed at providing support and assistance in many areas of life, such as health care, housing or education, and aim to improve the well-being of people with disabilities, including the medical, socio-economic and sociocultural living conditions. For instance, TSOs furnish information and expertise, support medical research, engage in preventive measures and rehabilitation, and offer services and facilities ensuring appropriate support and aids (for instance, workshops, housing and outpatient services), cultural and sports activities, qualifications, advice, counselling and legal support, organising exchange in self-help groups and contributing to development aid. To a certain extent, most of the TSOs of our study also engage in awareness raising, networking, interest representation, advocacy and lobbying. Differences in the types of activities between local or regional branches of welfare organisations and self-help organisations are mostly gradual rather than categorical, depending on the capacities and focus of each organisation.

Both service-oriented and policy-oriented activities are shaped by the aims and ideas that have become enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On the one hand, service-oriented activities are increasingly designed to enable persons with disabilities to lead more self-determined and independent lives, foster equal opportunities, fight discrimination and promote their active participation and inclusion in all areas of life. On the other hand, political activities seek to promote the full and de facto implementation and enforcement of these rights in legal regulations, policy-making and administrative practice. As a particularity of the selected TSOs under review, the efforts geared to promote inclusion and equal opportunities do not only target disabled

people in Germany but often also target beneficiaries and addressees in other countries inside and outside Europe.

Organisations of our study address, for example, inclusive schooling in developing countries or mobility and sports as important dimensions of inclusion and participation in society. Small independent non-profit associations are the forerunners when it comes to trying out innovative and alternative concepts, for instance, cultural activities and arts projects as new forms and means of activation and inclusion. In these instances, innovation is not triggered by recent crises. Instead, it is promoted by particular activists with a strong vision of an inclusive society. Having a background in the cultural sector, these institutional entrepreneurs consider “culture always [as] a pioneer of things that need to change within society as a whole” (Disab2, 10/2016). What they find particularly innovative about their concept is their broad understanding of inclusion and the diversity-oriented character of their companies in which artists with and without disabilities, with multiple talents and skills and from various backgrounds (e.g., from different religions, from different countries, from different sexual orientations, elderly people, refugees and homeless people) work closely together on diverse topics and in multifaceted forms. As one interviewee points out:

A main objective for us is the extended definition of inclusion [...] Of course, we see ourselves as innovative in what we do. What makes this special is that it distinguishes us from [...] a theatre for disabled people [...]. We don't do that. Disabilities are one part of the extended concept of inclusion. (Disab4 10/2016)

What makes their work distinct is the extended conception of inclusion and the objective to contribute to a diverse society in which disabled people are just one among many social groups within a multifaceted inclusive community.

Solidarity across Borders

The changed contextual conditions within which TSOs in the fields of refugees, unemployment and disabilities find themselves do not only influence their activities and strategies at home, including their support of beneficiaries with migrant or refugee backgrounds. They also shape how TSOs develop and make use of transnational solidarity relations.

Particularly in the fields of unemployment and refugees, building and strengthening transnational cooperation and solidarity action are a direct response to the impact of the multiple crises of the past decade. Several of the interviewed TSOs established partnerships with organisations from other European countries, on top of their domestic core activities, in order to identify common problems, to compare and better reflect on strategies and solution concepts and to gain a louder voice in Europe. Especially for highly politicised unemployment TSOs, transnational political cooperation, dialogue and mutual solidarity support are used as important means of transnational awareness raising about the multifaceted repercussions of the economic crisis and the situation of unemployment in Europe. Attention is shifted, for instance, to the impact of the economic crisis and austerity programmes on workers' and union rights, precarious temporary work and service contracts or exploitative working conditions in other countries:

One point [is] to collect knowledge from the various countries bottom-up. And then to identify commonalities. And to prevent the rise of a misleading picture, for instance, about the unemployed in Germany and [...] in Italy. Hence, to build the foundations for cooperation by learning about similarities and also the particularities of different countries. (Unemp6 10/2016)

Moreover, transnational partnerships have the purpose to engage in joint political events and campaigns and to support strike action in partner countries:

We make use of all occasions to come together with union people from other countries, to exchange information and to provide mutual help. [...]

We travel there to show our solidarity with their resistance [...]. Events, common dialogue and political campaigns. [...] We have participated in their demonstrations [as] a sign that there is support for their fight from Germany, too. (Unemp7 10/2016)

These kinds of partnerships typically involve reciprocal relationships of mutual solidarity, support and reinforcement among the organisations. In addition, the various forms of transnational alliance building and awareness raising are a means of mobilising solidarity of the German public with the unemployed, precarious workers or poor people in other countries, but also to re-shift attention to the issue of (long-term) unemployment and poverty in the German debate in response to the decline in public awareness of these issues in this country.

In the migration sector, some politically oriented activists engage in knowledge exchange, investigation and observation and information about the European border regions, namely in the geographical “hot spots” (Migr11 10/2016) along the migration routes or at the Mediterranean Sea. For this purpose, they built close partnerships with local and international organisations in Italy, Greece, Serbia and Turkey. Due to their particular awareness of international developments, they started to react to the new challenges in the migration field more than a decade ago, hence a long time before the topic landed at the top of the German public agenda.

Next to these political forms of transnational solidarity, the recent crises have also triggered the development of practical forms of transnational solidarity. In the unemployment field, some politically oriented TSOs, in particular, started to provide direct help for people from countries suffering from the economic crisis and built, for instance, partnerships with Greek volunteer organisations and social clinics in order to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis and austerity policy (for instance, by collecting and providing donations). In comparison, in the refugee sector, TSOs work to capacity simply by providing support for refugees at home. However, some of the interviewed TSOs made it their mission to respond to the challenges of the recent migration and refugee movements outside Germany. In reaction to the perceived humanitarian crisis, these TSOs emerged explicitly to provide help to refugees in need

along their migration routes in the European border regions or in transition countries outside of Europe, or to organise civic sea rescue in international waters between Africa and Europe.

In contrast to the multiple forms of transnational cooperation and engagement that have emerged in reaction to recent crises and challenges, there are other examples of transnational solidarity that have a longer tradition and are less influenced by specific issue-attention cycles. In these cases, transnational solidarity takes the form of help projects for groups and people in need in less advantaged parts of the world (such as in Eastern or South-eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America), either as a supplementary activity to the organisations' domestic core activities or as their main activity. In the framework of our study, this form of transnational action is provided by several disability organisations and by a regional branch of a welfare organisation dealing with unemployment and poverty. It involves, for instance, financial support (like fundraising and the provision of donations, e.g., for medicine and medical devices, poor relief and soup kitchens), experience and knowledge exchange or the support of local actors (like helping the locals to build up new structures, such as self-help workshops, infrastructure for education/training, supported employment opportunities and local self-help groups). In addition to concrete support, it is striking that these transnational projects are often committed to promoting empowerment, emancipation and capacity building of local groups. In the disability field, this means, for instance, helping local actors advocate and enforce the rights of persons with disabilities and improving social inclusion and equal opportunities for the participation of disabled people in these less advantaged countries.

What the various forms of transnational cooperation and solidarity across the three fields have in common is that they are highly dependent on time and human resources. Normally, the organisations already have to cope with a very high workload with regard to their core activities. The lack of time and capacities are the main reasons why transnational solidarity work is generally perceived as important, but put into practice only to a limited extent. This is particularly true for organisations that are small and/or highly reliant on volunteers. Generally, transnational engagement relies strongly on personal commitment, enthusiasm,

personal connections and perseverance of a well-defined circle of organisational members or individuals, and it is often poorly institutionalised within the organisations. In comparison, intensive transnational solidarity activities with partners from abroad can only be ensured by organisations that pursue international solidarity work as their main purpose and that are equipped with the necessary staff and resources.

Innovation in Solidarity: Missions and Conceptions

It is striking that many of the interviewed TSOs across the three fields aim to establish a new understanding of what (transnational) solidarity should mean. Interestingly, despite the very different context conditions and challenges in the three fields, their new approaches point in a similar direction. Across all three fields, TSO representatives repeatedly emphasise explicitly that they do not want to help in a charitable, compassion-based sense or treat their target groups as passive aid recipients. They often reject “asymmetric” and “paternalistic” top-down relations and the treatment of their beneficiaries as “mere objects” of ready-made forms of help:

Often the term ‘helper’ is used. But we reject this. We do not want to see ourselves as ‘helpers’. [...] This project stood out because of the attitude to meet at eye-level [...]. We are not the wealthy white ‘helpers’ from Berlin. (Migr4 10/2016)

Many TSOs aim to interact with their target groups as “equals at eye level” and seek to integrate them as much as possible into the organisational activities in order to overcome the divide between those who provide and those who receive support. An interviewee from the migration sector explains, for example:

It is our aim to work with refugees at eye level in order to give them access to services they are entitled to and in order to support them in their own political struggles. What is important, not as a charity-approach ‘we help

them', but as real support at eye level. [...] Half of our active members are refugees themselves. (Migr8 10/2016)

This new approach also involves transferring responsibilities to and fostering capacity building of local self-help organisations in target countries. In this regard, an organisational representative of the disability sector highlights:

We understand solidarity in such a way that we do not [...] look down from large to small, or from North to South, [...] who is the recipient, who needs to say 'thank you', who says 'you are welcome'. Instead, the services that we induce are implemented by local partner organisations as a realisation of existing human rights. [...] We do not see this from a charity perspective. (Disab3 10/2016)

The TSOs' activities across all three fields are geared to empowering and activating their beneficiaries in order to enable self-initiative, self-reliance, self-organisation and self-representation. This approach is opposed to one-sided top-down directed help, placing the recipients of help in a dependency relationship. While these ideas are not completely new in the unemployment and disability fields, they are a clear novelty in the refugee sector. While in the past, refugee help was considered mainly an act of humanitarian help during a specific crisis (Aumüller 2016; Kühne and Rößler 2000), the TSOs under review perceive these new objectives as more appropriate and also important for a successful integration of refugees with a long-term perspective of staying in the country. As one activist of an initiative for female refugees highlights:

We want to make these women visible, [...] give these women a voice, [...] contribute to their emancipation, [...] support them so that they can live here independently. [...] We should not take the entire burden from these people. They are grown-up adults. [...] We should let them make things by themselves. Self-reliance! (Migr2 09/2016)

The long-term objective should be that refugees build up their own organisational structures. [...] This German perspective always has a whiff of paternalism. [...] Someone is giving and the other one is taking something.

This implies an infant's perspective, a victim's perspective. This is a difficult approach, which I do not want. I would like them to develop their own plans, to propose their own ideas, which we can then try to realise jointly [...]. To enable them to establish their own associations or initiatives. [...] People who will presumably stay here should find their way into these structures. [...] In consequence, they become participants themselves, are self-responsible. This leads much more to the strengthening of their self-esteem, that they can actually be equal actors. [...] We have to work towards this in the next couple of years. [...] Otherwise, we would have to keep up the current helper structures over the next 15 years, which is unrealistic. (Migr12 11/2016)

In the field of unemployment, the notion of empowerment is enshrined in a revised self-conception that rejects the image of the unemployed as passive social welfare aid recipients. Instead, it promotes an active, powerful, subject-oriented self-image. In particular, the more critical and politicised unemployment TSOs seek to reinvigorate the self-confidence, the feeling of dignity and self-determination of the (long-term) unemployed and to change the role of unemployed people as mere aid recipients of one-sided charitable acts of help into the role of self-responsible, active agents. Here, the aim is also to get the long-term unemployed and working poor people out of their isolation, to raise their awareness about their rights and to encourage their (re-)politicisation:

Many people have been activated to state 'I will no longer give up my rights'. [...] What was innovative for us was that we did not say 'The situation of the unemployed can only be changed in Berlin' [...]. Nonsense! People can themselves become politically active subjects. By identifying weak points where it is possible to break out of this invisibility and, by creating bonds of solidarity, to make the problem again a publically discussed problem. This is an alternative approach, namely the complete opposite of the idea 'the poor cannot do anything'. [...] Of course the unemployed can organise themselves and create political pressure through targeted action! (Unemp2 09/2016)

For some representatives from the disability field, the notion of empowerment is even not far-reaching enough. For them, having equal opportunities is a right that does not require to be granted by a third party:

‘Solidarity’ is perhaps a term that is already a bit worn-out. [...] ‘Empowerment’ actually also suggests that somebody empowers someone else to do something. Actually, that implies again a hierarchy or a difference. ‘Equality’, ‘equity’, [...] ‘inclusion’ [I would say]. [...] ‘At eye-level’ – this may sometimes also appear a bit contemptuous, [...] perhaps one of the two of us has condescended to do something. (Disab6 10/2016)

Discussion

Overall, such reflections about the understanding of solidarity and the adequate approach towards target groups have been mainly addressed by the more politicised TSOs but hardly at all by the strongly service-oriented TSOs. In the field of refugees, the new approach can be partly explained by the engagement of new actors and initiatives. On the one hand, several of our interviewees were already active in left-wing political or anti-racism groups in the past. Their previous experiences and their knowledge about political concepts, such as “racisms” (Migr3 09/2016), “critical whiteness” and “asymmetric power relations” (Migr4 10/2016), shape the way they conceptualise concrete solidarity action. And many of these actors want to distinguish themselves from how refugee help was carried out in previous times, most often by charity or church-related organisations. On the other hand, there are TSO activists with no previous experience in voluntary or political work. To some extent, these new activists have become more critical due to their direct experiences during their engagement with the impact of political and administrative practices on refugees and have thus assumed a more political approach over time. In addition to ideological motivations, they prefer a bottom-up, inclusive approach partly because of their lack of expertise but also because of the novelty of the new challenges and the uncertainty about adequate solution approaches. In addition, the only recently growing self-perception of Germany as an immigration country and the new

“welcome culture” provide important foundations for this ideational change. While in the past, migrants and refugees were expected to leave the country after a certain time, a new awareness that these people will stay longer and, hence, need to be integrated into society and enabled to lead an independent life is spreading and affecting the work of TSOs.

In comparison, in the field of unemployment, the revised understanding is not so much due to the intervention of new actors in the field, but rather due to the enhanced re-politicisation of many unemployment TSOs and the awareness of the urgency of political re-mobilisation and change after a decade during which the problems of (long-term) unemployment and precarity have become individualised and largely invisible. And it is also in response to the continuous tightening of unemployment policies, sanctions and controls—largely outside public attention. This enhanced politicisation is particularly true for those TSOs that have already had a political mission or advocatory approach, while the service-oriented TSOs mainly address the practical dimensions of their work.

In contrast to the other two fields, the revised understanding of disability TSOs about appropriate solidarity conceptions and approaches towards target groups is not so closely linked to recent challenges. In very general terms, the ideas expressed are grounded within a larger discourse that partly dates back at least to the 1960s and 1970s. However, with the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Germany in 2009, the notions of inclusion and equal opportunities as human rights have become particularly relevant for the work of TSOs in the sector while the ratified UN Convention itself provides an influential reference point for their claims-making.

Conclusions

Organised transnational solidarity with vulnerable groups is practised against the backdrop of country- and field-specific circumstances. Newly arising challenges, crises and uncertainty may, however, disrupt the normal flow of events and help institutional entrepreneurs transform existing rules and routines and introduce innovation. In Germany, the developments that accompanied the arrival of a high number of refugees in 2015

and 2016 are a very illustrative example of how a perceived crisis has been used to promote change. Our own observations are in line with other studies that have been published recently in reaction to the “refugee crisis”. Publications concerned with the collective level of organised refugee help in Germany widely agree that the recent developments not only have boosted the quantity of civil society initiatives, groups and organisations but have substantially changed the composition of collective actors in the field, the range and types of activities, objectives and approaches and the division of tasks (Aumüller et al. 2015; Aumüller 2016; Speth and Becker 2016). Several recent studies also confirm the new combination of practical, care- and needs-oriented support action and political approaches and actions (Hamann et al. 2016; Karakayali and Kleist 2016; Speth and Becker 2016), as well as the relevance of political motivations on direct refugee help, like preventing a hostile opinion climate and right-wing mobilisation or changing policies (Daphi 2016; Hamann et al. 2016: 14; Misbach 2015; Schiffauer 2017; Schmid 2019: 124; Speth and Becker 2016: 8; 37–38; Sutter 2017). In line with our own findings, other scholars shift attention to the fact that political objectives are not always openly propagated, but they sometimes guide the organisational work in a rather subliminal way (Karakayali 2017).³

Overall, the developments and experiences of TSOs in the field of refugees are in large parts rather specific. Both the challenges and opportunity structures and the responses differ remarkably from those of TSOs in the unemployment and disability field. If there is a direct parallel, then it exists due to the fact that unemployment TSOs have also been affected by a recent crisis, namely the European economic crisis. However, this crisis created completely different circumstances for unemployment TSOs. Instead of leading to an enhanced public and political issue awareness and the opportunity to establish new initiatives, enable the rise of new actors

³In contrast, Steinhilper and Fleischmann (2016) criticise the rather unpolitical and primarily needs-oriented, humanitarian character of the recent refugee help engagement. However, their assessment is based on a very strict definition of political action. Moreover, their study targets volunteers, while our own study has been conducted with founders, leaders or responsible core members of TSOs. In fact, the two observations are not necessarily contradictory. While key TSO representatives mostly pursue a political mission or perceive their organisations’ work itself as a political statement, they are aware of the diverse motivations and attitudes of volunteers and therefore partly abstain from making official political statements.

and mobilise new resources, volunteers and supporters, the European economic crisis went along with a decreasing visibility and attention for the societal and political determinants of long-term unemployment and precarity among Germans. On top, public and political attention was additionally shifted away from these problems towards the refugee issue. This situation provided little incentive and no additional resources that would have triggered the emergence of new institutional entrepreneurs or the attraction of new members and volunteers. Change occurred, nevertheless, and it was promoted by already existing, mostly politically oriented TSOs. Most strikingly, existing TSOs used the unfavourable context conditions as an inducement to find new ways of mobilising solidarity and support for unemployed people. Of key importance for this change is the fact that unemployment TSOs adapted their strategies by reframing grievances and solution approaches, redefining constituencies and building new alliances. With their new approaches, TSOs aimed to reach beyond the typical particularistic strategies and started to identify interlinkages and overlapping issues of broader social concern, to align their problem definitions and action strategies towards new constituencies and to coalesce with various other groups in German society and beyond in order to struggle in solidarity for a common overriding cause. Hence, their “frame alignment” (Snow et al. 1986) and strategic alliance-building activities had both a cross-sectoral, intersectional dimension (for instance, by a solidarisation with precarious workers, farmers, refugees, migrant workers, other poor people, etc.) and a transnational dimension (by collaborating with other European TSOs and international TSOs, such as those from Greece).⁴ This finding resonates well with recent scholarship on transnational solidarity movements highlighting that solidarities are actively constructed as part of struggles over power relations (Bandy and Smith 2005; Featherstone 2012; Waterman 2001). According to this literature, political activists lead strategic efforts to bridge differences and align the definition of grievances, group identity and appropriate action. Solidarity and collective identity are thus created through the

⁴Such cross-sectoral and transnational strategic coalition-building has, to some extent, already been tested during the 1980s and early 1990s (Rein 2013: 47–49). However, this strategy has been replaced by other priorities during the 1990s.

construction of new links between different activists and social groups, as well as between different places and parts of the world (*ibid.*). Hence, this strand of research underlines that TSOs must “advance strategic frames and foster group identities that motivate members to engage in collective action. [...] Such identities are negotiated and re-negotiated by activists themselves, as group members work in an ongoing way to define a collective ‘we’ and its relation to opponents” (Smith 2002: 506).

Compared to the other two fields, TSOs in the disability field have not been affected by concrete crises in recent years. Their opportunity structures are shaped by the international discourse about the enforcement of human rights and, in particular, the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by Germany in 2009 and the EU in 2010. Against this backdrop, existing TSOs have developed services and activities that help disabled people in Germany, in other European countries and in countries of the “Global South” to lead a life according to the principles of inclusion, equality and equity. Those with a more advocatory or political approach take action in order to achieve a full implementation of the enshrined rights of equal participation and anti-discrimination in political regulation and administrative practice, for instance, by means of awareness raising, lobbying, campaigning, protest or legal action.

Despite the very different contextual conditions and ways TSOs responded to challenges and opportunities in their environment, there are some similarities across the different fields. To some extent, these similar features also resemble developments in transnational solidarity organisations and movements on a global scale. First, our study suggests a trend of increased (re-)politicisations, which has already been observed by international social movement scholars with regard to more recent transnational solidarity organisations and movements (Baglioni 2001; Passy 2001; Zamponi 2017; Zamponi and Bosi 2018). In the context of our own study, this (re-)politicisation is particularly true for TSOs in the area of refugees and unemployment. Most strikingly, German TSOs addressing refugees have largely bridged the division of tasks between service-oriented and political forms of solidarity action, which in the past used to be typical of many solidarity organisations, also beyond Germany (Baglioni 2001; Baglioni and Giugni 2014; Giugni 2001).

Secondly, and partly interrelated with the observed politicisation, our study reveals that TSOs across all three fields underwent a clear transformation in the conceptualisation of (transnational) solidarity and the relationship towards their target groups (also Fernández G. G. et al. 2020; Zschache et al. 2020). Many of the analysed TSOs are characterised by a new understanding of solidarity action that moves away from asymmetric top-down, help-oriented charity approaches towards more subject-centred, bottom-up and empowerment-oriented approaches. In this revised perspective, beneficiaries are regarded as equal, self-determined and self-responsible persons with whom TSOs wish to interact at eye level. In the field of refugees, this conceptual change seems partly linked to the new actor structure that emerged in the context of the crisis and the role of new institutional entrepreneurs seeking to implement their own alternative views. To some extent, they are also a response to the new insight that many of the refugees will remain longer in Germany and thus have to be enabled to live a self-reliant life as equal society members, an idea which is reflected in the new “welcome culture” of 2015 and the growing acknowledgement that Germany is an immigration country. In the unemployment field, the new understanding is largely interrelated with the increased re-politicisation and mobilisation of many TSOs against the backdrop of significant deteriorations in unemployment policies and inadequate public and political support. In the disability field, the revised approach is directly connected with the ideas and principles promoted by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the related objective to enforce equal human rights. Presumably, the change in thinking in this field has occurred rather incrementally and has already been prepared by changing ideas and demands since the 1970s. Thus, the transformed conceptualisation of transnational solidarity is embedded within different field-specific circumstances. At the same time, though, it resembles developments of solidarity organisations and movements on an international scale. Following the social movement literature, it seems to be a more general pattern of younger and more politicised transnational solidarity organisations and movements critically reflecting on and often rejecting the traditional guiding ideas of charity, neighbourly love, protection, care and assistance to the suffering, and to shift organisational orientation towards individual emancipation, societal democratisation,

social and human rights, anti-racism and the idea of reciprocal, interdependent solidarity relations (della Porta and Massimiliano 2013; Eterovic and Smith 2001; Fernández G. G. et al. 2020; Giugni 2001: 236; Kousis and Paschou 2017; Passy 2001: 8–11; Waterman 2001: 236). Future research should, therefore, contribute to improving our understanding of how field-specific, country-specific and international context conditions and opportunity structures interrelate in shaping transnational solidarity organisations.

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Part II

Solidarity in Times of Welfare Retrenchment



5

Scopes of Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Insights from Poland

Janina Petelczyc, Rafał Bakalarczyk,
and Ryszard Szarfenberg

Introduction

Civil society organisations in Poland have stepped up their activities in order to address social problems and meet the needs of deprived groups over the last decade. Even though organisations working in different issue fields (migration, unemployment and disabilities) have had different priorities and agendas, the expansion of solidarity actions has been a general

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J. Petelczyc (✉)

Department of Social Insurance, SGH Warsaw School of Economics,
Warsaw, Poland

e-mail: jpetel@sgh.waw.pl

R. Bakalarczyk

Independent Researcher, Warsaw, Poland

e-mail: raf_19@tlen.pl

development across the three domains. This raises questions about the societal factors driving the development of civic solidarity initiatives and practices. The Polish experience seems particularly instructive because civil society organisations have been operating within a societal environment that has been less affected by the various crises of the European Union (EU), as compared to other countries such as Greece or Italy. Still, Poland has experienced significant socio-economic and political changes, to which civil society organisations have reacted. The comparison of the three issue fields allows us to highlight the specificities and similarities of this development. In particular, it will show that civic solidarity was driven more strongly by public policy responses than by those moments of crises, which government actions were intended to address.

Poland was not directly affected by the economic and financial crises of 2009, nor by the massive inflow of refugees in the years 2015 and 2016, although the indirect effects have been considerable. On the one hand, the country seems to have coped relatively well with the worldwide economic crisis and was the only EU Member State with a continuous positive gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Compared to the EU, the average level of GDP change in Poland was relatively moderate, even in 2009. In fact, among European countries, only Polish GDP growth was not directly affected by the economic crisis. However, in spite of good economic conditions during times of hardship in Europe, the Polish government used the crisis as an excuse for continuing liberal policy changes that had been initiated beforehand, partly in order to comply with the Procedure of Excessive Deficit imposed by the EU. On the other hand, social and labour indicators were not as positive as economic ones, but these were neglected by the Polish government. As a result, the (partly hidden) economic crisis and weak policy responses of the state to this phenomenon were reflected in citizens bearing the brunt of it (Theiss et al. 2017). Its impact on the labour market was significant. Unemployment, especially youth unemployment, rose, and growing

R. Szarfenberg

Faculty of Political Science and International Studies, University of Warsaw,
Warsaw, Poland

e-mail: r.szarfenberg@uw.edu.pl

numbers of people were forced to work on “civil contracts”, deprived of labour and social security rights. “Anti-crisis” packages introduced by the government protected employers rather than employees. The government also introduced austerity measures such as cuts in funding for public employment services, including unemployment benefits, as well as freezing salaries of some groups of workers in the public sector (Petelczyc 2017).

Austerity policies, however, did not only affect workers and the unemployed, but they also affected other groups, like the disabled. In Poland, 4.7 million people live with disabilities, among whom 3.1 million have formally been classified as disabled. In the group of disabled adults, 22.7% have the status of a person with advanced disability (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy 2017). Many of them demand long-term care and support in activities of daily living. In the Polish context, this kind of care is provided in large part by the family and the informal sector. The well-being of those people and their families depends partly on social benefits. Access to those benefits became limited for the caregivers of the disabled adults in 2013. As a reaction to the changes in law, several social initiatives rallied around the caregivers and initiated protest movements.

On the other hand, the so-called refugee crisis has also had repercussions on public debate in Poland. Even though the inflow of migrants from Ukraine was substantial, contributing thus to a migrant community of about 2 million people, public concerns were particularly sensitive towards refugees fleeing from wars, persecution and poverty outside Europe. Against the EU’s attempts to establish a system of burden-sharing and relocation of refugees, the Polish government resisted. Poland stands out as the country that took in the lowest number of refugees: 3500 non-EU asylum applicants in 2015 and 2500 in 2016, compared to 249,000 in 2015 and 631,000 in 2016 in Germany (Eurostat 2017). Three hundred and forty-eight refugees were granted permission to stay in 2016, whereas in 2017, 150 got official permission to stay (Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców 2018). The so-called refugee crisis did not directly impact on Polish society, given that Poland was not part of the transit routes of refugees, but it did affect public policies indirectly, because the inflow of refugees coincided with the terrorist attacks of 2015 and a political

campaign preceding the Polish parliamentary election in October 2015, which contributed to the politicisation of the issue.

In this chapter, we wish to highlight the experiences of transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs) working in the field of unemployment, migration and disability analysed in the context of the TransSOL cross-national project (see TransSOL 2016). In particular, we aim to highlight the way in which these organisations have adapted to the socio-economic and political developments, and the challenges they have presented to Polish society. We aim to answer the following questions: Are there significant changes in how TSOs operate and respond to societal needs and grievances? To what extent are these changes a reaction to the socio-economic and political developments? And how (if at all) have the crises affected the TSOs' understanding of solidarity in the different fields of unemployment, migration and disability?

This chapter is based on the qualitative analysis of 30 interviews with the representatives of solidarity organisations working in the field of unemployment (labour), migration and disabilities. In order to grasp the experiences of TSOs in a comprehensive manner, we followed a sampling strategy that strived to increase diversity, for example, in terms of issue fields, action repertoires and organisational features. We conducted interviews with 21 charity help-/service-oriented organisations (7 working in the field of migration, 9 in unemployment and 5 in disability) and 17 protest/social movement/policy-oriented organisations (5 working in the field of migrations, 7 in unemployment and 5 in disability). Most of the organisations deliberately employ a hybrid approach in their actions, combining the provision of various services with an engagement in policy-making on local, national and/or international level/s. Given that research was interested in cross-national linkages and references, only organisations and groups were included in the sampling that exhibited a transnational element (for instance, beneficiaries, supporters, partners, sponsors or missions). Interviews were conducted between September and November 2016.¹

¹ For more information on sampling, see the introduction to this volume and <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

Organisations in Times of Crisis: Theoretical Framework

Civil society organisations are engaged in acts of solidarity in support of deprived target groups. For Rymsza (2006), solidarity is composed of two forms of social ties. On the one hand, solidarity is based on social ties and a mutual concern for the common good. On the other hand, solidarity is based on institutionalised ties (expressed in public authorities' activities) and non-institutionalised ties (mediated by non-governmental organisations engaged in social and political support for deprived groups). According to this framework, social policies and public measures of a redistributive nature are a manifestation of institutionalised (state) solidarity, while charitable activities and political advocacy by TSOs are an expression of non-institutionalised (civic) solidarity. Rymsza's theory of solidarity can be complemented by another dimension: the scope of solidarity. Public or social solidarity could be related to a very narrow issue and group of people (such as people deprived of some cash benefit after the reform of social welfare system) or to a very broad array of issues and many different groups (namely all people with disabilities and people in poverty and all issues which are important to them). In addition, the scope of solidarity in terms of involved groups and issues may be national or international.

This concept of solidarity highlights that organised forms of solidarity, which are central to this chapter, are strongly embedded in the socio-economic and political structure of their environment. In fact, we might expect that the socio-economic situation and the levels of institutionalised (state) solidarity might impinge on the scope and intensity of activities by TSOs. In particular, we should expect that the financial and economic crisis would have impacted on civic solidarity in Poland. The mechanism could be formulated in causal terms: The crisis causes an increase in social needs (more people in unemployment and in poverty, etc.) and a reduction in the ability of the state to satisfy them by means of public funds (lower budget revenues). Public and non-public solidarity activities supported by the state budget may suffer substantial losses, thus increasing a gap between growing social needs (increase in demand for

solidarity) and responses of the public sector (decrease in supply of solidarity). Citizens and existing civil society organisations might be called on to fill this gap by providing activities of non-state social entities of solidarity (TSOs).

This general assumption, however, needs to be differentiated into two propositions, given that scholarly writing has been sceptical about the explanatory power of objective deprivations. In fact, the assumption that TSOs respond to rising social needs in times of crisis presupposes that civic solidarity is a pure mirror of socio-economic grievances. Studies of social movement and civil societies have shown, however, that these responses are mediated by two factors: the availability of organisations and organised forms of action and the availability of political opportunities and targets (Giugni and Grasso 2016; Grasso et al. 2019).

On the one hand, we know that collective action is dependent on existing organisational fields that more often than not adapt to or expand the range of their activities in order to meet (new) needs. Labour organisations, for instance, play an important role. They are rather old social actors that have learned to adapt to new social realities, including dynamically changing cultural patterns that increasingly shape the working environment (Milner and Mathers 2013). According to Diani, unions, which have been in crisis for years, remain significant social actors by renewing themselves and introducing diverse strategies (Diani 2019). One part of the labour organisations' strategy to cope with this challenge includes taking actions in favour of groups or issues which are not traditionally understood as labour rights, like supporting atypical workers (Gumbrell-McCormick 2011), women and ethnic minority members (Kirton and Greene 2005) or victims of domestic violence (Wibberley et al. 2018). One can also see a significant change in the organisations active in the field of labour in the context of increasing migration caused by both the typical free movements of persons and the refugee influx. The experience of European countries proves the existence of a developed catalogue of activities that offer support to foreigners by labour civil society organisations. The same situation can be seen with regard to unions, whose tradition proves that they played an important role as a political and social actor in the fight for the rights of migrants (Marino et al. 2015).

On the other hand, political opportunities and targets are a decisive factor in arousing organised activities of solidarity. TSOs require civic liberties to organise and mobilise support publicly, and they require some sort of political and public support (for instance, in terms of funding) in order to provide services and maintain their activities. Moreover, TSOs are clearly involved in ongoing policy debates and related political conflicts, because they advocate for social rights and entitlements in order to institutionalise their call for solidarity. This implies that TSOs will step up their activities when the state fails to provide liberties, financial support or social rights. The mobilisation of solidarity during the last decade might thus not be a direct reaction to the economic and financial crisis, but rather to the changed public agenda of the state. In this regard, we can assume that the effects of the crisis have been indirect. The economic crisis might have aroused solidarity activities due to the changed government policy of austerity in general (which are at least partly shaped by the excessive deficit procedure imposed on Poland by the EU), and regulatory and benefits cuts reducing social security protection and social investment, in particular. Organised forms of solidarity seem to be motivated by government actions.

The centrality of austerity policies as causes and targets of political protests and solidarity actions has been confirmed by previous studies (della Porta 2015; Ancelovici et al. 2016). Civil society organisations help people who have not enough resources (both financial and social capital) and whose needs are ignored or insufficiently addressed, for example, by the state (Mohan 2002). For the Greek example, Chrysostomou (2015) showed that when the state fails and acts insufficiently, it opens the door to the rise of civil society organisations. In this sense, policies of austerity might encourage civil society organisations and civil society activists to enhance and expand solidarity initiatives and practices. In these terms, the crisis and its policy responses have become a catalyst for the empowerment of civil society in Greece (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014). However, this situation is also true for Poland, given that rising unemployment rates have run parallel to a growing budget deficit and public debt, leading to increased pressures upon the government to reduce its spending. Therefore, the country has also implemented several cuts in public spending, justified by the crisis (Rae 2012; Theiss et al. 2017). It

is to be expected that the introduction of austerity policies had led to an increase and/or expansion of organised solidarity by existing and/or new TSOs, both formal and informal (Cabot 2018; Chrysostomou 2015). Informal social networks, self-help groups and more formal civil society organisations seem to rise in answer to insufficient state activity by providing social services and political advocacy for those target groups with severe needs and disadvantages (Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014).

The Perception of TSOs' Context Conditions

Previous research has shown that civil society organisations adapt their organisational work to upcoming grievances and restrictive policies and often also to the impact of international crises. However, in the Polish case, these adaptations seem to be driven only marginally by the various crises affecting the EU itself. Much more important is the way that TSOs perceive the societal conditions and transformations and the political opportunities and constraints. In this regard, our interviews reveal that perceptions diverge considerably in all three fields. While some TSOs acknowledge objective grievances caused by the socio-economic crisis of the EU, the wars in the Middle East and the so-called refugee crisis as shaping factors, most of them put rather long-lasting conflicts and problems and inadequate policy-reactions centre stage. A number of the interviewed TSOs share the view that the economic and financial crisis had some direct and/or indirect influence on their work. Those who address the economic crisis underline, for instance, that the crisis forced the organisation to quit certain activities. Others mention that, while in times of economic stability, the organisation was based on the financial contributions of their members, during the economic recession, their members had less money to give to the organisation, which made effective activity more difficult. Moreover, other interviewees point out that in times of economic crisis and job scarcity, labour migration might have been perceived as a risk for workers in some segments of the labour market and, consequently, led to a weakening of solidarity towards immigrants.

In comparison, other interviewees declare no, little or only indirect influence of it on their organisation's activity and on the perceived level

of solidarity towards the groups they care about. For some of the TSOs in the field of migration, more long-lasting international developments or external factors, such as the conflict in Syria or the difficult situation in Ukraine, are more influential on their work than the economic crisis. While the influx of many Ukrainian migrants affects the work of Polish TSOs more directly at home, the repercussions of the so-called refugee crisis are more consequential for those TSOs operating in countries of war and conflict outside Europe. These organisations are less concerned with developments in national policy-making because their activities target problems outside Polish territory and the direct responsibility of the Polish state.

Another reason for the limited (perceived) impact of the economic crisis on the situation of certain organisations is the fact that many of them do not base their work on huge financial resources and are oriented on non-material rather than material support provision. In fact, several TSOs declare that their main activity is supporting the rights of certain groups, advisory and moral support, but not necessarily financial or material resource distribution. Others emphasise that the solidarity (or lack of it) with migrants or refugees is not an issue of the economy and/or resources, but rather of how people think and act, what they are conscious of and how the problems are discussed. Here, it should be added that the Polish debate on refugees was extremely politicised in the context of pre-election campaigns and anti-migration mobilisation by the oppositional right-wing party.² Moreover, many problems the interviewed

²The refugee crisis in Europe occurred simultaneously with a political campaign preceding the Polish parliamentary election in October 2015. In July 2015, the Polish government declared its readiness to welcome 2000 refugees into Poland. This was, however, highly criticised by the opposition. In September 2015 Jarosław Kaczyński (Law and Justice party leader, in opposition) claimed in Parliament that “under foreign pressure and without the consent of the Polish people, the government does not have the right to take decisions which are highly probable to negatively affect our life (...) the number of foreigners will increase and then they will stop respecting our laws and customs (...) would you like us to quit being hosts in our country?” He also proposed what he called *ordo caritatis*—an order of compassion which means: First the closest ones, then the nation and then the others” (Narkiewicz 2017). The significance of this term—first the closest ones, and so forth—reveals an attempt to establish a kind of “natural hierarchy” of solidarity relations (Szczipak et al. 2018). Kaczyński’s claims went further in October 2015 when he said that “migrants have already brought diseases like cholera and dysentery to Europe, as well as all sorts of parasites and protozoa, which (...) while not dangerous in the organisms of these people, could be dangerous here” (Politico 2017). After Law and Justice’s victory in the parliamentary election in

migration TSOs have to cope with are rather related to the difficulties of economic and social integration of migrants and refugees in Poland and to the formal barriers on the foreigners' lives and work in Poland. Some of the issues they have to tackle, for instance, with regard to accommodation, are to some extent caused by the insufficient policy of the state, public authorities and institutions. Thus, the ways in which the Polish government and administration respond to rising problems and challenges—and the insufficiencies of it—constitute a relevant context condition according to some interviewed TSOs. In this respect, a representative of one of the organisations highlights, for instance, the unfriendly attitude of the current state authorities towards the third sector organisations, which generates a negative surrounding for their activities. Among the interviewed disability TSOs, it is the organisations in particular supporting caregivers that blame the Polish government for having deprived this group of people of social benefits. Moreover, according to a few TSOs in the (un)employment field, the recent changes in labour and social policy, including the resulting “flexibilisation” and “precarisation” of employment, have had a considerable impact on their work. Overall, however, it is interesting to note that many of the interviewed TSOs do not blame the state and its policy as the main cause of problems.

TSOs' Responses to Changing Circumstances and New Challenges in Their Field of Action

Our theoretical framework suggests that inappropriate or insufficient action by the state to realise its obligations towards vulnerable and excluded groups of people creates both a space and a trigger for civil society organisations to act and to adjust their solidarity approach. Our interviews provide us with in-depth insights to examine if and how the TSOs

October 2015, this point of view, together with a widespread narrative of citizens' protection, Polish sovereignty and an obligation to care for the Polish Catholic tradition, became hegemonic. This was the rationale for opposing the refugee relocation system in the EU, although some scholars (Pochyły 2017) claim that Polish foreign policy towards the refugee issue did not change that much between 2014 and 2016.

under review responded to the changing circumstances and new demands in their fields of action.

Overall, it is striking that Polish TSOs applied three main strategies in order to cope with the new challenges and grievances, namely (1) the expansion of beneficiaries and activities, thus broadening the TSOs' scope of solidarity, (2) new alliance building with other organisations and (3) the establishment of new TSOs as a reaction to changed circumstances and resulting new needs. Interestingly, these strategies were not equally salient in each of the three fields of vulnerability. Instead, we can see field-specific approaches, with certain strategies having more weight in some fields and different strategies in others.

The broadening of the TSOs' scope of solidarity and action towards new target groups and the building of new alliances with other organisations were most prominently pursued by TSOs in the field of (un)employment. Trade unions, for instance, which used to provide activities and services primarily for "typical employees", have expanded their activities in order to address the needs of precarious workers, the working poor and working students. Our interviewees often emphasise that their understanding of "worker" is broader than the typical definition in the Polish labour code. For example, the term "workers" also includes persons who are employed on the basis of a civil law contract (so-called junk contracts in Poland), deprived of any working or social security rights. The respondents also highlight that their organisations respond to all the changes resulting from transformations in the labour market. Hence, they adopt a broad understanding of the term "employee" and help "everybody who has any relation to the labour market" (Unemp1 08/2016):

We answer to all the changes connected to flexibilisation and precarisation. For us 'employee' is each person who sells their labour. (Unemp3 09/2016)

This broad understanding was shared by unemployment TSOs. Their activities aim to help unemployed and poor people with diverse grievances and needs. In their work, they pay, for instance, "special attention to poor employees and poor people with disabilities, addicts and also homeless people" (Unemp7 10/2016). The interviewed unemployment

TSOs also address various special groups of job seekers and the growing groups of people who are excluded from the labour market, such as the young unemployed, women, the disabled migrants and any others whose access to the labour market is more difficult:

Beneficiaries of our actions are all people who are in some way connected with the labour market, regardless of the professional statute or contract, whether they are employees or unemployed. (Unemp5 10/2016)

Moreover, working migrants have become an important addressee of the interviewed (un)employment TSOs. With the growing numbers of foreigners working in Poland, a number of the organisations under review—trade unions as well as other TSOs—have developed new strategies to integrate migrants into the Polish labour market. They aim to fight the unemployment of migrants, and if migrants are working, organisations guard their legal employment and advocate for equal labour rights.

In line with their broad understanding of target groups, many interviewed (un)employment TSOs have established alliances and different forms of cooperation with a varied range of other organisations, initiatives and movements. They support the work of other civil society organisations and public or private institutions working in the field of (un)employment, engage in the training of volunteers and cooperate with different social leaders and “social innovators” seeking to tackle unemployment:

We also support other NGOs, employees of other non-governmental organisations, employees of social enterprises, and employees of public institutions, labour offices, social assistance centres, all those who deal with or have contacts with the labour market somewhere. (Unemp2 08/2016)

Moreover, the broad range of cooperation partners and allies also includes movements of people threatened with eviction, women’s movements for legal abortion, and movements against Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the extreme right and the rise of nationalism:

We support tenant movements, participate in demonstrations, such as against CETA, criticise the extreme right, nationalism, and support feminist actions in the field of women's rights. (Unemp3 10/2016)

Interestingly, this broad approach towards target groups and alliance building is remarkably less influential in the disability field and is also less pronounced in the migration field, while the third strategy (new creation of TSOs) plays an important role in both fields (see below). As regards target groups and alliance building, TSOs in the field of disability have a more differentiated, particularistic understanding of their target groups, leading to a division of work between different types of disability TSOs rather than to cross-sectoral action and cooperation. For instance, some of the interviewed disability TSOs dedicate themselves to the problems of families of heavily disabled adults. Another organisation leads a day-care centre for people with intellectual impairments, while others focus on the rights of people with autism; still others devote their time to specific rare diseases, assist with the activation of the disabled or represent various problems of disabled children and adults. Similar to the division between special target groups, a segmented form of cooperation prevails among the interviewed disability TSOs. Usually, cooperation takes place between organisations with a similar profile and similar or even the same objectives. Hence, alliance building and solidarity are practised between groups that are very close to each other, but much less on a broader horizontal scale. Some interviewees suggest that, although they see the need of a broader solidarity approach, the situation forces them to focus on selected groups or a certain area. This deficit of solidarity between various groups is to some extent seen with regret:

Generally there is no solidarity between people; everybody is focused on their own issue. (Disab6 9/2017)

The segregation in the disability field is partly explained by the specificities of the various diseases and forms of disability. In part, the interviewed TSOs report a marked competition over (financial) resources and public and political attention between different groups of disabled and

diseased people and their organisational representatives which further contributes to division in the field (e.g., Disab4 11/2016).

To a certain degree, the focus on specific target groups and needs is also true for TSOs in the migration field. Here, many TSOs have become established only recently and aim to fill a new gap that is still not sufficiently addressed by state policy. Facing new challenges, they centre their attention on those beneficiaries with the most pressing and urgent needs, which in the Polish case are primarily migrants from Ukraine. The fact that many Polish migration TSOs are in the early stages of development seems to contribute to their currently rather narrow focal point. However, this does not prevent them from opening their activities and services to migrants and refugees from other countries.

While the expansion of the scope of solidarity in terms of beneficiaries and related forms of action and alliance building emerged as an important response to recent challenges in the employment field, the establishment of new TSOs has been a relevant strategy in the fields of disability and migration in reaction to new circumstances and needs. In recent years, parts of the disability field have been shaped by restrictive state reforms. Our study shows that the withdrawal of the state from some of its obligations for disabled people and relatives who care for them has led to the creation of new disability, TSOs and the organisation of new volunteers and activists in social movements and civic initiatives. For instance, caregivers of adult disabled persons have been particularly affected by reductions in public support. In the face of changes in legislation and the resulting limitation in the level of social security for caregivers of the adult disabled, the members of that social group have begun to mobilise and organise themselves in new initiatives since 2012 and 2013 in order to fight for a return to the previous law, regain their social entitlements, generally improve their situation and fill the gaps in social security and support caused by this policy change:

I joined the organisation in 2013, after the government deprived us of social benefits. (Disab1 9/2016)

Organisation originated a bit later, but generally we started to act in 2013. (Disab2 9/2016)

The reason for establishing new initiatives was strictly bound to the unexpected change in the law at the end of 2012. Thus, there were no former initiatives or TSOs focused on that issue before 2012. The TSOs examined were oriented towards the articulation of the protest of certain groups and rapid changes in the law concerning support, so they did not seek broader contacts with other groups in the disability field with a different activity profile. Moreover, the people engaged with TSOs oriented on policy change concerning the benefits for caregivers had no or very few former contacts with other TSOs in the field of disability due to intensive daily engagement in caregiving.

In the migration field, new TSOs have been founded in recent years parallel to the arrival of many new migrants in Poland. Given that state policy in this area was still not sufficiently developed, civil society actors stepped in to mitigate the situation and to offer help to those in need. While other European countries have mostly been shaped by recent migration movements from the Middle East and North Africa, Poland has been most strongly affected by the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Ukraine fleeing war and economic crisis. In response, new TSOs were created focusing primarily on migrants from Ukraine. Nevertheless, many of these TSOs do not exclusively provide support to Ukrainian migrants. Instead, they are open to assist other foreigners, too, such as people from the former Soviet Union (e.g., Belarusians, Russians and Chechens) or refugees from Syria or other countries hit by war and/or crisis:

The main beneficiaries are Ukrainians living in Poland, but the organisation is not closed to immigrants from other countries. When publishing a newspaper, conducting trainings or meetings – we are always open; everyone has the right to come and it happens: Chechens, Poles from other organisations, Belarusians, Russians. (Migr3 09/2016)

In addition, a few other TSOs follow a broader approach and help any migrants, economic refugees, asylum seekers and/or citizens of countries facing war. In this respect, the interviewed TSOs underline, for instance:

Our organisation aims to help everyone living or residing outside of their homeland ... we do not restrict ourselves to any group. (Migr4 09/2016)

We mainly focus on preventing social exclusion, and social exclusion can have many causes. [...] We fight stereotypes against foreigners. (Migr1 08/2016)

Only one interviewed organisation specifically provides direct charity help and services to Syrians in Syria—by providing humanitarian aid to local organisations:

In general, we provide this type of humanitarian aid to units that operate there, whether it is the Red Cross, local humanitarian units, so-called White Helmets, namely civil defence organisations and so on. (Migr8 10/2016)

The Role of Transnational Solidarity in TSOs' Responses in Challenging Times of Crisis and Insufficient State Policy

In addition to the three strategies of TSOs discussed in the previous section, our research reveals that for some TSOs searching for transnational solidarity is a further reaction to the encountered deficits of state policy, but also to the multiple crises in Europe and beyond. Among the TSOs that follow this path, the approach and degree of implementing transnational solidarity varies, however. Moreover, it is striking that for other interviewed TSOs the transnational aspect is almost absent or incidental. This applies particularly to the disability TSOs in our study.

For some of the organisations under review, engaging in transnational cooperation is a means of gaining access to inter- or transnational funding sources, mostly from European, Norwegian or Swiss funds:

We do not cooperate internationally, apart from financial support from the European Union. (Disab3 09/2016)

Beyond these financial incentives, transnational partnerships and cooperation are also set up to exchange experience, information, knowledge (for instance, about innovative practices from abroad) and resources, and organise reciprocal support in various ways (including technical support). This applies to several of the interviewed TSOs in both unemployment and migration fields and to a few disability organisations:

For us, it is about the exchange of social capital and experiences, having someone in the place of action; if the people for whose rights we are fighting are in a country other than Poland. (Migr10 10/2016)

We cooperate, exchange experiences, support each other internationally. (Unemp5 10/2016)

Solidarity of all workers, regardless of industry, position, type of contract, gender, nationality and country. It is solidarity beyond borders, intercompany. It manifests itself in maintaining contacts with organisations in other countries to mobilise and support each other. (Unemp3 09/2016)

A part of the organisations belongs to European networks cooperating and implementing joint projects. For instance, Polish trade unions work side by side with other European trade unions (regional as well as federal) and engage in joint projects, analyses and support (demonstrations, funding, etc.). Moreover, transnational cooperation is used for joint lobbying, advocacy, networking and educational activities.

The first and probably most important step that leads us to real change in the migrants' and refugees' situation is raising awareness. (Migr9 09/2016)

There are also organisations that operate abroad, especially in countries affected by war and deep crises like in Ukraine or Syria. This is especially true in the field of migration, where several of the interviewed organisations operate transnationally because their work is related to problems on an international or global scale. However, not all of the migration TSOs in our study have intense, long-term cooperation with foreign organisations. Some of them, although conscious of existing problems set against

an international or global backdrop, focus on activities in the local area. The most common activity is helping immigrants from different countries in Poland. When arriving in a new and foreign environment, migrants are often at a loss and need broad support that TSOs attempt to provide. Thus, helping in the local area seems relevant to the needs and the time and place, where they are reported:

We support migrants, foreigners, of different nationalities. It turns out that it is a large group of people, often vulnerable, when they need support, not to get lost, to start to function normally. (Migr5 09/2016)

As was aforementioned, even if the purpose of most organisations is to help particular groups (like Ukrainians in Poland), they are also open to Ukrainians in difficult situations living in Ukraine. Organisations that support a specific national group in Poland often start to expand their activity abroad because of the links of their beneficiaries to their places of origin. They create networks of migrants in Poland with their families and friends abroad:

Our foundation participates in actions like fundraising or collection of medicines for people in a difficult situation in the East, especially for orphaned children because of the war. There are grassroots initiatives of our beneficiaries which we also join. (Migr7 10/2016)

Compared to the enhanced attention on Eastern Europe, Polish migration TSOs are considerably less dedicated to refugees and people in need from the Middle East and have barely established transnational linkages with that region. In fact, only one organisation we interviewed specifically provides direct charity help and services to Syrians in Syria.

While some interviewed TSOs underline that they use transnational cooperation and solidarity as a means to enhance their opportunities and impact and to cope with restrictive circumstances, other TSOs rather emphasise the barriers to transnational cooperation. Such barriers are seen in the scarcity of resources, such as funds, time and staffing in the organisations and its skillset (for instance, in reference to language and communication).

Barriers of language. For example, I don't know any (except Silesian), so for me there is a barrier of language. (Disab2 9/2016)

Language. And the finances on our side. (Disab1 9/2016)

Some organisations also point to the difference in goals and problems between themselves and organisations abroad. However, even those who report no transnational cooperation share the opinion that such contact could be useful and would not discount it in the future.

I think that there would be some profit, because we could exchange experiences with each other. We could get some inspiration. (Disab6 9/2016)

Only in exceptional cases is transnational solidarity not regarded as something desirable. One disability TSO states that their concern is focused on a very local or national scale, and there is no interest in more complex and stable cooperation with foreign organisations. Generally, the least commitment to such transnational relations can be found among policy-oriented disability organisations that struggle for more decent social security for caregivers. This finding is astonishing because there are transnational initiatives that integrate many national social movements, regarding long-term care and family caregivers, such as Eurocarers. It is interesting that reference to Eurocarers did not occur in any of the interviews.

Conclusions

Our study has provided instructive evidence on how Polish transnational solidarity organisations have mobilised and organised collective action in order to fill the gap provoked by the growing divide between increasing and new grievances and needs in times of recent economic, social and migration challenges, on the one hand, and insufficient and inadequate state policies, on the other. As our analysis shows, the TSOs under review have done so by applying various strategies with differing weight and relevance across the three analysed fields of vulnerability. Across the fields

of unemployment, migration and disability, we see that these organisational strategies have been considerably shaped by the fact that TSOs adapted to changed circumstances and found new ways to show solidarity with vulnerable groups. These are similar to the findings of existing social movement studies (Diani 2019; Gumbrell-McCormick 2011; Kirton and Greene 2002; Wibberley et al. 2018; Marino et al. 2015), where the labour- and unemployment-related TSOs, in particular, expanded their scope of solidarity towards new target groups and problems which traditionally were not regarded as labour rights or unemployment issues. Among others, Polish unions, and other labour as well as unemployment organisations, have broadened their range of activities in order to target, for instance, precarious atypical workers, jobless women, young people, migrants or other disadvantaged, deprived and excluded groups. Moreover, Polish (un)employment TSOs have also broadened their focus of activity by engaging in new alliances with other organisations from various neighbouring—and partly overlapping—issue fields, dealing, for instance, with problems of eviction, women's rights, rising nationalism or international neoliberal agreements such as CETA and TTIP. In comparison, TSOs in the fields of disability and migration have been characterised by the fact that many of them were created in recent years in response to newly arising grievances and needs and against the backdrop of insufficient state support. In the field of disability, TSOs representing the needs of caregivers are a particularly salient example of this development (Kubicki 2016; Bakalarczyk 2015). Moreover, in the field of migration, it was most striking that many TSOs have recently been established as a reaction to the influx of many migrants fleeing from war and economic crisis in Ukraine.

In addition, it emerged from our study that some TSOs have adapted to new circumstances by creating new or by intensifying existing transnational solidarity interlinkages. Among the analysed TSOs, the group of (un)employment organisations has the strongest transnational bonds, both by cooperating with other countries' organisations and by helping excluded people abroad, namely the unemployed in Spain or Greece. Furthermore, some migration organisations send aid abroad to countries facing war and other types of conflicts. However, their primary focus of activity is on migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who have already

arrived in Poland (especially Ukrainians, but not exclusively). In contrast, disability organisations are the ones that make the least use of transnational cooperation and action. Instead, each of them centres on a very specific slice of reality: different groups of disabled or diseased people and their caregivers. They mostly answer to the rather particular needs of the various groups almost abandoned by the Polish state.

Interestingly, only a part of the interviewed TSOs explicitly discussed the reasons and circumstances of the (new) needs and demands they aim to cope with. The other part appears to be mainly help- and service-oriented and tends to avoid addressing the economic or political circumstances of their work. In fact, most TSOs across the three fields aim to tackle the direct problems and meet the immediate demands arising in their field of activity. While TSOs in other European countries regard the multiple crises of the past decade as a relevant factor of their work, this does not apply to most of the Polish TSOs under review. In this sense, Polish solidarity work is not driven by the socio-economic crisis and the so-called refugee crisis affecting the EU at large but is rather a reaction to grievances and conflicts associated with public policies and measures adopted by the Polish government in the different fields of activities.

Nevertheless, some TSOs underlined the indirect impact of the economic crisis and/or the immediate relevance of domestic state policies on their target groups and their own activities and agendas. In the disability field, for example, social cuts in benefits for caregivers of disabled people were mainly explained by the difficult situation of public finances (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy 2012). The unsatisfactory commitment of the state and public institutions was one of the perceived causes of solidary activity of many organisations in that field. This observation is true not only for those who started their activity in 2013 as a response to the cuts on social benefits but also to older organisations, for instance, TSOs representing people with rare diseases, who could not receive appropriate treatment and therapy in the mainstream public health sector. Interestingly, the influence of the larger economic crisis on these restrictive domestic policy changes was not addressed by our interviewees in this context.

As regards the (un)employment field, TSOs are notably affected by the recent changes in the labour market and related labour market policy that

go along with a “precarisation” and “flexibilisation” of employment conditions and a loss in the level of social security. However, against the backdrop of complex and variously interwoven contextual factors, it is often not easy to distinguish the role of more general and international developments, like the economic and financial crisis, insufficient or inadequate state responses and specific national policies. In fact, labour-connected TSOs, for instance, see their work as a broader process of answering the challenges of our time: growing liberalisation and deregulation of the labour market, as well as the decreasing role of trade unions and other organisations representing working people. In part, their activity is justified by the lack of sufficient state labour policy, but also by the need to strengthen the employees’ side and that of the middle class in times of globalisation.

Finally, TSOs working in the field of migration stated that their solidarity activities resulted from the mass migration of people from eastern areas (mainly from Ukraine) and, to a smaller degree, the larger migration crisis in and beyond Europe. The absence of an adequate response by the Polish government is perceived only sometimes as an impact factor on their work. In their view, they mostly respond to the immediate needs of migrants and victims of conflict in other countries, rather than to consequences of state policy, which seem less evident for civil society actors in this field than to those of the other two.

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6

Changing Fields of Solidarity in France: A Cross-field Analysis of Migration, Unemployment and Disability

Manlio Cinalli, Carlo De Nuzzo, and Cecilia Santilli

Introduction

The economic crisis that has impacted Europe since 2008 has gone hand in hand with increasing austerity, unemployment and long-term reduction in social benefits and European incomes (Fassin et al. 2013), as well as a dramatic migration crisis across the Mediterranean region (starting with ‘Arab Springs’ and continuing with the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria). The fact that the migration crisis has grown out of a decade of

M. Cinalli (✉)

Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan, Milan, Italy
e-mail: manlio.cinalli@unimi.it

C. De Nuzzo

Center of Political Researches (CEVIPOF), Sciences Po, Paris, France
e-mail: carlo.denuzzo@sciencespo.fr

C. Santilli

School of Social Work, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
e-mail: cecilia.santilli@soch.lu.se

economic crisis and welfare retrenchment has contributed to weakening established norms of redistribution and solidarity throughout Europe, paving the way for contrasting dynamics. Thus, there has been the development of Eurosceptical, populist and nationalist forces on the one hand (Fekete and Sivanandan 2009), while on the other there has been the emergence of novel forms of solidarity mobilisation within civil society (Kousis et al. 2018). The latter is at the core of this chapter, whose starting point consists of questioning the implications of the economic and migration crises for solidarity organisations in the French context in particular. The main aim is to assess whether solidarity remains nationally bounded or otherwise follows some consistent pattern of transnationalisation for solidarity organisations and, in this case, who are the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of transnationalisation (Kriesi et al. 2008).

Hence, while this chapter focuses on the specific case of solidarity organisations in France, it does so by giving a transnational twist to the analysis of solidarity organisations. Our treatment considers their characteristics and activities, as well as the main roles and exchanges that they have within and across solidarity fields in France and beyond. The analysis is conducted with reference to the fields of migration, unemployment and disability, spanning public debates and policy-making throughout the last decade in France, Europe and beyond.¹ Usually, French NGOs are traditionally not transnational and have not yet developed a distinctive transnational character; flourishing since the 1980s onward, solidarity organisations have played a major role in the fight against vulnerability and social exclusion, inscribing their intervention within the space of national politics (d’Halluin 2012; Santilli 2017; Valluy 2008). This is why much of the analysis of this chapter is committed to examining French solidarity organisations in their own national context. Yet it is also dedicated to discussing their transnational developments within the broader context of a full decade of global crises accentuating the growth of solidarity across countries (Lahusen et al. 2018).

¹ This analysis derives from Work Package 2 of the TransSOL project, which received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 649435.

In what follows, we compare French solidarity in three fields (migration, unemployment and disability) by assessing endogenous characteristics, organisational activities, as well as roles and exchanges of 30 ‘transnational solidarity organisations’ (henceforth, TSOs). By TSOs, we mean solidarity organisations that are French-based, but may in fact take a number of transnational features in a new context of ongoing global crises and welfare retrenchment (Kousis et al. 2016). Our treatment aims to evaluate how these transnational features relate to endogenous characteristics, activities, roles and networks of our interviewed organisations, affecting their particular experiences within changing fields of solidarity.

Our analysis draws on in-depth qualitative interviews conducted between May and July 2016, following a sampling procedure based on quantitative website-based analysis of TSOs. Beside issue-field variation (ten interviews in each issue-field) and a selection strategy aimed at targeting a relevant number of grassroots groups,² we allowed for geographical variation with 15 TSOs active in Paris and 15 TSOs active in other parts of the country. Furthermore, we allowed for variation in terms of size, internal organisation, membership and strategies of TSOs, thereby including a large variety of organised actors such as politically oriented and service-oriented organisations, formal and informal groups, as well as charities, practical help associations and social movements (see also De Nuzzo and Cinalli 2016).

Facing Crisis and Welfare Retrenchment: Our Theoretical Background

Since the 1980s, France has started a process of ‘rationalisation of welfare’ following in the footsteps of emerging ‘new monetarist’ and ‘new right’ agendas (Hay 2013, Schmidt and Thatcher 2013). At this time, the end of post-World War II economic growth and expansive social rights pushed for the creation of solidarity organisations caring for vulnerable people against a new course of welfare retrenchment. Institutions and

²For more information on sampling, see Introduction to this volume and <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

policy-makers encouraged these associations to populate the so-called third sector so as to release state institutions from social assistance and reinforcing partnerships between civil society and the state (Laville et al. 2001). Yet, this purpose has also served the objective of constraining the potential recourse to protest actions and contentious politics (Cinalli 2007), an argument to which we shall return in this chapter. Most crucially for our analysis, the increasing call for more civil society since the 1980s has led to the formation of large multi-organisational fields (Curtis and Zurcher 1973), with a growing number of specialised organisations intervening across different fields of solidarity (Cinalli 2004; Giugni and Passy 2001; Massé 2001; Valluy 2008). As we will argue, global crises over the last decade have not changed this long-term trend, but they have nurtured stronger processes of welfare retrenchment and shrinking resources which TSOs must face for their own survival.

Accordingly, we draw on some main scholarly teaching of contentious politics for assessing changing fields of solidarity, including their cross-level dynamics at the national and transnational levels. Following Resource Mobilisation Theory (Oberschall 1973; McCarthy and Zald 1977), we focus on a number of endogenous characteristics that may have an impact on the way that French TSOs behave at times of crises and retrenchment. Our engagement with endogenous characteristics is quite broad in scope and extends to activities and roles of TSOs in their potential dichotomy between 'politically oriented organisations' engaging in policies on the one hand and, on the other, 'service-oriented organisations' engaging in services directly provided for vulnerable groups themselves (Lelieveldt et al. 2007; Torpe and Ferrer-Fons 2007). These endogenous characteristics of French TSOs account for a first set of more general questions about fields of solidarity. Take, for example, the length of TSO activity in their field: We ask whether the older TSOs stand up better than younger TSOs against welfare retrenchment and global crises. Similar questions will be asked with reference to available resources (are richer TSOs the better placed against retrenchment and crises?), especially the main role played within the solidarity field with regard to the difference between a service-oriented and politically oriented focus. Indeed, previous scholarship has argued that civil society organisations in the solidarity field engage especially in delivering services and advocating

policy (Baglioni and Giugni 2014), often specialising in either role (Baglioni et al. 2014). Some focus on shorter-term provision of concrete services, while others focus on sensitising the public opinion and influencing policy-making. By drawing on this scholarship, we are endowed with sound analytical tools to detect the subsidiary role that is potentially offered by TSOs in France for complementing welfare provisions, as well as their political role for winning more resources for solidarity.

By considering dynamics of exchanges within fields of solidarity, we then distinguish between mutual contacts among TSOs and their outreach to broader civil society on the one hand and their linking with institutions and policy-makers on the other (Cinalli 2004; Feiock and Scholz 2010; Bassoli and Polizzi 2011). Drawing on previous research that has used relational structures to study the contentious politics in fields of vulnerability and exclusion (Cinalli 2007; Cinalli and Füglistler 2008), we focus on the exchanges between TSOs and other actors, thereby moving to a more nuanced study of cross-fields and cross-level interactions. In so doing, the analysis engages with a number of crucial questions about the importance of broader exchanges of transnational solidarity. For example, we ask whether TSOs with a closer access to institutions and policy-makers have more capacity to stand up against retrenchment and crises or, alternatively, whether TSOs can compensate their increasing weakness by establishing broader exchanges allowing for mutual help and co-sharing of resources among solidarity organisations and civil society at large. Most crucially, we can ask whether cross-level networks of solidarity are really an option that is open equally to all TSOs in France or if space for transnationalisation only benefits some winners while at the same time constrains space for losers among the TSOs, thereby serving the purpose of state and policy actors willing to pre-empt contentiousness across fields of solidarity.

Ultimately, our analysis allows for extending the debate over the 'tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman 1973). Do crises and retrenchment in France reinforce the role and strategies of the best fit among the TSOs, or are crises and retrenchment incapable of stopping new forms of transnationalisation which also revive contributions of the smallest and less resourceful among TSOs? The point is crucial to understand that overall contextual characteristics may not have the same impact on different

actors within the same field, a hypothesis that is rarely controlled through systematic interaction of exogenous opportunities and endogenous resources. Within the context of a long decade of pre-empting politics (Cinalli 2007), this understanding aims to shed light on what ‘the fittest’ means today when looking at changing fields of solidarity in France, which TSOs have the best potential to cope with hard times of crises and retrenchment, and hence, what are the long-term perspectives of solidarity in the next future.

Solidarity Fields and the Endogenous Characteristics of TSOs in France

Our findings show a first crucial element about the way in which crises and retrenchment have impacted on TSOs in France. This is the vicious circle of reduction of their public funding while their beneficiaries are growing in number, making it difficult for TSOs to retain members and personnel just when recruitment of new members and personnel is heavily needed. In our interviews, many representatives of smaller and more informal TSOs (without offices and staff, a more informal status and so forth) have especially complained about the fact that funds are thought especially for service-based activities over emergencies, a key point to which we shall return. It is also interesting to notice that TSOs dealing with migration face the toughest conditions because their intervention is required not only at the same time of crises and retrenchment but precisely when governments and policy-makers give successive restrictive twists to migration policies. The difficulties met in working over solidarity in such a constraining context are exemplary, acknowledged in the words of one interviewee:

The French economic situation was not good and we never had much funding from the state, although this lack of funds was balanced by EU funding. Over the years, however, the situation has become increasingly difficult because the number of migrants needing assistance has increased while staff has remained the same. In addition, we struggle to help migrants gain their rights because of migration policies. (Migr4 07/2016)

Not surprisingly then, we find that our TSOs have been forced to focus on more urgent needs (for instance, food, housing and health) since the same work must be completed with less manpower, less time and at a faster pace. In the words of one of our interviewees:

One of the consequences of the economic crisis and of the austerity policies is that more and more people in need come seeking our aid. We have to face an increasingly growing demand and we cannot take care of everyone, because we are forced to cut the time for each single person or to filter and try giving priority to the situations we deem to be the most urgent. (Migr8 07/2016)

However, when looking most closely at our sample, we find that the impact of crises and retrenchment varies according to some endogenous characteristics of TSOs and the specific fields within which they are active. Looking at the duration of activities across the TSOs which we interviewed, we find that TSOs which were set up before 2008 face more difficulties than those which were set up afterwards. Many older TSOs complain about the negative impact of the last economic crisis on their work and have perceived a significant contraction of their activities in terms of organisational hardship, lack of funds and decreasing personnel. We also find that the specific solidarity field matters, intersecting with duration of TSOs' activities: Accordingly, we found that, in the field of migration, TSOs are of more recent establishment, in line with the emergency to cope with a truly humanitarian disaster, irrespective of the level of available resources.

In addition, nearly all interviewees are not at their first experience in the solidarity field. The majority of interviewees can be considered to have developed a professional know-how with regard to their specific field of solidarity. Of course, each one has walked their own individual path, but they share common traits in relation to the fact that they have had an average of two jobs and internship or voluntary experiences in various associations before becoming full-time members of their own TSO. Taking the words of a TSO's representative to exemplify:

I started to take part in my organisation's activities as a volunteer only recently, after retirement, but in truth I have been desiring to work with migrants for a very long time. Before starting my job career as an accountant, I had attended some training courses to prepare for humanitarian aid, only to drop that occupation for personal reasons. That dream, I always carried with me, and here, in this association, I feel like I have a purpose and I'm useful. (Migr2 07/2016)

Emphasis should be put on the fact that the French associative context has been singled out for its gradual professionalism (d' Halluin 2012; Valluy 2008). This process, along with the retrenchment of welfare in this sector, has led to a reduction in militant actors in a shrinking number of smaller and more informal organisations, on the one hand, and, on the other, due to the extensive development of organisations that support the state with their expertise (Santilli 2017). Among the larger number of more strictly organised associations, personal motivation grows together with the increasing professional involvement of individuals. As regards the fewer and more informal groups, a spontaneous and more direct political urge to change the *status quo* is still alive, responsible for driving members and sympathisers towards activism. This is an obvious contrast with the broader purpose of institutional actors and policy-makers to reduce potential contentiousness across fields of solidarity.

In the field of migration, interviewees speaking on behalf of more formal and larger TSOs show the strongest professionalism, whereby the provision of services is by far dominant compared to protest activities. By contrast, small and informal TSOs still display a strong criticism vis-à-vis the politics of migration as led by French institutions and policy-makers. The situation is similar in the unemployment field, though service-orientation and political action are not always distinguishable and can be brought together in harmonious terms within the same TSO. In the words of one interviewee:

Our aim is to help people integrate into the world of work and put pressure on the government so that everyone has the same rights and the same job opportunities. There are still people who do not have access to more

profitable jobs because of their ethnic and social origins; we want to change this situation. (Unemp2 07/2016)

As regards the field of disability, it is again the more formal and larger TSOs that are most strongly committed to improving the concrete situation of their beneficiaries. Thus, some TSOs are made up of disabled volunteers who, in addition to working in the organisation, try to raise public awareness of specific pathologies, while others focus on medical developments for the treatment of different diseases. Whereas the challenge against institutions and policy-makers is not a priority in the field of disability (at least much less than in the fields of migration and unemployment), we do find differences in terms of deeper ideological motivations leading to personal mobilisation. In particular, our interviewees in the field of disability are generally motivated by a very strong interest in fundamental human rights and values, even if only with minor or no reference to current political affairs:

For us, respect, equality and dignity are the most fundamental values. The two main dimensions are subsidiarity and reciprocity. We offer our services for free and we take each person as the actor of his or her own rights. (Disab9 07/2016)

Size and formalisation of interviewed TSOs matter when asking about the specific impact of crises and retrenchment on organisational activities. Smaller and more informal solidarity organisations within our sample were in general the most affected. As discussed, we find that all our TSOs have been forced to focus on more urgent needs and to reduce their political activities. However, while the big and medium-sized TSOs talk especially about the necessity to renounce any further expansion and to readjust their activities in order to balance the provision of services with the advocacy activities, our findings show that smaller and more informal TSOs are often forced to soften their political stance, focusing on the provision of services in order to survive.

Yet, another crucial finding is that this trend helps to maintain balance in the way that TSOs combine their political-based and service-based roles, hence containing the otherwise drastic differentiation in terms of

the role being played by the larger and more formal TSOs on the one hand and the smaller and more informal TSOs on the other. This is a crucial point which we need to tackle in full in the next section: Both service-orientation and political action coexist within fields of solidarity overall, as well as within individual TSOs as a way to face up to their increasingly constraining milieus.

The Role of TSOs: The Choice Between Services' Provision and Political Engagement

Scholarly knowledge has looked beyond the impact of crisis per se, arguing that austerity measures, and in particular, the way these measures are implemented within the specific political context of a given country, have in fact the strongest importance (Bermeo and Bartels 2014; Cinalli and Giugni 2013). Most crucially, this scholarly argument claims that austerity fits in a broader long-term political agenda that in many western states has preceded and in fact survived most recent crises (Blyth 2013; Cinalli and Giugni 2016; Schmidt 2016). This specific reading of crises being conveniently used to reinforce a pre-existing neoliberal agenda of welfare cuts and pre-emption of political challenges from below is clearly acknowledged in the words of one interviewee:

The economic crisis has not been as heavily negative as the crisis of the welfare state value. The associations have to supply welfare services provision and this is of course a consequence of the austerity policies, but also a consequence of the redesign of welfare state started some decades ago. I don't think that the economic crisis has changed the structure of the associations. Most of them in France lost their protest and political dimensions some years ago. (Migr3 06/2016)

Accordingly, just as welfare cuts reflect more usual dynamics of power politics at the national level rather than international crisis and external constraints (Pontusson and Raess 2012), in the same way responses by our TSOs are expected to be deeply embedded within their own field and

the specific policy environment. The specific role of TSOs also stands out in the way they combine service-orientation and political action.

Some interviewees consider their TSOs to be protest, social movement and politically oriented organisations. Yet, the mainly political role of these TSOs is not the same for all: Thus, interviews show that TSOs in the migration and unemployment fields take a stronger political role than TSOs in the disability field. As said, we also observe that political engagement is stronger for smaller and informal associations but weaker for larger and formal TSOs. Larger and medium-sized TSOs have to cope with a contradictory set of roles: They play a crucial role in supplying key services (thereby helping public institutions), while they also maintain a strong critique vis-à-vis institutions and policy-making. Our findings about larger and more formal TSOs show their clear difficulties vis-à-vis crises and retrenchment. State policies have had a negative impact through substantial cuts that push them to appeal further to other private channels for funding. Readjustment has occurred by focusing even further on more urgent needs where state funding is likely to be more available. In the words of an interviewee:

We suffered so much from the crisis that we had to create full-time job positions for some persons dedicated to the search for funds. State and regional funds have visibly shrunk. Now we need some persons to follow every procedure, to do the paper work, to write down projects addressed to private financiers. This situation is so difficult that we are obliged to focus on urgent needs and, sometimes, this means reducing the advocacy activity, at least in our daily practices. (Disab10 07/2016)

Likewise, interviewees speaking on behalf of smaller and more informal TSOs state that their organisation must provide services as an effective way to compensate for decreasing resources. This increasing combination of different roles, such as services' provision and political engagement, is clearly acknowledged by some interviewees as a necessary step to face restrictive twists in the political agenda. In the words of an interviewee:

In a context where state funds have visibly shrunk, we have to demonstrate that we offer professional services to vulnerable people. We will not have public funding if we say that we want to help irregular migrants, but we will have money if we offer a legal or social support to asylum seekers, for example. In this context, you can't be too militant because in this way you will not have the power to change migration policies. Our strategy is to be professional in order to have public funds. With these funds and with a good reputation, we are able to negotiate with the state. (Migr6 07/2016)

This trend is somewhat obvious in the migration field, where TSOs often intervene by providing services on ad hoc terms, for example, by reacting quickly to a specific situation of emergency. In the words of an interviewee, speaking on behalf of a TSO dealing with the social support and health care for migrants:

Small associations have a hard time proving their worth in a system where funds are progressively cut off and are only granted to organisations following the same efficiency-based logic which inspires capitalist competition. These associations used to do innovative, original things; they cared for integration and for dialogue between French people and migrants. But they didn't make it: Those who try to do something new, don't survive. Only organisations providing services, and which can prove through numbers that they are efficient, survive. (Migr1 07/2016)

However, the same trend favouring a more balanced combination of political and service activities can also be detected in the other two fields of solidarity. In the words of two interviewees speaking on behalf of TSOs mobilising over unemployment and disability, respectively:

We are small associations and it is very difficult for us to prove our efficiency in a system where funds are only granted to organisations based on capitalist competition. It is hard for us to survive. In order to have some money we proposed different services, such as the organisation of professional training for our beneficiaries, or we assist them in the development of networks. These activities allow us to be funded and, of course, to help our beneficiaries. (Unemp9 07/2016)

After the beginning of the economic crisis, we had no money and our organisation has not received any more public subsidy. And this is happening in a period when public services are dwindling and the needs of sick persons are growing. Hence, I think that our services and our assistance is becoming more and more important. (Disab8 07/2016)

In fact, the increasing combination of services provision and political engagement together is so normal that only one out of the TSOs self-defining themselves as politically engaged in the field of migration openly attacks the other solidarity organisations for being too focused on services. In the words of its representative:

We act on behalf of migrants; we go find them on the streets and speak with them. We are not offering them any service. We only try to establish a human connection with them, and they in turn begin participating in our activities and helping us. We aren't like other NGOs, too focused on services while lacking in political vision. They said "We are policy-oriented associations", but they have submitted to the national migration policy. (Migr2 07/2016)

In the solidarity field of migration, we find volunteers who search for migrants (stations, roads, etc.), talk with them and try to convince them to get involved in the group's activities. Involved migrants become volunteers themselves, helping in turn even more migrants to learn French and look for places to spend the day or find a regular shelter. Simply put, we observe that different roles (the political-oriented vs. the service-oriented) are by now entwined within practices of solidarity much more than one may otherwise expect (Baglioni et al. 2014). The ultimate evidence consists of a number of interviewees in the migration field who do not define themselves as activists, but rather as 'politically oriented professionals', thereby mixing two roles that have become strongly related with each other within the changing field of solidarity in France. In the words of one interviewee:

We propose services to help the migrants, but at the same time we uphold a clear political position, which is to promote an open and welcoming migration policy. We publish protest documentation against migration

policies, but we talk and negotiate with governments in order to change things. We are not militant in the strict sense. We are professionals. (Migr7 07/2016)

Also in this case, we find evidence of similar trends in the other two fields of unemployment and disability, respectively. In the field of unemployment, our findings show that protest-oriented associations have come together in a collaborative blog publishing articles and disseminating information about job insecurity. This blog nurtures a broader network of social information and work events, dealing with labour law specifically intended for employees, seniors and the unemployed. We have also found a weekly podcast dedicated to unemployment and the labour market. In addition, the mission of TSOs often underscores the importance of supporting education and training. In the words of an interviewee:

Our aim is to support the education and training of youth from families in precarious situations, for applicants and employment professionals, particularly in Technical Education and Agriculture. (Unemp9 07/2016)

Other TSOs consider themselves to be organisations operating on political-based premises, yet essentially helping institutions and policy-makers with the aim of reinforcing the defence of rights of vulnerable parts of the population. In the words of an interviewee:

I do not consider myself a militant who works against the system. The French state has a legal system which grants the same rights to everyone and helps those who need it most. My job is to make this system work as efficiently as possible. For this reason, we work with governments and political parties. (Unemp5 07/2016)

As regards the field of disability, our findings show that solidarity organisations are especially open to a fruitful dialogue across the public and policy domains, furthering the strongest cooperation with institutions and policy-makers. Not surprisingly, this extensive cooperation with institutions and policy-makers means that TSOs in the disability

field are the least prone to contentious challenges vis-à-vis government and the most inclined to focus above all on the provision of services. Yet some emphasis should be put on TSOs fighting against HIV. While becoming less militant over time, these TSOs stand out for their long-term political engagement in the solidarity field.³

Looking at the three fields, the expansion of service-based activities is not an obstacle to TSOs' solidarity. In fact, solidarity seems to be a value of the majority of our TSOs, sometimes in open distinction vis-à-vis other humanitarian or charity organisations. In the words of an interviewee:

We define our organisation as a solidarity organisation because we don't agree with the humanitarian approach or with charity organisation. At the beginning, we were a humanitarian organisation but we understood the importance of an equal relationship with our beneficiaries. We support them, both by the provision of services and by acting politically in order to defend their rights. Solidarity means being part of a human community and defending the rights of vulnerable people. (Migr1 07/2016)

A similar vision can also be detected in the words of another interviewee speaking on behalf of a TSO mobilising over disability:

I think that our answer to the growth of vulnerable people, at least our objective, is solidarity. Of course, we do this by helping our beneficiaries with different activities that are service-based. These services should be provided by public institutions but actually this is not the case. (Disab8 07/2016)

The words of these two interviewees show two different aspects. On the one hand, we see the strong importance of solidarity in the actions of our TSOs. On the other hand, we also see that TSOs adopt a more practical approach whereby service and advocacy activities can be combined together.

³When the HIV epidemic spread to France in the 1990s, anti-HIV associations were involved in defending the rights of those suffering from the disease, contributing crucially to the implementation of health system reforms in 1998 (Santilli 2017).

Networks and Cross-level Dynamics

Moving on to the analysis of interactions among TSOs and with other actors in their own fields of solidarity, our findings show that TSOs have fostered mutual contacts among themselves, with broader civil society, as well as with government and policy-makers. Not surprisingly, the problem of funding is extensively acknowledged. Mutual contacts and help among TSOs are indeed considered to be a first important step to survive hard times and impoverished resources. Mutual interactions seem an obvious step for organising larger events and activities, but a broader civil society outreach is also essential. For example, information is exchanged among TSOs, universities, research centres, and media outlets and then made available for the general public in order to increase awareness of solidarity issues through an intense activity of publications and dissemination. Six of the interviewees, for example, have singled out their collection of data on specific problems that vulnerable people face when trying to gain access to basic welfare provisions.

This first type of connection among TSOs working together and a broader civil society outreach is not in opposition, but it often leads to furthering contact with institutions and policy-makers. Of course, the relationship between TSOs and their institutional counterparts within fields of solidarity can always be tense, even when referring to the least contentious field of disability, owing to the reduction of public funds and restrictive policies. In the words of an interviewee:

During the last year, we have not received public funds either at the national level or at the regional level and the relationship with the government has become tenser. (Disab9 10/2016)

However, the linking with institutions and policy-makers is seen as a viable route to increase the visibility of TSOs, as well as their capacity to face reduction of funding and political choices by government at times of crises. While nurturing links with policy actors in their own field at the national level, TSOs also communicate extensively with regional authorities, as well as with departments and town halls, all standing up as potential sources for funding at the subnational level. Most crucially, interactions

with institutions and policy-makers extend at the supranational level, owing to the growing contact between TSOs and European policy-makers.

This seems to indicate that the specific aspect of ‘transnational solidarity’ is somewhat weak when dealing with cross-level interactions forged by French TSOs. The latter try to seize supranational political opportunities in a tactical and utilitarian fashion, with the main aim to impact on European policies, as well as gaining further funding opportunities that may compensate for weak leverage on policy-making and funding reduction at the national and subnational levels. In fact, the tactical and utilitarian dimension can be referred to as a somewhat thinner type of Europeanisation by which TSOs appeal to Europe in an ‘externalising’ fashion (Chabanet 1998; Balme and Chabanet 2008) through which the real stakes remain at the national level.

The strategic and utilitarian logic seems to prevail also when TSOs shape their mutual contacts among themselves within their own field of solidarity. In the words of an interviewee:

The EU gives loads of funding to big organisations and NGOs, but they also fund smaller associations, mainly if they are part of a national or international network. (Migr8 06/2016)

This finding may indicate the potentially regressive dynamics with reference to the operation of broader networks involving many TSOs working in fields of solidarity at the subnational, the national and the European levels (della Porta and Caiani 2007; Lahusen, 2004).⁴

At the same time, emphasis should be put on the fact that the largest and most formal TSOs are those that engage the most with transnational solidarity practices. They share lobbying practices, gain more legitimacy and a louder voice transnationally, cooperate mainly in transnational solidarity support, raise transnational awareness and

⁴For example, a group network was created by many organisations and some of them, by 2007, decided to focus their action on inequality in France. After 2007, this group organised more meetings with the actors of solidarity at the national and European levels. Through this broad cooperation among French TSOs and other solidarity organisations in other European countries, a higher number of development funds was obtained (De Nuzzo and Cinalli 2016).

organise transnational political events and campaigns. An interesting example is the development of a Mediterranean network whereby many TSOs (not just those related to migration) have set up agencies abroad, such as in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria:

We can say that after the crisis we have increased our international activities. Maybe it's a question of funding but actually we have always been interested in these kinds of linkages. Maybe the crisis has been an opportunity. (Disab5 07/2016)

Yet, for the medium-sized and smaller TSOs of our sample, it seems more difficult to engage in cross-national activities, unless they are part of an umbrella organisation or network. Our findings show that these organisations organise congresses and conferences in France or in other countries where they discuss various national and transnational resolutions. However, while our TSOs see this as an important type of activity, they also state that the development of more stable transnational actions remains very difficult. In the words of an interviewee:

Unfortunately, we have no time for building important and structured transnational actions. For example, here (in France) we have the problem of migrants, asylum seekers who arrive in Italy and then came here. And then, they have to go back to Italy. Now, collaboration with Italian associations to help these people and change the situation would be useful. We have organised some meetings, we have some contacts but not a real political transnational network. (Migr2 07/2016)

Transnational communication and actions obviously remain a suitable route to walk for any funding occasion, especially by the bigger and more structured TSOs that have more resources. Otherwise, due to the costly transnational exchanges, our TSOs remain primarily active at the subnational and national levels. In the words of an interviewee:

One of the first survival strategies to change the public policies in this country is to collaborate with similar associations, also with bigger and more structured organisations, working at the national level. In this way,

we might have economic support to continue our work but we can also change the political context. (Migr4 09/2016)

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the dynamics of solidarity in the fields of migration, unemployment and disability, at times of economic crisis and welfare retrenchment in France. Among the various findings, there are three points that deserve major attention. First, we have put a strong emphasis on the changing role of TSOs in the way they combine political and service activities. While it is stronger in some field than others, the main trend consists of service-orientation and political action being progressively interwoven together. We have shown the increasing role of less resourceful TSOs as service providers, allowing for access to public funding within an increasingly constraining context (even if this does not mean giving up the critique towards institutions and policy-makers). This trend, however, is in more general terms observable for the majority of our TSOs, thus contributing to the explanation of the overall reduction in militant action and protests.

Yet changing combinations do not proceed necessarily by increasing substitution of political activities with service provision. Our main argument has been that TSOs mobilising over solidarity in France stand out due to their capacity to adjust flexibly according to different conditions. We have put a strong emphasis on the notion of ‘politically oriented professionals’—emerging with force in the narrative of interviewees—providing clear evidence that flexibility between policy-oriented and service-oriented activities has been interiorised in full by the TSOs themselves. We thus expect that TSOs could become more politicised in the future, should the economic and political conditions change once again.

The second point is about networks. We have shown that our TSOs aim to engage with solidarity through the development of mutual contacts, further contacts with broader civil society, as well as via links with policy-makers and institutions. Hence, their effort to ground solidarity into concrete contacts explains why the most extensive networks are forged at the national and the subnational level. Since closer contacts

among TSOs are crucial to survive hard times of economic crisis and welfare retrenchment, it was not surprising to find that the majority of our TSOs have intensified connections with other neighbouring actors in the same field. As regards more distant transnational contacts, we have found that they are especially forged in residual terms, merely as a tactic and utilitarian means of ‘externalisation’ in order to increase funding rather than nurturing solidarity.

What is more, our findings show that the larger and more structured TSOs also have an advantage in terms of transnationalisation. Their richer resources enable them to develop transnational networks in order to gain further funding and more influence. By arguing that cross-level networks of solidarity are an option that is not open equal among our TSOs, we have moved on to discuss our final point. In this case, we have put a strong emphasis on the potential advantage of the most structured organisations—which we can term ‘the fittest’—within solidarity fields in France. Among the interviewed TSOs, the most structured ones have more resources and a better capacity to stand up to restricting conditions. We have argued that the strategy of the fittest is two-fold. On the one hand, the most structured TSOs, just like many others, focus on more urgent needs, for which state funding is more readily available. On the other hand, they also appeal to private channels for funding, but in so doing, they rely on resources that are not available for smaller organisations. Ultimately, our findings show that the smallest and more informal solidarity organisations are the most affected by crisis and retrenchment, turning to increasing provision of services at least until new conditions allow for reviving their political stance. Taken from this viewpoint, the economic crisis and welfare retrenchment in France have served to pre-empt potential challenges of solidarity movements.

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7

Against the Tide: Transnational Solidarity in Brexit Britain

Simone Baglioni, Olga Biosca, and Tom Montgomery

Introduction

The austerity that has come to shape the policies and politics of contemporary Britain generates challenges for all forms of solidarity. The needs of vulnerable groups increase while the resources of organisations engaged in solidarity come under pressure. The context in which our interviews were conducted is one where communities are still dealing with the impact of austerity policies (O'Hara 2015) that have followed a legacy of decades of privatisation resulting in a rolling back of the state (Peck and Tickell 2002). Thus, the transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs),

S. Baglioni (✉)

Department of Economics and Management, University of Parma,
Parma, Italy

e-mail: simone.baglioni@unipr.it

O. Biosca • T. Montgomery

Yunus Centre for Social Business and Health, Glasgow Caledonian University,
Glasgow, UK

e-mail: olga.biosca@gcu.ac.uk; thomas.montgomery@gcu.ac.uk

which form the focus of our study, are not simply performing, in some sectors of society, a complementary role to the welfare state but in fact playing a critical role in meeting the basic needs of vulnerable groups. Indeed our findings of the contemporary context reveal a tale of ‘two Britains’. On the one hand is a Britain of top-down policies and discourses which are anti-solidarity, reactionary and re-activate decades-old discourses of dependency (Wiggan 2012) and deservingness (Stewart and Mulvey 2014). On the other hand is a Britain of grassroots solidarity, (self-)organised from the bottom up, often with the partnership and support of local government, a layer of governance that has itself been on the front line of austerity measures with local authorities in England on course for a 75% cut to their total funding from central government by 2020 (Smulian 2017). It is within this context our study took place, where we chose to focus on solidarity with vulnerable groups whose needs increased while services were being rolled back and policies became ever more hostile and punitive. Therefore, the focal point of our research has been those TSOs working with three vulnerable groups: (1) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; (2) disabled people; and (3) the unemployed.

Our interviews with TSOs in the field of migration in the UK took place against the aftermath of the referendum on European Union (EU) membership where the issue of immigration was at the very forefront of the ‘leave campaign’ and was at the centre of concerns following media reports of increased levels of xenophobia (Ferguson 2016). Nevertheless, immigration has been a consistent source of contestation with senior politicians labelling Britain a ‘soft touch’ (Prime Minister’s Office 2013) for benefit tourism amidst a context where the media have played an active role in the fomenting of xenophobia (Greenslade 2005). In this landscape, the UK has been among those countries accepting the lowest number of Syrian refugees.

Similarly, in the field of disability, UK Government policy has become an area of political contestation given the extent to which cuts to the welfare state have had a significant impact on the living conditions of disabled people. This manifested itself in welfare reforms including the Work Capability Assessment, introduced by the Labour Government in 2008 (Bambra and Smith 2010) and expanded by the Coalition Government in 2010 (Baumberg et al. 2015), which led to narrower

entitlements to benefits, with disabled people who previously were assessed as unable to work being redefined as fit for work (Wright 2012). Thus TSOs in the field of disability in the UK find themselves operating in a context which a United Nations inquiry has condemned for the ‘systematic violations of the rights of persons with disabilities’ (United Nations 2016: 20).

Moreover, the field of unemployment has been at the forefront of concerns for policymakers in the UK since the onset of the global financial crisis and those concerns have never seemed to diminish. Indeed, following the result of the EU referendum in June 2016, one of the key concerns has been the potential job losses that may occur as a consequence. Workers in the UK, whether in the private or public sector, are now navigating ever more challenging labour markets. These are increasingly characterised by non-standard forms of employment such as ‘zero-hour contracts’ (Pennycook et al. 2013) in ‘low pay, no pay cycles’ (Shildrick et al. 2012) complemented by a welfare system characterised by sanctions and compulsion (Watts and Fitzpatrick 2018).

It is against this backdrop that we undertook our study of TSOs across the three fields. Our study was guided by a central research question: how do transnational solidarity organisations meet the needs of vulnerable groups in times of crisis and austerity? To answer this question, through the analysis of our findings from interviews with TSOs, we structure the chapter as follows: (1) we set out our research design; (2) we explore the interactions, both positive and negative, that our interviewees in TSOs have with policymakers; (3) we investigate the impact of austerity across organisations participating in this study; (4) we elaborate on the mission, innovative activities and key individuals of the TSOs we interviewed and the groups within UK society whom their solidaristic efforts focus on; (5) we examine the cooperation between TSOs at different scales (transnational, national and local). Finally, we outline our conclusions on the key findings and their implications for future research on transnational solidarity across the three vulnerable groups which form the focus of this study.

Research Design

The focus of this chapter is an analysis of interviews conducted with organisations engaged in solidarity with different vulnerable groups across the UK. From the larger random sample of 300 TSOs, 30 were purposively sampled following a maximum variation strategy in the context of Work Package 2 of the TransSOL cross-national project.¹ Ten TSOs were selected across each of the fields of migration, unemployment and disability, and we sampled TSOs involved in service delivery as well as those more activist-led and oriented towards policy change. Geographical diversity was achieved by sampling across the constituent nations of the UK, from large urban conurbations such as Glasgow, Manchester and London to rural areas such as mid-Wales and coastal communities in the south of England. Our interviewees in the TSOs were also diverse (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity and disabilities) (TransSOL 2016).

In the field of migration, participant TSOs represented a mix of formal and informal organisations. Some were part of a broader network across the UK, others were a network to bring together a variety of actors supporting migrants and refugees, and another group was focused on the needs of specific migrant communities. TSOs were also geographically spread throughout the UK and therefore provide us with a solid overview of the spatial context within which these organisations were meeting the needs of those settling or seeking asylum in the UK. In the field of disability, we found that although most of the disability TSOs had a headquarters with their own premises, very often interviewees declared themselves to be working remotely (a third of the interviews were conducted with people working outside of the organisation's premises) which reveals to some extent the ability of these organisations to work as reticular connectors of skills and capacities dislocated across diverse geographical settings.

¹ This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 649435. For more information on sampling, see the Introduction to this volume and <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

Our interviews were conducted face to face or by telephone and were undertaken between September and October 2016. The interviews were transcribed and analysed to elicit key themes that were then organised to produce a coherent reflection of how TSOs were meeting the needs of specific vulnerable groups in times of crisis in contemporary Britain. We now turn to our findings from the interviews and the conclusions we can draw, beginning with the interactions between TSOs and policymaking.

Interactions with Policymakers and the Impact of Austerity

For some, though certainly not all the TSOs we interviewed, we uncovered a somewhat nuanced relationship with policymaking. On the one hand, there was contestation with dominant policy discourses emanating from central government but, on the other hand, there were partnerships between TSOs and those agencies or authorities that were also involved in meeting the needs of the vulnerable groups.

For example, a number of interviewees from migration TSOs described their organisations as having relatively good relationships with their respective local authorities. For example, one interviewee, a manager of a refugee project located on the south coast of England, described the partnership developed between his organisation and the city council as 'very positive' and that the council had adopted a welcoming attitude towards the arrival of new migrants, whilst placing this in contrast to what he described as an unwillingness of UK Governments to discuss and promote the positive aspects of migration, a conclusion mirrored in existing research (Statham and Geddes 2006). Moreover, although other interviewees would also describe their relationship with city councils as close and collaborative, this did not appear to be extended to the UK Government level where there was a consistent degree of criticism.

Some interviewees in the migration field were highly critical of the UK Government in their handling of the refugee crisis as well as the legal frameworks relating to migration more generally, with one interviewee suggesting that the work of her organisation to assist women migrants

was simply not reflected in the actions of the UK Government which she insisted had its 'own agenda'. This mirrored the conclusion reached by another of our interviewees who asserted that:

Every Immigration Act has made the situation worse for asylum seekers and refugees. That is a submission to the populist anti-immigration agenda and has made things worse for anyone seeking protection in the UK. (Migr4 10/2016)

The same interviewee also articulated his belief that the legislative framework is intended to prevent the societal inclusion of asylum-seekers/refugees with the purpose of managing their expectations. There was a shared perception that the current legal framework for migration lacked empathy towards migrants. In words of another interviewee from a TSO based in the south-east of England:

It's hard to be made less welcome; it's not a nice thing being a refugee in the UK and if you can't find a job, you go to Jobcentre plus and they really don't respect refugees...there is no staff training, people often report that it's a very unfriendly service. (Migr8 10/2016)

This hostile environment emanating from top-down central government being navigated by TSOs involved in organising solidarity with migrants and refugees was not unique, as our interviews with other TSOs revealed with many reporting similar experiences. One field where this was apparent was that of disability.

There was a consensus among the interviewees from TSOs supporting disabled people that the economic crisis and the austerity policies implemented by the UK Government have had a negative impact on disabled people and on the sector as a whole. This impact translated into a higher number of people suffering from mental distress due to increased financial and economic pressures, and a higher number of people who cannot afford to pay for certain health/care-related services that they require. With the public sector provision of such services itself being cut as a consequence of the crisis, disabled people could only access such services by paying for them. As one interviewee pointed out:

with austerity policies, even access to statutory services has become more difficult. (Disab1 10/2016)

Moreover, austerity policies have been implemented through the re-assessment of benefits entitlement, as well as a reshaping of benefits' claiming procedures (Patrick 2014). As a consequence, a significant portion of disabled people entitled to receive benefits either have lost this entitlement or have had difficulties in completing the claim procedure (some TSOs actively provide support to help disabled people 'navigate through the procedure' in order to avoid losing their benefits). These efforts often took place against a backdrop of stigmatisation where policy and media discourses depicting claimants of disability benefits as workshy and scroungers (Garthwaite 2011). Although some TSOs reported being advisors to relevant policymaking bodies, all referred to the difficulty experienced by the sector to enter policy discussions and to be recognised as competent and legitimate policy actors. Moreover, rather than being considered professional providers of high-quality services, TSOs claimed that they were often considered by policymakers as being amateurish, given that they are the 'voluntary' sector. As one interviewee elaborated:

We are considered 'free and cheap' as we are part of the 'voluntary sector', but they [policymakers] do not consider that training volunteers, running services and a charity organisation has costs. For example, we don't accept a volunteer no matter her/his background; we recruit volunteers only through a specific application procedure in which we value competences and skills. (Disab2 10/2016)

TSOs are proud of the capacity they deploy and are therefore seeking to be acknowledged properly for the role they play. Furthermore, TSOs in our sample claimed that even if their views were to be incorporated into policies, the lives of disabled people would not improve due to failures in the capacity of policy implementation currently experienced at the local level. Local authorities have been at the forefront of cuts and therefore cannot implement policies as they should. One of the interviewees stated that although the UK has well-meaning legislation, such as

the Equality Act 2010 or the Care Act 2014, the potential of this legislation remains largely untapped as their proper implementation would require resources—economic and human—which are not being made available. The TSOs we spoke to expressed regret that there was no serious challenge brought against the UK Government on their failure to fully implement this legislation. Challenging the government directly was, however, a more frequent occurrence with other TSOs, such as those in the field of unemployment.

Each of the TSOs in the field of unemployment we spoke to had some form of interaction with policymakers; however, this varied from quite formalised links to those who would engage on a more infrequent and informal basis. There was also a broad spectrum in terms of the types of relationships which existed, some in partnership and others, more antagonistic. Those interviewees from trade unions explained that they did in some cases have very good relationships with some policymakers, especially with those sympathetic with the trade union movement and actual trade union members. However, trade union interviewees perceived that they were locked in a confrontation with the UK Government over the introduction of new legislation, which some of the trade unions described as a political attack on worker representation, namely the Trade Union Act. This legislation had implications on issues such as turnout thresholds for strike ballots to financial consequences for trade unions (see Darlington and Dobson 2015). One official made it clear that she felt the Trade Union Act was a deliberate political attempt being made by the Conservative Government in the UK to undermine the trade union movement and prevent workers from being properly represented. This view was echoed by other trade union representatives we interviewed.

Our interviews also revealed how the economic context is affecting those TSOs geared towards supporting those seeking to re-enter the labour market. One interviewee, a director of a social enterprise, explained that not only the impact of the crisis meant a hardening of attitudes towards those who were unemployed, but also despite having no financial resources to do so, his organisation was frequently offering support to those who would previously have been supported by government agencies. The interviewee provided examples of some of the deep cuts to local authority services in his area including one situation, which had occurred

the day before our interview, where a teenage girl presented herself at their drop-in centre having been referred there by social services. The interviewee recalled his conversation with social services:

We phoned up social services asking for a care plan, an assessment of where this girl's needs were and they said 'we can't deal with her now, our adult team is no longer running...she's now sixteen, we can't help her, our budget stops at sixteen'... That's not helping anybody. (Unemp5 09/2016)

Nevertheless, despite his organisation having to substitute for services no longer offered by the local authority, he was clear in his support for those working within the local public sector, highlighting the cuts that these agencies were coping with:

We have very good relations with social services; it's not their fault. (Unemp5 09/2016)

The understanding demonstrated by this interviewee towards the challenges faced by local government services that have been cut significantly due to austerity policies may not only stem from the working relationship his organisation had fostered with the local authority, but also stem from an empathy built on a shared experience of the difficulties in meeting often complex needs in a context of a shrinking pool of resources, an experience that a number of other TSOs could also relate.

What therefore becomes clear from our findings is that among the TSOs we interviewed, regardless of the field in which they were operating, there was a relationship with policymaking and policymakers that was far more nuanced than simply one of clear partnership or antagonism. Instead, although most TSOs were openly critical of the discourses and policy agenda stemming from the UK Government, many were also engaged in formal and informal partnerships with individual policymakers and public sector agencies. What perhaps united these actors was a common experience of trying to meet the growing needs of vulnerable groups while their organisations were navigating budget cuts that were hindering their ability to do so.

The Impact of Crisis and Austerity at the Grassroots Level

During the course of our interviews, it became clear that both crises (the economic crisis and the so-called refugee crisis) have had a clear impact on the TSOs across different fields in the UK. Indeed, as some interviewees from migration TSOs explained, it was the issue of the potential influx of refugees which had acted as the main catalyst for their group to be founded, with one interviewee explaining that, in contrast to the UK media portraying a hostile environment for refugees, their group was keen to bring together the community to welcome refugees and to offer them practical support. This view was echoed by other interviewees operating in the field of migration who believed that there was a reality on the ground that was more welcoming, generous and supportive of refugees than the UK media portrayed. Nevertheless, other interviewees warned that they had detected a hardening of attitudes towards refugees in the UK, with one respondent, a coordinator of a refugee group in the north of England, expressing the belief (shared by another interviewee in the south-east of England) that the cuts to welfare spending, as well as how these cuts have been communicated via the media, have negatively impacted on attitudes towards refugees in the UK. Therefore, despite variations in perceptions across our interviewees, there was a consistent message expressed that the UK Government had done little in practical terms to assist refugees in the midst of that crisis.

Another dimension of crisis which emerged during our interviews was that the economic crisis was having an impact on the TSOs themselves, as well as on the people who formed the focus of their solidarity efforts. Overall, there was an awareness of an increasingly competitive environment for funding, with one interviewee from a migration TSO arguing that many third-sector organisations need to be perceived as ‘innovative’ now just to exist, perhaps underlining the conclusion reached by Osborne et al. (2008) that the focus on innovation in this sector may be a distraction from the more substantive contribution that can be made by these organisations. The concerns regarding funding were echoed by another

practitioner in the migration field who believed that the decrease in funding opportunities reduced possibilities to work in partnership with other TSOs, particularly those at the transnational level. One interviewee outlined the nature of the challenge facing their organisation:

After the crisis, we feel more uncomfortable. It looks like the UK has lost direction and there are so many uncertainties that it is very difficult to forecast or plan our activities. It also makes it more difficult to apply for funding. (Migr5 10/2016)

In terms of the consequences of the crisis for the disability charity sector, there has been an obvious reduction in income available from donations or public procurement. According to our interviewees, the latter has become much more competitive (an interviewee speaking for a charity based in southern England explained that before the crisis, her organisation had a 60% success rate on bids to run services in the UK, whereas now its success rate amounts to 5% success, despite employing the same professionals to formulate bids). More competition, however, does not necessarily equate to better services: in fact, our interviews reveal that these disability charities are now competing to deliver services at lower prices than before, and even when an organisation wins a procurement contract, the implementation of the contract may be extremely challenging given that the public sector expects charities to do more work with fewer resources. Other salient consequences of the crisis are that service provision by the public sector is focused on those services which are considered mainstream in terms of addressing the needs of the wider population, and therefore services that are perceived to address a smaller pool of patients, although being essential to their well-being, are interrupted or considered 'niche' and, as such, too expensive.

A consistent theme across each of the unemployment TSOs we interviewed was that the financial crisis and the austerity measures which followed had a clear impact on members and service users. One trade union official whose membership were mainly workers in the private sector described the economic crisis as having a major impact on members leading to numerous redundancies. The same official added that the period

following the crisis had actually reshaped the membership of the trade union which had in the past been predominantly male, but was now evenly split between male and female workers. Another trade union official explained that the crisis had led to pay freezes and changes for the public sector workers he represented. Moreover, he added that for many of the young workers now in the sector, poorer working conditions (for instance, longer working hours and changes to pensions) had become normalised and most of the young people were simply grateful to have a job with some level of security. Moreover, a number of interviewees engaged in the field of unemployment indicated that the crisis had financial implications for their organisation, with one respondent from a charity explaining that the situation had led to a financial crisis within her organisation which was already stretched to capacity. Other interviewees working with the same vulnerable group also made reference to the much more difficult funding environment that they found themselves in, with one interviewee from a social enterprise based in Glasgow explaining that the funding cycle had contracted from three years to one year and that she was concerned about the impact on their member organisations. At the individual level, one trade union official explained that the cost of living puts financial pressure on members since the crisis was such that he was concerned that the cost of union membership may become an expense that workers could ill afford. This has serious implications for the resources of the organisation; he also added that his work in communities had revealed to him the precarious existence many of his members were experiencing:

None of us are free from that absolute poverty...in a couple of months you can be in that absolute poverty no problem, and there seems to be no bounce back from that poverty; that's the scary thing about the crash for me...it's a one-way street, there seems to be no return. One of the saddest things we've had within the trade union community is the amount of suicides because there isn't that hope. (Unemp7 08/2016)

The Organisational Expression of Solidarity: Missions, Target Groups, Innovation and Key Individuals

The activities of the TSOs we interviewed ranged along a spectrum: from one end, there was a strong focus on service delivery such as language classes for migrants or services designed for disabled people with specific conditions, to the other end of the spectrum with some organisations such as trade unions emphasising self-organisation in workplaces whilst other TSOs pursued advocacy for all disabled people. There were also a few TSOs which viewed themselves as intermediaries between organisations in their field. Across a broad range of these organisations, there was a consistent theme of having to do more work with fewer resources. Nevertheless, these same organisations were meeting needs in new ways and drawing on their depth of experience to do so, often with scarce resources.

During the course of our interviews with TSOs in the field of migration, it emerged that there seemed to be two different paths which these organisations took: on the one hand, a focus on campaigning, lobbying and mobilising other organisations to support migrants and refugees; on the other hand, organisations which were involved in delivering services directly to migrants and refugees. These latter migration organisations provided services across a broad range of areas including English language classes, counselling, health clinics and assistance with accessing state support as well as more general 'life skills' to help people to adjust to living in the UK. One theme that emerged during the course of our interviews was the importance of voluntarism for some organisations and the complementary role volunteers played alongside paid staff. Furthermore, in terms of those we interviewed, there was a mix between those who had worked in some previous capacity in the field of migration and had brought their experience to bear in their current role, as well as some interviewees who were involved in similar practices but had also been migrants themselves.

In its broadest sense, the target groups for the types of TSOs we interviewed in this field were primarily refugees, asylum seekers and migrants,

although the activities of these organisations were in some cases focused on meeting particular groups in need. For example, the role of one network which we interviewed in Scotland was to mobilise collaborative efforts between other TSOs to provide assistance to those asylum seekers who were experiencing extreme poverty and destitution. One example of the specific focus of the TSOs was an organisation in the south-east of England which was dedicated to supporting women from migrant communities, assisting them in accessing employment and education, as well as preventing abuse such as domestic violence. Another interviewee explained that, although their organisation had originally begun with a focus on a specific migrant community, it was now offering support to all refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, despite the clear and consistent emphasis from our interviewees that the focus of their TSOs had been refugees, asylum seekers or migrants, when we drilled down into the details, we found that these definitions were not equally broad across all cases and were often driven by more specialised needs.

Another aspect we explored in our interviews was the types of innovative activities that TSOs undertook in the field of migration. Here, there were consistent themes which emerged across the majority of our interviews; in particular, there were examples provided by the interviewees that frequently involved the delivery of some form of education or skills training or some degree of participation in cultural activities. Another interviewee said that her organisation's main goal of providing a 'voice' to refugees and migrants is an innovative way to address migration/asylum issues in the public debate where people tend to speak on 'behalf' of migrants and refugees rather than letting them speak directly. Although similar concerns, issues and activities could be found in TSOs operating in other fields, there were organisational differences that underpinned the approaches taken across all of the TSOs we interviewed, as exemplified in the field of disability where a background in the health profession often emerged as a key characteristic of a number of organisations.

In the field of disability, our interviewees occupied key positions in their organisations; being either as executive directors or in managerial positions, they were placed in a suitable position to speak on behalf of the organisation. Our interviews reveal that disability TSOs deploy a high level of specialisation and knowledge capacity: several interviewees have a background

in health (some with a relevant prior career in the National Health Service (NHS); e.g. one was a hospital director) or social work and have joined the third sector after research or work experience on disability or cognate issues (e.g. care, learning and education, etc.). As one interviewee said:

After having spent so many years in the health area of the public sector, I felt I had accumulated the right skills and network for the third sector. When the opportunity arose, I decided to accept the offer and moved to work in the charity sector. (Disab1 10/2016)

Building on these considerations, we conclude that disability TSOs, given the nature of issues they deal with, require health or social care professionals to operate them, people who in addition to passion and a strong ethical inspiration also possess specific knowledge of disability issues in general as well as on the specific impairment/disability that the organisation may focus, alongside first-hand knowledge of the health and care sectors. In fact, our interviews reveal that the field of disability is one in which TSOs have specialised according to diseases or impairments, whilst a few of them (mainly umbrella groups) adopt an overarching, pan-disability approach.

The target groups of the solidarity action of TSOs in this domain are clearly disabled people and their families, and solidarity is conceived as an intimate component of their action since the services they provide and their advocacy campaigns often involve TSOs deploying a practical form of solidarity, being that of support and advice to people in need. Of course, as in the other fields explored in this chapter, there are some TSOs which adopt more politicised approaches; however, the dichotomy between these and more service-oriented TSOs is perhaps less pronounced due to the consistent concern regarding the inclusive nature of joint campaigns and initiatives.

When asked about the innovative character of their work, some TSOs in the field of disability indicated that their activities are at their most innovative when they provide those services which are of primary importance to disabled people, yet to be provided from other sources, and therefore their innovativeness stems from the capacity of the TSO to assist in meeting unmet needs. Other TSOs considered some of their

services to be innovative because they contributed towards a better understanding of a specific disability. For example, one interviewee, from an association working on a specific disability, said:

Before our association started advocating about this particular form of disability, people ignored how life was for people diagnosed with it; they did not know what it meant for someone to live with the syndrome. Therefore, parents whose baby was diagnosed had no accurate information on which to take a decision about whether to keep the baby or not. Our work has allowed prospective parents to take a decision on the basis of accurate, precise information. Now they can speak with families who have babies with the syndrome and discuss with us about it. (Disab5 10/2016)

Another TSO, based in England, mentioned the tailored services they developed to foster the employability of disabled people, working not only with disabled people themselves but also with employers who are still reluctant, according to these charities, to employ a disabled person. This underlines the barriers to employment faced by disabled people in the UK, and more broadly, labour market challenges have been experienced across communities where TSOs have been operating.

The interviews we conducted with TSOs in the field of unemployment have encompassed a mixed sample of organisational types ranging from trade unions to social enterprises and charities. As with the other themes in our interviews, these TSOs are spread across the UK and have varied remits across international, national and local levels; indeed the challenges and opportunities which emerge from the processes of devolution in the UK quite clearly emerge in some of these interviews.

A clear distinction which also emerged among our interviewees in the unemployment field was that between those organisations which were overtly political, both in terms of how they perceived the economic crisis and in terms of the affiliation of their organisation, and those which were less politicised but still engaging in the policymaking process. Another distinction was the relationship between the organisations and the beneficiaries with some (particularly those in the third sector) having a service-delivery type relationship with the unemployed/precarious workers (for instance, helping to develop the employability of unemployed people,

help with CVs and skills development) and the low paid, whereas others (particularly those in the trade unions) were keen to emphasise the importance of self-organisation (such as more activist driven and direct campaigning against low pay, precarity and welfare cuts). It should be noted that there were clear differences in terms of the resources available to each organisation as some key informants were from the largest trade unions in the UK whilst others were from organisations (particularly in the third sector) with only a handful of staff.

The target groups for these organisations are quite varied, ranging from those who are currently employed in various sectors (including retail, creative industries, energy, public sector) to those who are low paid and precariously employed with little occupational identity, as well as young people who were not in employment, education or training. Furthermore, it became clear that both through changing needs, as well as to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the organisation in times of crisis and austerity many had diversified their target groups to include hard-to-reach communities, migrants and refugees.

There were a variety of responses from the interviewees when asked about the innovative activities of their organisations. One theme which emerged across some unemployment organisations concerned the efforts they were making to improve the skills of members and/or service users including training academies to develop the next generation of trade union officials, skills initiatives for young offenders recently released from prison, as well as professional internship programmes with corporations for refugees. One interviewee added that her organisation, which focused on international solidarity with women workers in developing countries, had actively recruited new trustees with a view towards bringing more innovative ideas to the organisation. Another interviewee explained that his social enterprise, based in Wales, which offered support primarily to young unemployed people, had developed a social enterprise start-up initiative which was now being developed into a mobile app. This emphasis on 'reaching out' was encapsulated somewhat by one interviewee from a major trade union, who explained:

An ethos of the union is that we should look beyond our borders...we need to be outward looking. (Unemp10 11/2016)

The Challenges and Opportunities of Cooperation: Finding Allies at the Transnational, National and Local Levels

In terms of cooperation with other organisations within and beyond the borders of the UK, our interviews revealed some variation across the three fields. The networks and platforms which TSOs engaged with often reflected not only the size and shape of the organisation but also the scale at which they conducted their main activities. Thus, a number of migrant organisations were well connected locally; disabled people's organisations were often linked to UK-level networks and some European platforms, whereas trade unions were connected through their common affiliation to the Trade Union Congress and European trade union federations. There were, of course, some variations within each field (for instance, some employment-focused social enterprises were better connected locally; some refugee organisations were part of a national network).

The Transnational Level of Cooperation

In terms of transnational activities and partnerships, we found through the course of our interviews that the migration TSOs appeared to run along a spectrum of some who were quite involved at the transnational level to others who were barely involved in transnational collaborations. One organisation, run by migrants and dedicated to facilitating the greater participation of migrants in British society, was clearly quite well connected at the transnational level, holding memberships of different EU-level platforms and having members actively involved in the running of these platforms. Another interviewee explained that his organisation in Wales was actively developing a collaboration with an Italian refugee organisation whilst another interviewee commented that because of the work their TSO had done in Calais, it had been both useful and necessary to link up with pro-refugee organisations in France. The interviewee added that transnational solidarity was crucial to meeting the needs of refugees:

It needs to be coordinated throughout the EU rather than country by country, individually and fragmented. We are all appalled with the result of the [Brexit] referendum. This is a worldwide problem; it is not an individual local problem. (Migr1 10/2016)

One important catalyst for some organisations to collaborate with partners in Europe had been through EU-funded projects, although even here there was some variation in the responses with some interviewees from migration TSOs describing EU funding as ‘crucial’, whereas another interviewee from an organisation focused on a specific migrant community explained that although they had EU funding previously, it had not been pursued for some years. Moreover, one interviewee from an English refugee organisation articulated some scepticism about the amount of resources that could be expended on what could easily be an unsuccessful bid for EU funding, and this chimed to some extent with those interviewees whose organisations were not very engaged at all at the transnational level: a wish to pursue such collaborations but the obligation to concentrate resources elsewhere. As one interviewee explained:

We regard those things as... not as a waste of time, but you can put a lot of time and energy into them and they are not necessarily very successful. (Migr2 10/2016)

These same arguments also emerged in discussions surrounding the membership of migration TSOs of EU-wide umbrellas and networks. However, although there were some overlaps, our interviewees with TSOs engaged in other fields in the UK, raising different types of challenges. When asked about the benefits of such cooperation, all TSOs in the field of disability mentioned the possibility of exchanging experiences and practices (although some of the TSOs commented that they had provided more good practices than they had received, due to the high degree of professionalisation and development in the UK compared to other EU countries). These same organisations also reiterated the importance of being part of larger discussions and awareness-raising campaigns in order for disability issues to be ingrained into transnational or global processes, the effects of which can then reverberate back to the national context (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Others pointed to the beneficial effects of

transnational cooperation to strengthen fundraising capacities, but also to assist in mobilising volunteers and retaining their existing membership.

When asked about the challenges of such transnational collaborations, the majority of disability TSOs pointed to the diversity of contexts across Europe as posing a problem to long-term collaboration and proper exchange (different health and social care systems and different clinical traditions sometimes obstruct the sharing of best practices and policies). Others mentioned linguistic barriers among the challenging issues of transnational collaboration (here one could speculate that linguistic and cultural homogeneity has facilitated easier links between UK disability charities and North American organisations and umbrella groups, which were reported as key international contacts by some of the interviewees). Finally, a few interviewees, echoing their counterparts in the field of migration, reported the costs of participation in EU projects in terms of the bureaucratic burden, which was considered too high a price for smaller charities. These advantages and disadvantages of transnational cooperation identified by TSOs in the fields of disability and migration were reflected in our interviews in the field of unemployment.

The experience of being involved in transnational partnerships was something that emerged across all of the TSOs we interviewed in the field of unemployment and there were mixed feelings towards these experiences. There was an awareness of the benefits of sharing experience and knowledge with contemporaries in other countries contrasted with concerns about the resources available to sustain these types of links. One social enterprise involved in supporting the unemployed through finding work in the independent media sector was operating across various countries through the work of their member organisations as well as being actively involved with a European Federation. One area where unemployment TSOs (particularly those which were third-sector and social enterprise organisations) had collaborated transnationally was through EU-funded projects; however, there were some who indicated this had been problematic at times. One interviewee explained that she had found the administrative burden of EU funding particularly difficult as her organisation was too poorly resourced to get involved in such projects. Another interviewee explained that although her organisation based in Manchester was actively involved in other countries (particularly in

Africa), it had in recent years become more cautious about developing links with, for example, some trade unions there as there were issues surrounding splits and rivalries that her organisation was keen to avoid.

Each of the trade unions we spoke to were members of various European trade union federations in both public and private sectors. One interviewee, a London-based national officer in a public sector trade union, explained that he had frequent contact with colleagues in Europe and recounted a recent visit where he had discussed the impact of austerity with public sector workers in both Spain and Greece which he described as a learning experience. Another officer from a large UK trade union, who was based in Glasgow, explained that he had recently been involved in working and sharing information with colleagues in the USA and that his union had been particularly active at a more global level. Across the trade unions the idea that acting in concert with international partners was seen as particularly beneficial for lobbying efforts with one official explaining the importance of this in opposing the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Nevertheless, one official from a trade union indicated that there was pressure from his membership to concentrate resources on the UK context where there was a constant threat of job losses rather than international work. The official explained that any failure to be responsive to concerns of the membership could mean people may 'vote with their feet' and that although they have continued to maintain links with sector-specific federations in Europe, in more general terms the transnational work in the past few years has fallen down the list of priorities for the impact of the crisis was refocusing the TSO towards more local concerns:

We have tended to contract that...our members view is we need to protect ourselves before everyone else. (Disab2 10/2016)

The Local and National Level of Cooperation

One aspect we explored in our interviews in the field of migration concerned the various types of partnerships and collaborations that the TSOs had developed in order to better meet the needs of the refugees, asylum

seekers and migrants whom they were supporting. Despite the clear variations, perhaps due to the geographical location or the high degree of informality which characterised some of the groups we spoke to, there was a clear theme emerging that many were very well connected at the local level. Indeed, some of the migration organisations in the sample had been specifically set up with the purpose of mobilising local people and organisations to ensure that refugees would be welcomed when they arrived in their town. Other organisations, such as one we interviewed in central Scotland, specifically acts as an intermediary between different types of groups in order to provide support to some of the very poorest refugees in inner cities. Another interviewee explained that her organisation, based in the south-east of England, had developed a good working relationship with a local university and were also members of voluntary umbrella organisations. Therefore, it was often the local context which shaped the landscape for partnerships for many of the TSOs we spoke to, and this was evident even when these organisations were sometimes linked in some way with a UK-level organisation. There was one organisation with branches across three major UK cities which was specifically aimed at developing lobbying activities for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, yet despite being geographically spread across the UK still maintained the importance of local-level partnerships. Therefore, perhaps to a certain extent, the field of migration in the UK appears to be populated by organisations which focus their day-to-day activities on more local levels even when the TSOs themselves were part of broader, national movements, although it was clear that the national-level networks were an important focal point for information sharing.

As with some migration TSOs, most of the TSOs in the disability field are connected either to a UK-based network or to an international one. When asked about the reasons for being connected to other charities or organisations, all of the TSOs in this field emphasised the possibility of having their voices heard more effectively. This seems to be particularly relevant for those charities focusing on disabilities originating from rare diseases or those who work on mental health issues, which have come to be considered, during a time of economic recession and public sector cuts, as less relevant than physical impairments according to the findings emerging from our interviews. As one interviewee told us:

For charities working on rare diseases, it is essential to be part of umbrellas and network organisations, as that is the way we can have our voice heard. (Disab1 10/2016)

Therefore, only through connecting with and joining with other organisations will disability TSOs have opportunities to be heard by policymakers and the media. For some of these ‘niche-focused’ TSOs, it is also a matter of resources and costs: they simply do not have the human resources or economic resources available, for example, to attend multiple policy discussion fora or policymaking arenas, and therefore they rely on their umbrella organisation to undertake this work for them. The advantages of being part of a broader alliance were also identified by TSOs operating in other fields in the UK. For example, all of the TSOs we spoke to in the field of unemployment were linked in some way to a wider body or platform, and this was variable across different scales with some third-sector organisations, in particular, being much more linked in to those bodies which were operating in their local contexts. This was by no means reflective of all third-sector organisations since others—such as one particular charity—operated across the UK and had built relationships across different areas and with various local authorities and community planning partnerships. One interviewee, a director of a social enterprise, explained that developing partnerships with others had become a key issue in Wales, where they were based, since there were now so many organisations operating in this field that there needed to be a much more coherent strategy to ensure these different groups collaborated more effectively.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the trade unions we spoke to were well connected to unions that operated in similar fields (e.g. public or private sector), and either the interviewees themselves or their colleagues were actively involved in the work of platforms such as the Trade Union Congress. One interviewee, who is an officer in a trade union where the UK-wide membership is drawn mainly from the private sector, explained that she now viewed it as her role to build partnerships with organisations that were normally outside of the comfort zone of her trade union, such as small business employers (where workers were often non-unionised) or

religious organisations in order that the trade union can be more effective in its campaigning.

Therefore, cooperation and partnership were not only perceived as beneficial but in some cases crucial to the effectiveness of the organisation in performing its mission and meeting the needs of the groups in society with whom they organised to support at both local and national levels.

Conclusions: Main Findings and Implications

In this chapter, we have sought to answer the question of how transnational solidarity organisations can meet the needs of vulnerable groups in times of crisis and austerity. In doing so, we discovered a tale of two Britains: one which constructs a hostile and punitive policy environment for vulnerable groups and another which expresses its solidarity with these same groups through organisations by meeting their needs and advocating for change. The TSOs we interviewed are not exhaustive of the efforts taking place in UK society to express solidarity, but our sample offers an insight into the experiences of key actors at a critical juncture in UK society. The TSOs we interviewed have come under increasing strain in a context of austerity where they are often expected to do more with fewer resources and under such pressure, the capacity to pursue transnational linkages has become depleted as organisations try to meet the growing needs of vulnerable groups within the UK.

A core strength of the organisations we interviewed is the people who form them, who connect others in a mission of solidarity both within and beyond the borders of the UK and whose expertise (Osborne et al. 2008) is built upon decades of experience, thus deploying a high degree of competence and knowledge to advocate for better protection and living conditions. This often manifested itself in meeting specialised needs (such as pioneering efforts by disability TSOs to raise awareness of the impact of particular conditions), or a focus on groups in society who were more likely to fall between the cracks of statutory service provision. Such organisations are the very core of the solidarity this book seeks to understand as they work to provide much-needed services which would not be available otherwise and to raise awareness among citizens about the challenges faced by groups as diverse as the unemployed, the disabled and refugees.

Despite performing this critical role, these organisations have themselves come under intense pressure as they attempt to sustain their work amidst an increasingly difficult funding environment in which their already stretched capacities come under even greater strain. This insight has led us to a more nuanced conclusion regarding the relationship between TSOs and policymakers at different levels: on the one hand, central government with the top-down discourses which emanate from it is often perceived as an obstacle which these organisations and their beneficiaries must overcome and, on the other hand, local government, where a more active and partnership-based relationship becomes evident, perhaps built on a shared experience of the impact of austerity at the local level. Somewhat worryingly, it seems that for some organisations, the focus on sustaining their operations in their own local contexts in the UK has in some cases come at the cost of sustaining or exploring greater collaboration across borders at a time when European solidarity is under pressure from populist and reactionary forces. Therefore, our findings should act as a warning sign for those who value solidarity and social cohesion; there are implications for society when TSOs come under ever-increasing strain whilst public spending is in retreat: inequalities widen while human needs grow.

What our findings reveal is a need to broaden the scope of investigations into the impact of austerity beyond the local and national contexts and to scrutinise the implications for social cohesion by encompassing the simultaneous impact of austerity on the opportunities and capacities for transnational collaboration and solidarity. It is from the consequences of these findings that a future research agenda, around which the contours of solidarity in post-Brexit Britain, can be shaped.

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8

The Danish Welfare State and Transnational Solidarity in Times of Crisis

Deniz N. Duru, Hans-Jörg Trenz,
and Thomas Spejlborg Sejersen

Introduction: Civil Society and the Welfare State in Denmark: Towards Confrontation?

Civil society and the state are often seen as competing in the provision of social welfare. States provide welfare through compulsory regimes with an emphasis on social control, thus establishing a hierarchical relationship between the providers of welfare and its recipients. Civil society

D. N. Duru (✉)

Department of Communication and Media, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
e-mail: deniz.duru@kom.lu.se

H.-J. Trenz

Department of Communication, University of Copenhagen,
Copenhagen, Denmark

ARENA Centre for European Studies, Oslo, Norway

e-mail: trenz@hum.ku.dk

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organisations instead provide voluntary services that are meant to empower the recipients of welfare and emancipate them from the state. Civil society and civic spheres of solidarity action are in this sense distinguished by their attempts to escape from hierarchies and seek independence from the state. In this tradition, the private sector of civil society and the public sector of the state remain sharply distinguished (Cohen and Arato 1992; Trenz 2005). A civic sphere of society that is not elitist but participatory has historically developed in opposition to the state (Alexander 2006; Klein 2013). As such, it develops within existing state structures but also often builds transnational links and networks beyond the state (Lahusen and Grasso 2018; Liebert and Trenz 2011).

The Scandinavian model of the welfare state challenges such assumptions about the confrontation between state and civil society and their differentiation as two distinct spheres. Such a dichotomy between civil society autonomy against state authoritarianism has never applied in the Scandinavian context (Esping-Andersen 1985; Hort 2014; Trägårdh 2007). The Scandinavian countries did not simply develop as welfare states but as welfare societies (Rodger and Campling 2000). As such, they institutionalised welfare services and programmes that became embedded in the civic sphere. The Scandinavian countries are, in fact, exemplary of an alternative, Polanyian reading of state–civil society relationships based on embedment with both the state and civil society organisations embracing a notion of the good society to be protected from the damaging effects of capitalism (Caporaso and Tarrow 2008; Polanyi 1997). In this tradition, state and civil society can be said to form a totality (Berg and Edquist 2017). Arguably, such strong alliances between civil society and national welfare states would reduce incentives for civil society actors to engage in European and transnational networking. More recently, however, the European Commission is in search of a new type of alliance between state and civil society, as well as at member state level with the adoption of a New Public Management Approach and the decentralised governance of

T. S. Sejersen
Danish School of Media and Journalism,
Copenhagen, Denmark
e-mail: tss@dmjx.dk

welfare in cooperation with social partners (Christensen and Læg Reid 1999; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004).

However, this embedment and collaboration of the state and the civil society was challenged by the welfare retrenchment and the structural reform in 2007 and civil society began to be at odds with the state. Compared to Southern and Eastern European countries, Denmark and other Nordic countries have been less hit by the 2008 financial crisis. The Danish economy performed well with some stagnation in the initial crisis years, but it witnessed immediate recovery and generally low rates of unemployment (6.3% as compared to 7.7% in Sweden and 9.3 in Finland in April 2015).¹ Nonetheless, prior to the financial crisis, in 2007, Denmark went through a structural reform of the local government system with significant changes and overall cuts in the distribution of welfare. Mailand (2014) draws attention to the fact that it is difficult to separate the effects of the financial crisis, austerity measures and those of the structural reform in 2007. As an outcome of the 2007 structural reform, 273 municipalities were merged into 98, and 14 counties were reduced to 5 regions. The reform aimed to 'create economies of scale and improve welfare services' (Mailand 2014: 420). This increased the responsibility and the budget for the municipalities with regard to education (schools and day care) and care for the elderly, disabled, children and youth (Mailand 2014: 420). This restructuring, followed by cuts to welfare benefits, increased competition among civil society organisations for funding.

Furthermore, Danish civil society has a hybrid structure, where municipalities work together with civil societies (Fehsenfeld and Levinsen 2019). For instance, municipalities are in charge of welcoming, accommodating and integrating refugees to the Danish society and labour market. Nonetheless, they collaborate with civil society organisations in pursuing their duty and responsibility. Especially during the peak of refugee arrivals in 2015, many municipalities relied on collaboration with refugee civil society organisations and volunteers, ranging from welcoming them, providing basic needs and helping with their registration to

¹As of April 2015. See http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment_rates,_seasonally_adjusted,_April_2015.png

providing Danish language classes. Another level of hybridity occurs, when civil society organisations provide services as well as advocacy in the sense that they aim to protect the social rights and well-being of the refugees (Fehsenfeld and Levinsen 2019). This kind of hybridity has two challenges: First, the cooperation with local governments with civil society can imply that the government intervenes in the civil societies' actions and hence controls them. Secondly, this can increase the tension between government and civil society, when these organisations play their role in advocacy and oppose the government in order to fight for the social rights of the refugees. Bearing in mind the challenges brought by the welfare retrenchment and cuts to the civil society (Boje 2015; Fehsenfeld and Levinsen 2019; Jensen 2015), we expect to observe more friction between the Danish civil society and the government.

In this chapter, we seek to answer: How were the Danish civil society sector and transnationally oriented grassroots solidarity mobilisation affected by the economic recession (post-2008) and welfare retrenchments and structural reform of the Danish welfare state? What are the challenges faced by the Danish civil society? Did welfare retrenchments and structural reform of the Danish welfare state reduce the scope of solidarity activism, or do we observe progressive ways to expand civil society solidarity activities paired with new initiatives, transnational aspirations and cooperation?

Hence, we focus only on small-scale transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs) that have a transnational dimension in the performance of solidarity (for instance, helping beneficiaries outside the nation, having transnational links, sponsors and partners, activities conducted in at least two countries), in the context of the TransSOL project² (see TransSOL 2016). Among the informal/grassroots TSOs selected for qualitative interviews, we approached (1) those who primarily offer practical help (either mutual support or charity) and (2) those who identify as part of a broader social movement, with the aim of social and political change. In order to grasp grassroots formations, mobilisations and new initiatives of solidarity, we aimed to find small-scale, informal, non-professional organisations; small NGOs; grassroots organisations/movements; activist groups and protest groups that are led by a few organisers and formed

²This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 649435.

of non-paid workers and volunteers. We have interviewed 10 representatives (volunteer, organiser, head of the TSOs) from three fields of action—migration, unemployment and disabilities—adding to a total of 30 informants.³

TSOs' Challenges to Welfare Retrenchment

Our respondents from grassroots organisations attributed cuts in welfare expenditure to domestic developments and decisions taken by national government and not to macroeconomic developments or effects of Europeanisation and the financial crisis. For them, there was a 'home-made [welfare] crisis' that was not linked to external events, but responsibilities were attributed domestically. While many of our respondents reported about the substantial financial cuts which the Danish welfare state has endured over the last decade, they did not relate these negative effects directly to the financial crisis. The challenges to the welfare retrenchment in Denmark therefore need to be discussed in the context of the liberalisation of markets and a new management approach of government, such as the structural reform. In order to understand the challenges our TSOs faced following welfare retrenchment, it will be useful to give a brief overview of the existing funding opportunities of the TSOs in our sample. Unions do not get any support from the government and are mainly funded by membership fees. Besides negotiating wages and working conditions, the trade unions also administer an unemployment fund and provide assistance for the unemployed to claim benefits. Contacts with relevant ministries are often used to prevent financial cuts in particular sectors (e.g., within the arts and the cultural sector). Some of the organisations in the migration field get funding from the municipalities to be able to execute their solidarity work. Nonetheless, the main aim of the protest groups in this field is to oppose the government, hence governmental support is out of the question. However, all the TSOs in the disability and health sector receive national state funding to some degree and collaborate with centres and specialised units of hospitals all over

³ For more information on sampling, see Introduction to this volume and <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

Denmark. The disability field is the most dependent on public funding, and hence it was the most affected by the welfare retrenchment and structural reform:

The crisis has made it more difficult. And I say this because now people have begun to discuss the economy in relation to medicine [...] Before, this was not the case here in Denmark [...] I think this discussion is caused by the times we live in. (Disab5 09/2016).

They have become bureaucratic to apply for. Often you need to apply a very long time in advance. And the information you give has to be very precise. [...] Especially if you are a small patient organisation, you might feel that this is brutal. (Disab9 09/2016)

In Jöhncke's (2011) words, welfare has become 'workforce' in the sense that one needed to deserve the benefits and was pushed to work, which concerned all the fields. Active labour policies in the form of training and providing skills were aimed at the unemployed and the disabled to get back to work (Alves 2015; Møller and Stone 2013). The length of unemployment benefits was reduced from four years to two years (Mailand 2014). As an outcome of the public sector collective bargaining in 2011 and 2013, trade unions found themselves in more opposition with the state. Due to austerity measures, there was a freeze in wages in 2011 and a very low wage increase in 2012. As a part of the education reform, employers wanted to cease local agreements on schoolteachers' working hours and the ensuing government lockout of teachers without a prior call for strikes (Mailand 2014). Such government interventions challenged the power and autonomy of the trade unions. Our representatives from trade unions were highly sensitive towards the effects of the economic and financial crisis, which they relate to the neoliberal restructuring of the labour market and the more recent change of government. One of our informants articulated:

The government has changed their perspective in the ways they deal with unions. In the old days or many years ago, we had a cooperative system in Denmark where salary and so on were dealt with directly between the

employers' organisations and the workers' union and that has been the tradition in Denmark. But in the last ten or fifteen years, more and more stuff has been decided by the government or the Parliament. Not the salary itself, but a lot of stuff concerning the wellbeing of workers in their day to day work has been changed from being an issue between the unions and the organisations to an issue for the state or the government; that's a sectoral shift. [...] It could be issues about how many hours a week you should work or something, it could be issues about the benefits you get when you get pregnant and the rules concerning that. It is not like the laws have changed, but the incentives for the politicians to let these issues be dealt with by the unions are fewer now; they are more inclined to take the issues inside the government building and decide from there and they could make good or bad decisions and that is another issue. (Unemp7 10/2016)

For the small trade unions in our sample, the transformation of the Danish welfare state meant interferences in the autonomy of loan negotiations and even bans on strikes in particular sectors. Since 2008, the Danish government has also lowered the budget of the Danish regions, which has had indirect effects on loan negotiations in which regions as employers were involved. More frequent interferences by central government have been experienced by our respondents as major breaches in solidarity. In particular, the trade unions that represent public sector employees complained about the fact that the government was using its power to change legislation rather than playing its role as the employer in the collective bargaining with the trade unions. One of our trade union informants in the education sector recalled the 2013 lockout of teachers when the government and the public teachers' unions could not agree on the working hours; this disagreement ended in the government locking out primary and secondary schoolteachers for one month, without salary payment. Hence, we see that organisations in the unemployment sector are more and more in opposition to the state.

In the context of the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016, the number of refugees applying for asylum in Denmark was relatively low as compared to Germany and Sweden. Policies of deterrence by the Danish government, aimed at discouraging asylum seekers from applying for asylum in Denmark, has reduced asylum application numbers in the last

15 years (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2017). The number of asylum seekers in Denmark increased from 5115 in 2010 to 21,316 in 2016 but decreased again to 6266 in the following year.⁴ The reason behind this jump in 2016 in Denmark is that in November 2015, Sweden introduced border controls at Copenhagen airport and blocked refugees from entering Sweden. Before these border controls were established, asylum seekers were mainly in transit to Denmark, with the aim of reaching Sweden, where the migration rules were much looser.

In order to accommodate the increasing number of refugees, more funds were allocated to TSOs in the migration field. This created more concern for the other fields, such as disability organisations:

We are highly concerned about the retrenchment of the development support [...] And the story about parts of this being relocated to refugees coming to Denmark ... I shake my head in disbelief. If you want to decrease the number of refugees in Denmark, then you should increase the support to where they come from. (Disab9 09/2016)

Nonetheless, civil society in the field of migration and refugees has been facing many challenges due to restrictions in migration policies, which have negatively affected the migrant situation, as well as asylum seekers and refugees living in Denmark. Waiting time for family reunification was extended from one year to seven years (Duru et al. 2018: 261). The controversial 'jewellery law' gives the police the right to search for and take valuables from the refugees in order to subsidise their stay in Denmark (Gammeltoft-Hansen 2017: 105). The rules for the acquisition of citizenship have also been tightened with new conditions imposed on applicants such as volunteering and community service, with studying not counting towards the years spent in Denmark in addition to the Danish language and citizenship tests. Danish language classes are no longer free. Gammeltoft-Hansen (2017) calls these policies 'deterrent policies' as they aim to discourage the refugees and migrants from coming and settling to Denmark. Following the 2008 crisis, the migrants'

⁴ Please refer to Danish Migration Agency for the statistics: <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da/Tal-og-statistik/Tal-og-fakta>

unemployment rate was higher than that of the ethnic Danes, which was used by the politicians to justify welfare chauvinism. Since 2011, the government has become more restrictive towards the migrants and refugees regarding child, education and unemployment support (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016). These restrictive and deterrent policy changes have put the TSOs in tension and opposition to the government. One informant, who helps Muslim women regarding their health and well-being, underlined that the benefit cuts have made the migrants poorer, but also the neoliberal approach of the government makes the rich richer, increasing overall vulnerability in Denmark. She says:

The poor women are poorer because they are not working. Some of them are now pensioners. They get very little money. You have to live 40 years in Denmark to get a pension. The politics now is for the rich people. Generally, it is not supporting people who suffer so much. You have many more problems now with the homeless and it is not just people who come from other countries, but also Danish people who become homeless. 'Oh you have no work? That is a pity! You can go on the street!' [As regards the migrant women], when you are sick, you need medicine and it costs money. It is expensive to be sick. (Migr5 08/2016)

Even though the information provided by our informant about the Danish pension system is factually incorrect, the underlying subjective perception is clear: That there is a decrease in governmental support for the vulnerable people, such as the sick, the elderly and the migrants.

Nonetheless, according to some of our respondents, the refugee crisis has brought a new momentum to the mobilisation of solidarity. Faced with the restrictions of the government, and the increasing number of refugees in need of help and guidance, more people have started volunteering in grassroots movements aimed at showing solidarity with refugees:

The 'refugee crisis', or whatever you want to call it, has [had the] impact [...] [that] [...] there have been more people and more volunteers, because I myself, would not have become a volunteer, you know, without hearing about these things and how we treat [immigrants]. I have always been opposed to the way we treat immigrants, but I have not known how to do [some]thing, or I have not been wired up enough to go out and find [some]thing to do. (Migr1 08/2016)

TSOs became activated in the sense that existing practical help organisations have expanded their activities and new organisations have been founded. Our TSO informants describe this as ‘an awakening of the Danish society’ and concur that many Danes have started to think ‘outside the box’. On the other hand, the informants who work with Muslim beneficiaries pointed out that the populist and anti-immigrant tone of the politicians and the dominant negative stereotyping of refugees in the media have brought threats to the Muslim population. This informant below draws attention to the rhetoric of the Danish People’s Party and adds that Danish people have forgotten about the contribution of the migrants to the Danish economy when they first came as guest workers in the 1970s:

Then we hear about people who make problems, and just get money from the social system. And now the rule is that it is very difficult to get any money. It is not as easy to live in Denmark as it was 30 years ago. The laws have tightened up. [...] There have been many politicians, who said: ‘They misused Denmark!’, there have been many parties, Danske Folke Parti has been very good since the nineties (at saying) ‘We have to stop this [migration] because they are eating all our bread. They are taking our countries. They have to go out. They are stealing from Denmark!’ Urgh. There are many people here who have done a lot of work for Denmark. This we forget. (Migr5 08/2016)

Some informants also mention that, despite the increase in volunteers and the practical support at the grassroots level, there is a huge lack of official support: The EU and Danish politicians should take responsibility and ‘the burden’ should be not only left to Greece and Italy but equally shared between all EU member states. One informant added that:

Denmark should have shown solidarity by helping more, for example, when we heard about all of those refugees drowning. I think Denmark and all other countries should have been much more eager to show that we can’t just accept just outside European borders; children, people are drowning in thousands! (Migr2 08/2016)

There is thus an awareness of the limited reach of their own grassroots solidarity actions in the form of charity and of the need to call for more sustainable state action, and the promotion of convivial solidarity at national, European and global levels.

To sum up, even though we argued in the introduction that civil society and the state are not strictly in opposition in Denmark, this ‘home-made crisis’ of welfare brought along a divide between the state and the civil society sector. We see more tension rising from the TSO representatives towards the government. With the increase in asylum seekers, a higher budget was allocated in the field of refugee solidarity, which allegedly had diminished expenditures in other fields (like disability). Thus, the reallocation of welfare services has posed remarkably different challenges for the three sectors of solidarity.

Types of Solidarity, Activities and Target Groups

In the literature concerning solidarity, altruistic solidarity refers to inter-group solidarity, where one aims to benefit others by showing generosity, philanthropy and volunteering (Jeffries 2014). Altruistic solidarity stresses the difference between the helper and the one that is helped and implies that the helper/volunteer is separate/different from the ones that are helped, such as when an able-bodied person helps a disabled one. Solidarity can also take place in-group, and be mutual and reciprocal (Bruni 2008), where people within the group help themselves. In addition to these two types of solidarity, in our sample we have found another type: convivial solidarity (Duru 2020). Convivial solidarity is a collective work in order to fight for a common aim and to find solutions to a common concern in a non-communitarian way without separating/classifying people by ethnicity, religion, citizenship or nationality. People who show convivial solidarity do not categorise or hierarchise persons in need. Hence, in the situation of solidarity enactment, there is no separation or hierarchy between the refugees, asylum seekers and people who engage in solidarity activities. When there is a situation of tension or crisis (such as

a high number of incoming refugees), convivial solidarity aims to ‘solve’ the situation and show support by means of convivial practices. Crisis situations catalyse people’s engagement in convivial solidarity, which is performed by civil society organisations and citizens, with a normative aim for convivial living.

In our sample, we also paid attention to the scope of the TSOs’ support action. We categorised solidarity actions as (1) within the borders of the nation (e.g. ranging from local and regional to national) or (2) transnational (for instance, European, non-European and global). Table 8.1 shows these different types and scope of solidarity actions.

Among our respondents, the type of solidarity varies largely according to the sector and level of activity. A general finding from our interviews is that the more exclusive an organisation is, the more mutual and nationally focused its form of solidarity is. While most of the disability TSOs and unions offer mutual/in-group help, those who have more transnational activities across borders offer help for others. TSOs in the migration and refugee field lean more towards convivial solidarity. We have also found that it is sometimes difficult to separate giving practical help from having a political agenda. Restrictions in migration laws, relocation of funds and cuts in benefits have put the TSOs in more opposition to the government, and to have a political agenda. In this section, we first

Table 8.1 Types of solidarity

Types of solidarity	Level of action	Domestic/national (DK)	Transnational
Mutual/in-group		Solidarity among those in need/self-support: people in need support each other domestically	Solidarity among those in need/self-support: people in need support each other across borders
Helping others/ altruistic		Providing services and/or goods to beneficiaries in need domestically	Providing services and/or goods to beneficiaries in need across borders
Convivial		Contextualised (in-group) justice: secure equality, redistribution and peaceful living together within a group or country	Global justice: embracing a notion of inclusive and non-discriminatory solidarity of humanity

explore the relationship between exclusivity of target groups and types of solidarity. Then we explain the difficulty of categorising/separating TSOs into those that offer political action and those that offer practical help, since in some cases, TSOs offering practical help showed some political engagement, for instance, by taking a pro-refugee stand against the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the government.

For instance, in our unemployment and disability sample, at the national level, the small trade unions and the patient organisations we interviewed offer mostly mutual solidarity and have exclusive target groups and beneficiaries, who mainly live in Denmark. The mutual solidarity actions of the small trade unions among our respondents focus mostly on supporting their members, who belong to one professional group. They protect the rights of the workers, negotiate agreements between employees and employers, provide courses to advance professions and create networks to help members find jobs. They also collaborate with *a-kasse* (an unemployment insurance fund), where most of the workers sign up and pay a monthly fee. In addition to the practical help in the form of mutual solidarity to members (e.g., networking to find jobs, training and legal aid), they also raise broader political issues of social justice and redistribution, mainly at the national level, and are policy-oriented. Hence, there is often no clear separation between practical help and political mobilisation in the case of trade unions and labour organisations.

In the field of disability and health, the focus is also clearly on mutual solidarity at domestic/national level, and convivial forms of solidarity are left to bigger established organisations, who work transnationally. Patient organisations (voluntary, non-profit organisations) have a clearly defined group of disabled people. The target group is narrowly defined and solidarity action is in-group specific and aimed at improving their living conditions and those of their close peers, comprising a few hundred people. At the domestic/national level, the beneficiaries are mainly defined as patients with a certain disability and their relatives in Denmark. The TSOs facilitate 'informal networks of citizens acting through ad-hoc entities or new social media' (Boje 2015: 33). Mainly, this entails face-to-face meetings (such as annual meetings and educational events) and digital communication on Facebook. A key aspect is also that of fundraising,

mainly through national state funds such as the aforementioned Activity and Disability Fund and private funds. Finally, these organisations play a vital role in helping members access public help and funds at local (municipal), regional and national levels. These actions are all rather established and formalised among the interviewed organisations. Sometimes, the definition of their beneficiaries stretches outside Denmark, and when it does, it is typically linked to that of Scandinavian or Nordic countries such as Iceland, the Faroe Islands or Greenland. These groups in the disability and health field do not recognise themselves as social movements with a political agenda. Their mobilising potential is low and mainly restricted to their in-group members who rely on volunteering under conditions of restricted budgets. Thus, political activism and convivial solidarity in the form of welfare services is left to bigger societies or foundations, such as The Danish Cancer Society and the AIDS Foundation. Nonetheless, we have also found out that TSOs in the disability and health fields, who engage in transnational solidarity across borders (such as in Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Uganda and Ghana) and provide goods and health services, have a hidden political agenda. For instance, they aim to improve the educational system, offer micro-loans and self-help to the disabled and challenge the system in these developing countries.

The migrant and refugee organisations in Denmark generally go beyond mutual and altruistic solidarity action and define their beneficiaries in broader terms: ‘refugees and asylum seekers’, ‘migrants’, ‘women’ and ‘migrant women’. Many of them embrace the notion of convivial solidarity that is combined with political action. Among our respondents, many of the organisations represent practical help organisations at local level providing goods and services to refugees and migrants (for instance, Danish lessons, health classes, legal advice and social hangouts). Nonetheless, it is also common among these groups to raise issues of convivial solidarity (social justice), being politically active in opposing the Danish government’s restrictive asylum policies, aiming to improve the living conditions of asylum seekers in Denmark and raising awareness among the Danish population concerning these issues.

Many TSOs in the field of migration embrace the notion of domestically contextualised convivial solidarity. Their aim is to support the

integration of immigrants into Danish society and to prevent ethnic segregation and marginalisation. For instance, a Muslim youth organisation, active at the national level, at first sight seems to provide only mutual support for members of the Muslim community (e.g., by aiming to build the confidence of young Muslims and encouraging them to lead their lives according to Islam). However, when we look more closely at their activities, they also support convivial solidarity and engage, for instance, in actions to promote dialogue and a better understanding between ethnic Danes and Muslim Danes. These organisations are neither multiculturalist nor assimilationist. Their secondary aim is to establish a more tolerant and open society where people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds can live together and support each other. One inter-religious support group said the main aim of the organisation is:

To create harmony between different religions, to show the average people that we are not enemies, that the strong ethics in one religion applies also to the others, because there is so much hate speech in Denmark, especially towards Muslims. (Migr8 09/2016)

The beneficiary of their support action would not only be migrants and refugees but the Danish society as a whole. They aim to be inclusive of anyone who is a newcomer and see the Danes, migrants and refugees as forming a unified community, where helping one person means helping the whole society.

What Is Lacking? Let's Find a Solution and Reach More People

We sought to explore innovative practices and/or new ways of approaching the challenges that the TSOs' target groups/beneficiaries face regarding the cuts and restrictions in the three fields. In order to do this, we asked our informants whether they applied any innovative solutions. Some of our interviewees did not perceive their action as innovative in the sense that they have continued working in the same way and have not attempted anything radically different or new in comparison to their own

practices and those of other organisations. For instance, one political social movement that supports asylum seekers stated that what they do is not new, but they prioritised their political fight. For this organisation, being political and challenging the government regarding the restrictive migration rules and conditions of asylum centres is at the forefront, in contrast to other civic initiatives that offer practical help, food and clothes.

In all three fields, those who have considered their action as innovative explained that what they consider as innovative practices were (1) a new tool or approach to compensate for what is lacking in the system (or society), (2) use of digital technology and social media for better communication, and/or to reach more people to create awareness and inform the public, (3) a new way to be inclusive towards the vulnerable, disadvantaged or voiceless groups and if possible to help make these innovations ingrained in the system to ensure its continuity.

These three innovative ways mostly go hand in hand with each other. For instance, once they find what is lacking in the system, they find a new technological tool or use the internet and/or the most appropriate digital platform that may ensure a wider reach. In the field of migration and refugee support, for example, one innovation was to form an online archive for the refugees, for asylum seekers and also for people who work in this field, such as journalists, academics and politicians, in order to understand the Danish system of migration, asylum and citizenship rules. This online archive addresses a specific deficit (people do not understand the asylum system in Denmark) and finds a digital solution (online archive) with the aim to reach a wider target group (asylum seekers, refugees who want to come to Denmark, those who are already in Denmark and the general public). The founder said:

I quickly found out that most refugees and asylum seekers, and even Danes, don't understand the system at all. It is really complicated and it is made complicated on purpose actually, I think. It could be much easier to understand, and it could be used much more simply; it is so complicated that nobody understands it. Actually I found out that only a few lawyers really understand it, (laughs) not even the politicians understand what they vote for or against sometimes, so I just decided to find out how things were

working, to understand the system. I am not a lawyer so I want to do it from the outside. I managed! As I found it on my own, it was easier for me to explain it to other people. [...] I try to inform the Danish public about how complex the situation is, trying to make them understand that our laws are very cynical and not working as they should in many ways, and also trying to make the public understand that the refugees are not here for fun. It is not a choice they made, it is not something they do to make something out of it. They are just desperate and it is their only option. So I am trying to spread information to refugees themselves about their own situation, to help them out and I'm trying to make things more understandable for the public, and among the people who work with this in many ways, like politicians and journalists, to make them understand that it is not working as it should, and we could make it much better and things are really not fair as they are. (Migr3 08/2016)

In the field of disability and health, we mention the example of a 'Conversation Tool' developed by a patient organisation in response to a demand for improving communication between the patient groups and the health system. The tool is meant to be used at hospitals all over Denmark—and for all kinds of people with different disabilities:

During the past two years, we have developed a conversation tool. This helps patients and their relatives to talk about emotionally difficult subjects. [...] And we have tested it with health care professionals, as well. We believe it can be used by everyone who has been affected by a serious disease. (Disab1 08/2016)

Once the TSOs find out what is lacking and create a solution, they then aim for it to be integrated into the system and to secure its continuity. In the disability and health sector, such innovations can range from building and operating a hospital and providing health education to providing charity and raising awareness, providing vaccines, bikes and electronic equipment, as well as help-to-self-help—more specifically, micro-loans—to small farmers. Innovative action typically originates from within the organisation. It can encompass one-time initiatives and events, such as study trips and fundraising campaigns, but can also demand the development of long-term tools and permanent innovations. As an example of

the latter, one organisation decided that the obvious lack of native health personnel (experienced first-hand by volunteers working in Sierra Leone) demanded that they moved on from 'just' building and operating a hospital to founding a school with three different educational programmes.

Another new approach from the TSOs includes the aim of reaching a wider audience, which includes the use of social media and the internet to help their aims. One union launched a campaign to fight for higher salaries for the workers in the private sector, who are paid less than public sector workers, reaching 2 million hits on Facebook in support of their cause. These projects and campaigns are perceived as providing new solutions to their ongoing issues, bringing a new outlook and reaching a wider audience. Besides the unions, we found one social movement among our respondents that claimed to be a fundamentally new initiative. They do not target companies, supermarkets or institutions in the form of boycotts; instead, they aim to educate the general public about how to avoid food waste. They aim not only for a sustainable environment but also to fight world famine:

Due to our work within the last five years, the national waste in Denmark has been reduced by 25%. [...] We are not an organisation that point fingers. Lots of environmental organisations go against the industry, against the supermarkets, they point fingers. Our approach is collaboration. [...] We inspire the industry, and supermarkets, and restaurants, and canteens and consumers to stop wasting food. (Unemp9 09/2016)

The final way of being innovative is trying to be more inclusive of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups as target groups and beneficiaries. Below, we describe examples from all the three fields to show which kinds of new targets they include in their actions and how. One union in the arts' sector has launched a diversity project to reach a more diverse audience and be inclusive towards the lower class, the unemployed and migrants. The informant from the union wrote and directed a play about the residents of a building in a poor area of Copenhagen, where people from different classes and sociocultural backgrounds tell their stories. In the field of migration, a solidarity group for female artists and musicians expanded their beneficiaries to reach out to any women (not only musicians and

artists) who live in deprived areas. They help them to open their own business in Denmark and abroad. According to them, women have not been given the space and opportunity to have their voices heard; hence the organisation has provided these opportunities to its beneficiaries. Another inter-religious harmony group states that existing groups who encourage dialogue between religions are usually bi-communal such as Muslims-Christians or Jewish-Muslims. They distinguish themselves therefore as the only group that brings five religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Sikhism) together, with all five represented on the board. According to its representative, solidarity was confined to two groups/religious communities before they were founded. Thus, they have aimed for better inclusion and have opened up a dialogue between people of different religions. This helps them to fight the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rhetoric embedded in the political rhetoric.

National and Transnational Cooperation, Links and Networks

Most of the small organisations we interviewed would find it desirable to engage in transnational action but lack the means and the opportunities to do so. The idea of transnational solidarity is generally supported ideologically, for instance, by opposing military action all over the world. A good example of this combination between local and transnational action is an artist and musician solidarity initiative, which also aims to provide financial security and secure human rights for deprived women both in Denmark and in third-world countries. They do this by helping them to make a living (for instance, by opening their own shops), as well as supporting their artistic freedom (such as supporting female performing artists in various parts of the world). In all three fields, national cooperation takes priority. Transnational cooperation takes place either in the form of being a member of a transnational umbrella organisation (e.g., EU or Nordic), by having beneficiaries residing across borders, or having informal links to other countries and exchanging ideas. Nordic and

Scandinavian cooperation is seen to be one of the most common transnational linkages and networks.

While cooperation and networking at the domestic level is often stronger and institutionalised for migration organisations, the existing transnational solidarity cooperation is more informal, in the form of exchange of information and sharing ideas. For example, a Muslim youth organisation is also in touch with other Muslim organisations in the UK and the US. This enables them to learn about best practices in other countries and find solutions to the challenges that Muslim communities face. Another refugee organisation follows changes in the German and Swedish laws regarding asylum, and how refugee/asylum organisations cope with these. If similar law changes occur in Denmark, they can make note of how German and Swedish refugee organisations dealt with these changes and can get better prepared when they face similar challenges in Denmark.

For the organisations that mainly support those living in Denmark (a patient organisation, a small trade union), transnational cooperation has an optional and secondary function and they mostly collaborate with Nordic partners. National cooperation includes related sister organisations and larger umbrella organisations. The small unions we interviewed also prioritise domestic cooperation with other unions and are members of Danish umbrella organisations. However, most of them are also members of a Nordic network or umbrella organisation. After national cooperation, Nordic cooperation is the most important. Some are also members of an EU professional umbrella organisation and some, of an international umbrella. In most cases, they value this international connection as inspirational in terms of exchanging ideas, keeping up to date with what others are doing and taking good practice back home to Denmark. They do so in yearly or bi-annual meetings, where they visit partner or umbrella organisations abroad. Unlike migrant and refugee organisations, almost all the beneficiaries of trade union solidarity live in Denmark. Some provide assistance to Danish foreign workers in other Nordic countries and workers from the Nordic Region who come to work in Denmark, and very few offer services to workers of the same profession in developing countries outside of Europe (e.g., running an education programme for workers in Kirgizstan).

For organisations whose beneficiaries live abroad (building a hospital in an African country, a labour organisation that fights for better conditions of workers in developing countries), transnational cooperation becomes a mandatory and primary function. At the transnational level, the collaborators are often organisations that work in the same geographical area. This can be both one-person grassroots or larger charity organisations. However, the main collaborator is typically an NGO located in the area where their solidarity work is carried out. According to one of our informants, this cooperation is necessary and creates invaluable friendships and strong bonds. However, it can also be very challenging, for instance, when Danish activists are confronted with problems of local corruption, which might result in fraud, theft and a variety of irregularities. For example, one informant mentions this as a structural problem in many parts of Africa, where the system is seen as corrupt. Still, the main point is that the transnational work in this category is embedded in the very purpose of the organisations: to help challenged people outside Denmark. Thus, transnationalism must be viewed as a defining factor here and a matter of principle, rather than a secondary addition.

In all three fields, when it comes to EU collaboration, TSO informants complained that the complicated access to EU funding is a major hindrance. One disability organisation representative said:

We have not applied for EU funds. Partly because we haven't even discussed it, but also due to the fact that it is something that demands a high degree of expertise. To be able to get it, we would have to employ a professional fundraiser. (Disab9 09/2016)

Some union representatives and migration TSOs also mentioned that it is very hard to get EU funding. And even though you might get it, there are many obligations in terms of how to use the funding and what to deliver in return. Nonetheless, most of the unions recognise that the EU legal and institutional framework is very important for the protection of workers' rights, even though the EU has very little significance in their daily work.

For the disability sector, the level of involvement in European transnational networks can be said to be rather formalised and—in most

cases—to be of high importance for the TSOs. It takes different forms in that they are often members of both a trans-Scandinavian, trans-European (typically EURORDIS, a European umbrella for rare diseases) and a global cooperation. For example, one patient organisation has entered both an informal cooperation with a Swedish sister association and a formalised cooperation with a European umbrella organisation. The purpose of being part of the latter is described as following:

We compare ourselves and exchange knowledge with associations in other EU countries [...] What to do—and not do. (Disab2 09/2016)

Thus, this kind of cooperation provides the organisation with the possibility of knowledge and experience-sharing across borders, and it also functions as a European lobbyist organisation. Being a member of this umbrella organisation has provided the organisation quoted above with the possibility of meeting face to face with EU legislatives in workshops and discussions in Brussels.

A general finding of our interviews is that if the small TSOs are not politically active or cannot expand their actions across borders due to limited funds, then they leave the social justice agenda, political initiatives and transnational linkages and collaboration to higher-level (Nordic, European or International) umbrella organisations, of which they are members.

Conclusion

How were the Danish civil society sector and grassroots solidarity mobilisation affected by the economic recession in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and by the welfare retrenchment in Denmark? Our interviews with the small TSOs confirmed that the effects of the financial crisis, austerity measures and the so-called refugee crisis are not easy to separate from the structural changes and welfare retrenchment in the Danish system. Many of our informants articulated that the challenges faced were due to the neoliberal restructuring of the labour market, the structural reform, and the anti-migrant rhetoric of the current

government rather than to external factors, such as the financial crisis in 2008. These recent changes in the welfare state have nevertheless been experienced as dramatic as they have loosened the traditionally close ties between Danish civil society and municipalities in providing welfare services, especially in the disability sector, but partially in other sectors, too. The voluntary sector has in this sense become more political, not only providing services to affected groups but increasingly seeking to defend their social rights, and entering into conflict with the government.

In terms of solidarity actions, we have come across three types of solidarity (1) mutual/in-group, (2) helping others and (3) convivial solidarity. The more exclusive the TSOs are (in terms of target groups), the more they tend to lean towards mutual and in-group solidarity. Facing the challenges of the restructuring of the Danish welfare state as described above, many of these small TSOs feel the need to expand solidarity action beyond their narrowly defined target groups, but they often lack the resources and capacities to do so. While most of the disability and unions offer mutual/in-group help, those who engage in more transnational activities across borders offer help for others. TSOs in the migration and refugee fields lean more towards convivial solidarity. It was also difficult in some cases to separate the TSOs into those who offer practical help and those who define themselves more in terms of a political movement. For instance, small trade unions offered practical help and had a political agenda. Those TSOs that primarily focused on providing mutual assistance and welfare services could still have hidden political agendas or ideologies in their own way to promote social justice and redistribution across borders. Examples of such hidden political messages could be found, in particular, in the refugee help sector with a focus on providing local services that cannot be detached from commenting on the political situation at national or European/transnational levels. Other examples refer to engagement in international aid by disability and health organisations that provided humanitarian assistance across borders (hospital construction in developing countries) and became, at the same time, involved in the formulation of developmental policies. We thus observe that the divide between service and policy orientation within the civil society sector (Baglioni 2001; Giugni 2001) has been weakened in Denmark in recent years.

All in all, the TSOs wanted to expand their reach, whether by targeting beneficiaries across borders or by having a transnational impact when it comes to political activism. However, due to limited funding (as they are small scale), in many cases their solidarity action was performed inside the Danish borders. In these cases, a division of work applies within the civil society solidarity sector: Danish TSOs might prefer to focus on local solidarity activism, but they still maintain formal and informal links to Nordic, European and/or international umbrellas. Convivial solidarity might in this sense not be practised directly, but it is still embraced in the way more political and transnational forms of solidarity are delegated to these transnational umbrellas.

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9

Organisational Solidarity in Switzerland Across Fields: Interlinkage Between Immigration and (Un)employment

Eva Fernández G. G., Ophelia Nicole-Berva,
and Anna-Lena Nadler

Introduction¹

Solidarity as a practice is a response to help overcome immediate needs. In this chapter, we discuss how organisational responses of solidarity practices are strongly shaped by contextual factors. To do so, we provide an in-depth and qualitative analysis of practices of solidarity in Switzerland

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E. Fernández G. G. (✉)

Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

Department of Social Work, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, Geneva, Switzerland

e-mail: eva.fernandez@unige.ch

among the fields of (un)employment and immigration. These solidarity practices are analysed at the organisational level, as civil society responses to societal challenges. They are at the foundations of social processes that go beyond an infrastructure for the provision of services and goods (Coleman 1976; Scott 2003).

Our analysis is built at the crossroads of solidarity movement studies and organisational studies. Scholars have indicated at least three major mechanisms that commonly operate in social movement and organisational studies to analyse organisations (McAdam et al. 2001): environmental factors affecting the agency of collective actors; cognitive factors concerning actors' perceptions, interests and strategies; and relational factors of networks between collective actors. Both of these strands of literature have largely discussed approaches to collective actors as rational organisational forms shaped by political and cultural factors (Kriesi 1996; Davis et al. 2006). Yet, academic writing has overlooked how institutional factors—"the rules of the game"—shape solidarity practices across fields, within interdependent domestic domains.

Our chapter shows how institutional arrangements shape organisational solidarity across the fields of (un)employment and immigration in Switzerland. Key to our analysis is the assumption that Swiss organisational solidarity in the fields of (un)employment and immigration are partly conditioned and interrelated by common policy regimes related to immigrants' legal permits and precarious workers' status. We argue that the historical evolution of Swiss labour market policies and the enriched complexity of immigrants' profiles have been translated into policy frameworks that mutually shape collective actors' agency across the two fields. This particular entrenchment is effectively reflected in the interviews conducted for this study with actors from immigration and (un)employment associations. Although each field has a specific target group—immigrants versus workers or unemployed people—these categories are not mutually exclusive and mix easily. In a country of immigration like Switzerland, where a quarter of the active working population

O. Nicole-Berva • A.-L. Nadler

Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

e-mail: ophelia.nicole-berva@unige.ch; anna-lena.nadler@unige.ch

has an immigration background (Bundesamt für Statistik 2018a) and more than 17% of Swiss nationals hold dual citizenship (Bundesamt für Statistik 2018b), strict categories are de facto blurred. Consequently, by focusing on associations which benefit immigrants, precarious workers and unemployed people, we are interested in understanding when associations act in solidarity as enclosed fields, when they overlap and engage in solidarity across fields, but also when their action is missing.

Civic Engagement and Organised Solidarity in Switzerland: Previous Research

Since Tocqueville, the role of associations within democracy has been thought to enhance horizontal relationships of trust and to counterbalance institutional power (Putnam 2000; Verba et al. 1995). Complementary to this perspective, we believe organisations are more than mediators between political institutions and citizens. They are drivers of social change, pressure, representation and welfare subsidiarity (Baglioni and Giugni 2014; Warren 2000; Laumann and Knoke 1987). In particular, the set of actors in whom we are interested, the transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs),² maintain an active role in the provision of services, support and advocacy in favour of vulnerable groups (Kousis et al. 2018). These collective actors embody democratic means for social and political participation due to their capacity to influence the allocation and distribution of power and resources. These TSOs cover a wide repertoire of activities, initiatives and networks of cooperation. In the case of Switzerland, the organisational solidarity across the fields of (un)employment and immigration comprises various organisational forms, referring to a heterogenic family of voluntary groups, informal and formal organisations (Passy 1999; Baglioni and Giugni 2014). Laumann and Knoke (1987) developed a theoretical framework to study relationships between social structure (relationships among

²In our case, transnationality is assessed through the immigration background of the beneficiaries of the solidarity organisations, as well as through the activities targeting precarious workers and unemployed people independently and beyond their nationality, following guidelines in the context of Work Package 2 of the TransSOL project—see <https://blogs.uni-siegen.de/transsol/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>

organisations) and political decisions, often used to describe organisational settings within policy domains. Following their analysis, a policy domain concerns a substantive set of actors, events and coherent issues, which delimits its constituent membership. That said, in our analysis we are also interested in understanding the interdependencies and organisational gaps between two apparently separate domains ((un)employment and immigration). For our analysis, we will notably rely on the concepts of vertical solidarity (top-down solidarity related to humanitarian and philanthropic ideals) and horizontal solidarity (bottom-up solidarity related to human rights and empowerment ideals). Scholars have highlighted that these approaches are often associated with different types of organisations. For instance, vertical solidarity is related to formalised, centralised and highly professionalised organisations, whereas horizontal solidarity is more connected to smaller, informal and loose organisations dealing more with local issues (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005; Baglioni and Giugni 2014). By virtue of the link between the solidarity orientations and the organisational structure of the TSOs, we also dig into the relationship between the institutionalisation of the organisations and their internal legitimacy, concerning the norms and rules that govern organisational structures, solidarity practices and cooperation between organisational actors in the fields. In sum, the analysis of the TSOs' beneficiaries, activities, values and level of institutionalisation allows for the characterisation and comparison of TSOs between and within immigration and (un)employment fields and to see how/whether they overlap or not.

Historically, as for most Western European countries, solidarity organisations and movements in Switzerland first derived from perspectives focusing on human rights and aid-relief with a traditional assistance-oriented praxis. They were later complemented by a political praxis focusing on immigrants' rights (Giugni and Passy 2001). This second aspect of the solidarity movement praxis in Switzerland refers to the polarisation of immigrant issues brought about by important waves of immigrants dating back to the late 1970s. Switzerland's history of immigration policy is characterised by active economic recruitment policies, opening doors to foreign labour forces when needed, while holding restrictive integration and naturalisation policies (Klöti et al. 2007; Ruedin and D'Amato 2015). Over the last 50 years, foreign nationals have accessed Swiss territory mainly based on economic

interests. Yet, today, third country nationals also migrate to the country because of family reunification, education or asylum application reasons. In this context, Swiss policy-makers have become gradually aware of the economic and social costs of non-integration of immigrants (D'Amato et al. 2019; Steiner and Wanner 2019). These concerns have led them to promote integration both as an individual duty (conditional upon the requirements and individual responsibilities of a foreign person) and as a priority to be addressed by policy-makers at all administrative levels (Mexi et al. 2020). This pragmatic and restrictive approach to integration has evolved over time. Currently, the Swiss Confederation has developed targeted integration measures (for instance: language learning, training, labour market and socio-cultural integration programmes) as core objectives to current immigrant and labour policy regimens (DEFER and SEM 2018). The positive impact of immigration on the Swiss economic growth has also generated challenges for both immigration and (un)employment labour policies, making their development inevitably intertwined. Their interdependence is still ongoing today; through our analysis, we focus on the predominant role of immigration as the key driving factor of these changes.

Etienne Piguet (2013: 11) divides the latest history of immigration in Switzerland into five major phases. The first phase (1948–1962) is characterised as an open period in which the government sets recruitment agreements in particular with Italy and Spain, whose country nationals accounted for more than half of all foreign national workers in the late 1970s (Vidal Coso and Ortega-Rivera 2016). The great need for foreign workers translated into a “Gastarbeiter” (*guest worker*) regime, where workers were granted seasonal or temporary permits. The guest worker programmes were set in place to boost the Swiss economy while preventing permanent settlement of immigrant workers (Ruedin and D'Amato 2015: 141). The second period (1963–1973) is characterised by increasing xenophobic attitudes from the Swiss population towards immigrant workers that translated into governmental measures to limit the immigrant labour force. The first world oil crisis (1973–1984), however, resulted in a strong solidarity movement in favour of immigrants who remained in the country after losing their jobs and who lived under precarious conditions, marking the third period of immigration history. During this period, Swiss solidarity movements strongly advocated for social integration measures, which

did not conceive immigrants as a temporary workforce anymore. The perception of immigrants' integration in terms of non-permanent workers shifted to assimilating immigrants into Swiss society (Giugni and Passy 2002; Ruedin et al. 2015). The fourth period (1985–1992) marked the second wave of large-scale immigration. The quota system was more flexible, and almost 50,000 new permits were issued every year and 130,000 seasonal workers entered the country. From this period until today, the diversification of immigrants' countries of origin and reasons for immigration (such as reunification, education or asylum) have increased, resulting in greater concerns about managing cultural diversity (Ruedin and D'Amato 2015: 143). During the fifth period, the implementation of the Bilateral Agreement and its impact on the free movement of persons in 2002 was a turning point as it completed the Swiss immigration two-circle model (Bolzman 2007). This model conceives two different kinds of immigrant populations: the first circle comprises people coming from EU/European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and the second circle involves people from all other countries (third country nationals). To enter the country, the latter group is curtailed by working permit quotas limited to short-stay residence permits mainly for qualified workers. Additionally, we can detect a new phase of the immigration policy regime with more restrictive immigration policies that began in 2014, when the right-wing “initiative against mass immigration”, supported by 50.3% of Swiss voters, requested the *re-establishment of quotas for all categories of foreigners*, including European citizens (van der Brug et al. 2015; Mexi et al. 2020).

Broadly speaking, this short historical overview of the Swiss immigration regime allows us to consider at the institutional level the long-standing relationship between immigration and the labour market. Thus, the labour market and immigration policies have been translated into a variety of permit durations and rights. Depending on their labour integration, migrants may be categorised in various ways (immigrant, immigrant worker, workers, etc.) and would thus rely on different organisational structures. Previous analyses of civil societies and non-profit sectors have highlighted that organisational structures matter, because they are tied back to specific ways of organising tasks and activities and represent shared norms, rules and legitimacy, which are themselves defined by the organisational environment (DiMaggio 1987; Powell and Steinberg 2006). Through our interviews, we examine how

this categorisation from the top could reflect on the organisational issue within and between the fields of immigration and (un)employment, analysing how associations respond to the complexity of immigrant workers' legal status and precarity.

In terms of methods, we thus present an in-depth analysis of 20 qualitative interviews realised with TSOs across the fields of (un)employment and immigration. The selected TSO sample was drawn from the 289 TSOs mapped at the national level (TransSOL 2016). The following findings grasp fine-grained information on the TSOs' activities, concerns and solidarity views. The sample selection criteria prioritised a bottom-up approach: it focused on informal, non-professional groups and organisations, including activist groups, umbrella organisations, networks, help groups and service-oriented organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), unions, non-profit organisations and social enterprises.

To study the interdependence between fields, we analyse and compare three key organisational features among our sample of collective actors in relationship with key policy imperatives:

1. the beneficiaries and target groups defined by TSOs;
2. the activities TSOs engage in; and
3. the frames and solidarity orientations of the TSOs in relation to their level of institutionalisation.

Taken together, these three features allow us to look into the organisational responses to immigrant and worker policy regimes, by looking at activities associated with the legal status and vulnerabilities of the beneficiaries—immigrant/working population—and the frames mobilised by the organisations engaging on their behalf.

Comparing Immigration and (Un)employment Fields

Swiss (un)employment and immigration TSOs are located at the intersection of fields: the (un)employment organisations face issues related to permits and legal status for workers, unemployed people and immigrants,

whereas migration associations aim at the cultural integration of immigrants, which mostly implicitly includes the immigrants' integration into the labour market. Hence, the analysis of this chapter relies on comparing organisational features across fields while looking into the institutional and policy frameworks in which TSOs deploy their actions. Our analysis follows a double-comparison approach. It assesses solidarity both within fields of immigration and (un)employment and across fields, emphasising similarities and differences between organisations.

Beneficiaries and Target Groups

Comparing Association Within the Immigration Field

In our analysis, with respect to beneficiaries, we differentiate between two groups of associations in the immigration field. The first group of associations includes mostly service-oriented organisations engaging in the *cultural integration of immigrants*, targeting mainly newcomers or asylum seekers. These targeted groups are the most vulnerable immigrants, as they often do not speak the local language and are low-skilled workers, with relevant difficulties for the recognition of their diploma and with little or no financial resources.

We don't (...) reach expatriates (...) nor do we reach academics or people who come with very good employment training because they are well-trained people and we are mainly addressing people with few or no qualifications. (Migr1 10/2016)

These groups of people share in most cases precarious legal status. Some of them are undocumented immigrants or asylum seekers. Hence, added to their precarious legal status, these immigrants have often experienced traumatic situations and therefore display overlapping vulnerabilities. Additionally, some of these organisations target immigrants that come through family reunification, predominantly women with few or no qualifications. The following quote illustrates how gender is a key

component for the TSOs' organisational solidarity towards the most vulnerable groups:

Our association works only with women. We do so to allow people who might not otherwise go to a place for training because of traumatic experiences (...) it is people coming out of trafficking, prostitution, who have been raped during their immigration journey or whose culture of origin makes it totally impossible to imagine the person learning in a mixed environment. (Migr1 10/2016)

The second group of associations includes political or policy-oriented groups that focus on precarious immigrants and their rights, with particular attention given to people concerned with asylum procedures. These organisations focus on the promotion of individual rights and operate in a political context.

The collective exists to give voice to people who do not have a voice (...). They do not have so many opportunities to be heard (...). We try to show them that they have rights (...). Finally, our goal is also to give rights to those without rights. (Migr4 10/2016)

In recent years, our focus has been on the asylum policy. Before we were an association that was active on other themes, on immigration policy in general and in the field of the defense of undocumented immigrants. These are not topics that have been completely abandoned, but it must be said that, given the space that the debate on asylum is taking up in Switzerland, we have concentrated our activities in this field in recent years. (Migr3 10/2016)

We suggest that organisations in the immigration field differentiate between types of immigrants, excluding the less vulnerable immigrants groups from their major beneficiaries—immigrants with a more secure immigration status or well integrated into the labour market. We observe that both types of organisations operating in the immigration field focus on asylum seekers/refugees or immigrants with precarious status. However, while limited knowledge of the local language and/or low qualification skills act as the main criteria for beneficiaries among service-providing associations, it is mainly the political/legal status of the

immigrants that serves as a major criterion among beneficiaries across the immigrant political or policy-oriented groups. This also explains why cultural integration associations (mostly service-oriented) vary more strongly with respect to beneficiary groups, caring for specific needs such as female immigrants outside the asylum procedure. In contrast, political or policy-oriented groups target generalised groups of immigrants or asylum seekers; their beneficiaries are conceived in more homogenous terms and their claims vary with respect to political circumstances.

Comparing Associations Within the (Un)employment Field

As for the immigration associations, we first distinguish the organisations in the (un)employment field through their target group: some of them primarily focus on employed people and others on unemployed people. In the first group, we obviously find unions who defend employees. Their target group is defined by working status. For instance, some of these employment TSOs define their beneficiaries as such:

Generally speaking, our mission is to defend people who are employed and who, in principle, earn a fairly decent living. (Unemp2 09/2016)

The second biggest group is concerned with the working poor (or underemployed), the unemployed and people who rely on social help.

The objectives and approach of the association is to defend the individual and collective interests of unemployed workers, precarious workers and the working poor. (Unemp5 08/2016)

Thus, both types of associations in this field define their target groups through their status on the labour market, speaking as/for and providing services to beneficiaries that are somewhat mutually exclusive. Whereas one type targets workers with decent working conditions, in addition to side programmes for unemployed/precarious workers, the other one only addresses either unemployed individuals or the working poor.

Comparing Beneficiaries Across Fields

There is a clear distinction between associations in the immigration and in the (un)employment fields with respect to the definition of their target groups: the first delimit the beneficiary population based on migration status whereas the latter identify their beneficiaries by their employment and precarious working situation. However, immigrants and workers are not mutually exclusive groups. Organisations in the employment field do not actively exclude immigrants as beneficiaries. They consider immigrants as constituents of the labour market force and at least in the past, as important contributors to their organisation.

Immigrants as workers are members; actually, Italian workers were strongly politicised and are an important source of membership to our organisation. (Unemp2 09/2016)

In this sense, a person with an immigration background is just another “worker” with her immigration status remaining latent while integrated into the labour market. It is only when the person is subject to administrative burden related to a working permit or because of material barriers to access the labour market (language, skills, recognition of diploma, implementation of national directives at the cantonal level) that the worker is seen as an immigrant by the (un)employment TSOs.

Figure 9.1 illustrates the criteria on which immigration and employment associations define their constituents. The black line refers to

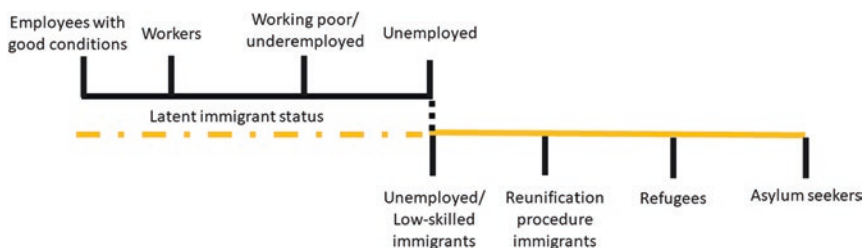


Fig. 9.1 Organisational beneficiaries in the fields of (un)employment and migration

the beneficiaries of the (un)employment TSOs' domain where the immigration status remains latent. The yellow one refers to a simplified version of the beneficiaries of the immigration associations. The shift in the categorisation of the immigrant/worker status starts at the level of "unemployed/low-skilled immigrants". This suggests that when a foreign worker loses her job, she is no longer categorised with respect to her employment condition, but by her immigrant journey.

These different groups of beneficiaries seem to be the result of historical developments and reflect the policy framework in which they were brought in and which continues to delimit their functioning. As seen in section "[Civic Engagement and Organised Solidarity in Switzerland: Previous Research](#)", at the early phase, Switzerland's immigration history was heavily shaped by strong labour demand implemented through the government guest worker programme aimed at preventing permanent settlement of immigrant workers in the territory (Ruedin and D'Amato 2015: 141). During that period, immigrants were only considered as part of the workforce and the political context did not call for cultural integration. Initially, immigrants were allowed to stay as workers while their immigrant status was latent and accompanied by economic autonomy. However, the solidarity movement in favour of immigrants emerged in reaction to the first world oil crisis (1973–1984) claiming immigrants should be able to remain in the country despite losing their jobs. This shift in the perspective implicated a strong call for social integration policies to assimilate immigrants into Swiss society (Ruedin et al. 2015). Yet, this demand could not be met by the TSOs in the (un)employment field, which up to that time acted as immigrants' main point of reference. It is therefore at this point that associations beyond the (un)employment field mostly emerged with the aim to advance immigrants' cultural integration and rights. This somewhat clear division between associations in the immigration and (un)employment fields with respect to their corresponding beneficiary groups, as shown through our analysis, still reflects this historical development and duality.

Activities

Comparing Associations Within the Immigration Field

Organisations in the immigration field can also be differentiated with regard to their set activity-focus. The first type of associations in this field is service-oriented TSOs, which emphasise the cultural integration of immigrants. The legal framework has heavily influenced their activities, with integration being one of the major pillars of the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals (FNA).³

Art. 4 Integration

1. The aim of integration is the co-existence of the resident Swiss and foreign population on the basis of the values of the Federal Constitution and mutual respect and tolerance.
2. Integration should enable foreign nationals who are lawfully resident in Switzerland for the longer term to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of the society.
3. Integration requires willingness on the part of the foreign nationals and openness on the part of the Swiss population.
4. Foreign nationals are required to familiarise themselves with the social conditions and way of life in Switzerland and in particular to learn a national language.

Service-oriented TSOs frame and partly finance their activities by ascribing to the FNA integration mandate. Most of these associations aim at improving immigrants' integration into the daily life of the host community, by providing cultural and languages classes, as well as "citizenship courses" favoring a better understanding of the Swiss political environment.

The process of teaching French is an essential tool for integration and insertion in general. French is also an excuse for us to get these women out of isolation, to break their daily lives. (Migr1 10/2016)

³ Art. 4 FNA, online consultation: <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20020232/index.html>

All we're doing is making a connection with Swiss culture. We help immigrants to integrate (Migr2 10/2016)

We talk about citizenship, how the voting process takes place, the different levels of democracy in Switzerland. We have a group that goes every year to Bern to visit the federal palace with a group of women. (Migr1 10/2016)

These activities mainly target immigrants who have low language skills and whose legal status is often precarious. Culture and language, evoked in the FNA law, paragraph 4, are the main subjects of these associations' activities. They are central tools for a short-term stay but also essential for a potential long-term residency that would imply participation "in the economic, social and cultural life of the society" (FNA paragraph 2). That said, integration is based on a mutual effort, from the immigrant population but also from the Swiss society. In this sense, TSOs connect nationals and foreigners, not only on the basis of volunteering but also by organising activities with the host community, contributing to the idea of "co-existence" that prevails in the FNA's first paragraph.

The second group of associations (political or policy-oriented) tends to contest the legal framework on immigration. They hold claims at the cantonal and national level, but also appeal for a broader change internationally. Although they might have personal contact with immigrants, they are not service-oriented at their core. They act as a movement opposing restrictive laws or procedures towards immigrants. The activities held by this kind of associations are mainly political (campaigns, lobbying, demonstrations). Most of these actions target asylum seekers and refugees who are struggling with the legal framework or who are subject to immediate removal. Most of these TSOs mobilise on behalf of immigrants', refugees' or asylum seekers' rights rather than mobilising immigrants themselves.

At the individual level, we support and defend; we try to do things for people we know and who come to the association. In collective action, we demand the right to housing, to decent conditions for everyone. For those we know, for those we don't know and who are in the same situation. (Migr4 10/2016)

The activities provided by both types of associations tend to complement each other. Whereas service-oriented TSOs seek cultural integration and deliver services in direct contact with their beneficiaries, political-oriented TSOs undertake political actions that strive for improving the principles of the law that constrain immigrants', refugees' and asylum seekers' rights. Furthermore, we observe that these activities still mirror the reason why most of these TSOs were initially created in the mid-1980s. Their activities echo social integration measures and simultaneously demonstrate the persistence of the cultural integration scope in the field of immigration. However, these activities also exhibited the gap between the fields of immigration and employment: the activities were not conceived as key for immigrants' integration into the labour market.

Comparing Associations Within the (Un)employment Field

With respect to the (un)employment field, independently of the main beneficiary group, all TSOs engage in the provision of services and political action. However, with respect to the political aspect, we observe that a set of organisations, such as unions and umbrella associations, engage primarily within institutional politics: lobbying, parliament interventions and policy discussions. That said, some of their service provision activities, such as legal assistance, also entail a political character:

Our role is to analyse everything that is happening in Switzerland in terms of changes in the laws, among others, that may have repercussions in terms of financial policy on employees. (Unemp1 08/2016)

We regularly respond by telephone to very practical questions, particularly legal questions, about employees' rights and duties in a specific situation. (Unemp1 08/2016)

On the other hand, TSOs concerned with the working poor (or the underemployed), the unemployed and people who rely heavily on social insurances or assistance provide administrative and legal counselling, job-searching and social services to their members. For instance, they provide

groups and meeting points for the beneficiaries to discuss and interact with people in similar situations. Additionally, they undertake political activities through less institutionalised channels. They often engage in protest-oriented actions, notably by mobilising their members:

We help with job search or we do legal aid; we have sometimes taken cases to the federal court (...) [our] tasks (...) are both individual consultations for administrative legal questions or socio-professional orientation, (...) and then a more associative component, more oriented towards collective action with public interventions, working groups, activities and collective projects to be developed. (Unemp5 08/2016)

We observe that both types of associations in the (un)employment field pursue similar activities: on the one hand, they provide services to their members, and on the other hand, they act at the political level. What differentiates them is mostly the *type* of political action. Indeed, employment organisations adopt a less protest-oriented but more policy-lobbying-oriented approach than unemployment organisations. Hence, employment organisations display a more mainstream, uncontentious, collaborative and professionalised approach, whereas unemployment associations engage in protest-oriented, critical and confrontational activities. Later on, we suggest why some of these differences depend on the TSOs' organisational structure but also respond to the employment legal framework. Switzerland has developed a system of active labour market policies for the unemployed or for people having difficulty accessing the labour market that focuses on job-related training, language courses, subsidies for employers and temporary employment programmes (Bonoli 2017). However, these types of programmes are mostly subject to or dependent on ordinary structures (governmental institutions and channels). As a result, the protest-oriented TSOs engage mainly with the individuals who find themselves at the “end of their unemployment rights” and fight against the stigmatisation that unemployed people and precarious workers constantly are subject to due to the economic-autonomy principle intrinsic to the law.

Comparing Activities Across Fields

The analysis revealed that in the immigration field, there is a clear distinction between associations providing services and associations oriented towards political goals. In the (un)employment field, even though all TSOs provide services and engage in political action, the distinction between the organisations is related to the political channels used to mobilise and obtain their political goals.

In addition, our analysis suggests that linkages between the two fields of TSOs activities are mainly indirect. The (un)employment framework does not caveat programmes for immigrants' labour integration due to structural preconditions like speaking the local language and/or by administrative burdens related to permit status. By focusing on the cultural integration of immigrants, TSOs in the immigration field provide a first step towards the integration of immigrants into the labour market. Thus, language classes and collective activities could be considered as the very first step towards integration but mostly towards *cultural* integration. Indeed, representatives did not explicitly make any direct connection between their activities and labour integration. They indicated that the integration into the labour market is not their main priority, unlike cultural integration. Additionally, grassroots associations in the immigration field are even less concerned with the integration of immigrants into the labour market. As previously explained, organisations in the immigration field still reflect the purpose for which they were initially established. They missed building bridges to the organisations operating in the (un)employment field.

On the other hand, associations working in the (un)employment field do not actively exclude immigrants as beneficiaries of the undertaken activities. Unions mainly defend people who are currently working. Immigrant workers can refer to them and benefit from their activities as long as their demands do not diverge from those of other workers. Again, this reflects the entrenchment of immigration and labour market policies in which immigrants were initially identified in terms of their working status with their immigration status remaining latent and key to their lack of recognition as a group. However, once immigrant

status becomes predominant because of administrative issues and legal precariousness, associations in the employment field tend not to deal with immigrant-specific questions themselves (for instance, permit-related and renewal) and reorient immigrants with this kind of problem towards other organisations in the immigration field:

With regard to questions of permits, residence or establishment, we collaborate with other associations. (Unemp5 08/2016)

To sum up, the activities undertaken by organisations in the immigration field focus on immigrants but are mainly linked to their cultural integration, leaving the labour market integration of immigrants as a side aspect. Alternatively, the activities of the employment field are linked to the protection of workers, their rights and/or their reintegration into the labour market. However, these organisations adopt a functional perspective, including immigrants solely in terms of their status as workers with limited programmes encompassing immigrant-specific characteristics.

Level of Institutionalisation, Frames and Cooperation

Now we look at the institutional frames mobilised by the representatives of the organisations in the fields of immigration and (un)employment. We rely on the concepts of vertical and horizontal solidarity to interpret how TSOs shape their frames in relation to their level of institutionalisation⁴ and cooperation with public institutions and other actors in the field. We argue that the level of institutionalisation, the value frames that organisations mobilise, and their degree of cooperation and networking are intertwined. On the one hand, institutional features condition the extent of cooperation. On the other hand, cooperation needs to be legitimised by referring to a certain coherence of ideals and value frames.

⁴Institutionalisation is the result of three components: formalisation of organisational features, centralisation of activities and decision making, and professionalisation of organisational roles (Fernández G. G. et al. 2020)

Comparing Associations Within the Immigration Field

Associations working on cultural integration play a key role in the implementation of Art. 4 FNA. They are subsidised by cantonal institutions and collaborate in close ties with other social services and authorities. The strong partnership with the authorities aims at ensuring that their activities meet the current needs of the cantons and of their beneficiaries, by guaranteeing compliance with the guidelines and objectives defined by the legal framework:

The language integration course project is part of an integration institutional project called Language and Training. We respond to this request because it is the integration office that subsidises us. (Migr2 10/2016)

Nevertheless, strong ties to institutional mandates also translate into relevant financial dependence on state/cantonal institutions, which also influences TSOs' structures. Most of these organisations exhibit a relatively high degree of formalisation and professionalisation and a relevant share of paid employees. That said, they tend to consider their dependency on public institutions as mutually beneficial due to their gateway role with regard to immigrant communities.

We have been participating for several years in a cantonal campaign to prevent excision and female genital mutilation, where we are also very active because we are a gateway for this public and the authorities may want to set up something but without access to the communities, it is not possible. We are one of the gateways for issues related to human trafficking (...) we participate at different levels with social institutions, the police and hospital. (Migr2 10/2016)

There is relevant cooperation between organisations oriented towards cultural integration of immigrants and state institutions. Although such cooperation might be beneficial to immigration associations, the existing legal framework also implies limitations. On several occasions, the organisations discussed limited financial means that restrict the geographical scale of their activities and the size of the target groups. They mostly serve

people who live in the same city or in the same canton where the organisation is based. This geographical limitation of solidarity could be considered as a direct consequence of the Swiss political system. Indeed, most of the interviewees referred to a differentiated cantonal implementation of the federal law within the immigration field. Likewise, representatives of cultural integration organisations restrained from critical discourse against authorities. They neither expressed major disagreement with institutional aims nor articulated opposing political opinions.

In contrast, political or policy-oriented associations in the field of immigration displayed critical opinions against authorities and public institutions. Their political frames were key aspects of their activities, and even though they sometimes exchange views with politicians or engage in lobbying activities, they mobilised and out-voiced frames of political distrust and anti-establishment. The following quote shows these TSOs' lack of trust in political actors and legal institutions, which is often replaced by trust in collective actors and civil society:

I no longer have any confidence in the law, which could eventually change, with the SVP making an initiative when they want, on lies (...) with a completely false speech about refugees, the population votes and votes for protection. For their protection, that's clear (...). I don't trust the laws (...). I trust the resistance of civil society and I think it will intensify. (Migr3 10/2016)

Additionally, this type of TSO does not rely on public subsidies and displays a lower degree of institutionalisation. They are considerably less structured than cultural integration organisations and are strongly characterised by non-hierarchical decentralised structures.

We don't get any state subsidies and that's the most important thing; it's really a principle (...) The rule is: we don't get any state subsidies. (Migr3 10/2016)

We have a collective, we have people who have registered, there is no [financial] contribution. There is no hierarchy. There is no leader, or anything. (Migr4 10/2016)

On the one hand, TSOs focusing on cultural integration are highly institutionalised, strongly active at the local level and have regular contact with state/cantonal institutions. Given their institutional dependency, these organisations are less vocal towards public institutions and about their beneficiaries' legal statuses. In contrast, the second group of associations, namely the political or policy-oriented organisations, lacks financial resources and organisational ties to the authorities. Similarly, these organisations are rather decentralised, dispose of horizontal organisational structures, and their low degree of institutionalisation relates to their strong political views against institutional dependency. Political-oriented organisations therefore complement the cultural integration-oriented organisations by challenging immigration and integration policies, aiming at the recognition of immigrants' rights. These two types of organisation (political vs. cultural integration) thus represent two aspects of solidarity. On the one hand, grassroots organisations are oriented towards horizontal solidarity through ideals of social justice and equality and are thus in line with ideals of moral responsibility and human bonding. On the other hand, cultural integration organisations are oriented towards vertical solidarity, notably by providing services and promoting values related to altruism and philanthropy, thus both relate to more vertical views of solidarity.

Comparing Associations Within the (Un)employment Field

The difference between the associations defending workers and the associations defending the unemployed or working poor is also salient at the level of frames and degrees of institutionalisation. As previously illustrated, employment organisations engage in institutionalised political action. Additionally, they display highly diversified organisational structures (professionalised) and strong sectorialisation of roles. They ensure close ties with politicians while framing their activities within their political role of counterbalancing as the workers' mouthpiece in labour-market partnerships.

Today we are trying to establish relations with practically all the parties. For several years now, we have held meetings once or twice a year with the leaders of the various Swiss parties (Unemp1 08/2016)

We mainly act at the level of the national legal framework conditions to try to modify a certain number of parameters of law, directives or other fields in favour of employees. (Unemp1 08/2016)

On the other hand, associations defending the unemployed or working poor are much less integrated into the political arena, and hence, their cooperation with political actors is considerably weaker. Their lack of access to institutional channels also translates into less professionalised and sectorial structures, where several roles converge under the same umbrella:

Sometimes we are heard by a Grand Council committee or consulted by trade unions or parties on a specific issue, but there is no follow-up, no concrete network. It is occasional, almost accidental. (...) We do not have much political support; unemployment is not a very sexy subject for politicians! (Unemp5 08/2016)

Due to the fact that their action takes place at the margins of formal institutions, unemployment associations engage in more contentious politics; they organise demonstrations or political performances to increase their visibility and impact, and they mobilise frames that question the system as a whole:

People tend to believe – or are led to believe – that their problems are purely personal and individual. It is part of our job to obliterate this guilt, to show that there are things that are part of the system and that are not related to people's psyche or temperament. The issue of unemployment, underemployment, and employment, in general, is a social, historical and economic process and not correlated to their psyche. (...) Sometimes the only and last way is to go and occupy a company or demonstrate outside the cantonal employment office (Unemp5 08/2016)

Moreover, these associations share a conception of collective action as a voicing mechanism, enhancing the individual empowerment of their beneficiaries. The below-mentioned quote further illustrates that frames of empowerment and emancipation are at the core of the organisations working in the unemployment field:

The autonomy of individuals is the principle that guides our action. When we help a person with administrative or legal procedures, it is with her/his involvement (...). The beneficiary remains the owner of the action. (...) We are not in a practice of delegation, mothering or representation. When we are in an action to denounce something, the people concerned must be on the front line and we are there with them. (Unemp5 08/2016)

In that sense, they distinguish themselves from employment organisations whose action frames are less confrontational and mainly deployed within the institutional arena. The following quotation illustrates that TSOs in the employment field stress frames of individual responsibility rather than frames of social change and empowerment. They indeed address issues of social and economic autonomy, and they conceive subsidiarity as a way of favouring a bottom-up approach: the organisation only carries out tasks that cannot be accomplished by the individual:

We refer to (...) social values; these are not religious values as such, but rather values of solidarity, of subsidiarity, therefore a number of values that emphasise the responsibility of the person and dialogue rather than confrontation. (Unemp1 08/2016)

Likewise, when looking at cooperation between TSOs in the field, we observe that the linkages are very weak between trade unions and unemployment associations and in most cases suggest opposing roles:

The trade union movement has lost much interest in this issue, at least in Switzerland. The issue of unemployment and underemployment is not a very lucrative area for trade unions. (...) In their analysis, unemployment is not a matter of workers but of social cases. And I think that the associations of the unemployed should develop a conflictual collaboration with the trade unions. (Unemp5 08/2016)

These findings suggest that in the Swiss field of (un)employment, TSOs diverge with regard to the organisational frames and channels used to mobilise their actions, which also influence their degree of professionalisation and sectorialisation.

Comparing Frames, Institutionalisation and Cooperation Across Fields

When we compare the frames mobilised in the immigration and (un)employment fields and their connectedness with institutional and policy frameworks, we observe that TSOs operating in the labour market field account for a more territorial-based perspective. This perspective is translated into specialised tripartite agreements and sets out a legal framework structuring working relationships and labour market conditions as an enclosed domain. Contrarily, in the immigration field, agreements like the Geneva Convention and the transnational refugee movement have crafted and challenged the immigration domestic policy regime and continue to do so. In addition, the strong politicisation of immigration issues in Switzerland is a result of the multicultural pressures caused by immigration. External diversity brought by immigration challenged previous labour and social policies, which had been formerly mostly successful in managing the existing cantonal diversity (Fleiner 2002, Fernández G. G. and Abbiate 2018).

If we focus on protest-oriented TSOs in both fields, we observe convergence with respect to the frames that the organisations mobilise. These TSOs share frames concerning social justice and their aims are strongly connected to the type of beneficiaries they support. By focusing on immigrants, TSOs in this field hold ideals of moral responsibility and human rights that allow clustering immigrants within various vulnerable groups. In contrast, (un)employment TSOs display ideals of social change and empowerment through ideals of mutuality and community belonging between beneficiaries. The dissimilarities in the TSOs' guiding principles could be the result of a complex policy specialisation in both domains and the previously discussed diversification of the immigration field.

It becomes clear that in both fields, TSOs vary in their degree of institutionalisation. Interestingly, the extent of institutionalisation is different in both fields when comparing associations whose primary focus is oriented towards service provision or towards political activities. Whereas service-providing organisations in the immigration field are highly institutionalised, political and policy-oriented TSOs are not. On the other hand, unemployment TSOs that provide services do not dispose of a high degree of institutionalisation, whereas policy-oriented employment organisations such as unions are extremely institutionalised. Additionally, there is little indication of cooperation between the fields of immigration and (un)employment:

Indeed, we have little interaction with associations that defend either the unemployed, asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants or certain immigrants. We are relatively far from these groups of people and the associations that represent them (...) in the regions and even in the cantons, there are branches, and solidarity actually moves to that level. (Unemp1 08/2016)

To sum up, Fig. 9.2 suggests how activities, political aims and degrees of institutionalisation are related within fields and between fields. With respect to activities, these are fairly similar across fields. However, the aims of political action diverge across and within fields, as well as the degree of institutionalisation. Weaker cooperation with state authorities

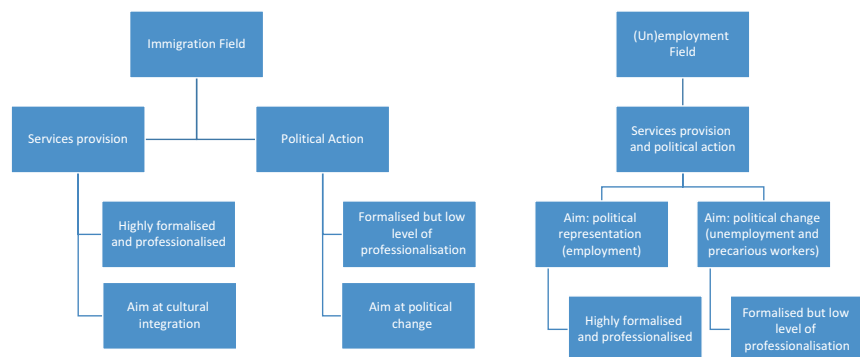


Fig. 9.2 Frames and organisational solidarity in the fields of (un)employment and immigration

translates into political aims of social change and justice, which convey more anti-establishment positions and favour less institutionalisation. This is the case for political and policy-oriented immigration organisations and TSOs operating in the field of unemployment.

Solidarity Across Fields

Connecting Immigration and Employment Associations

Drawing on the previous analysis, we conclude that associations in the immigration field have limited contact with the (un)employment field TSOs. Although some activities of service providing organisations in the immigration field could be linked to the work integration of immigrants, the interviews with the representatives of such organisations lack any indication of this linkage. Their rigid focus on cultural integration is likely to be historical and related to the sectorialisation of employment policies, which did not contemplate the diversification of immigrants' journeys—moving from (male) guest workers beneficiaries to family reunification and refugees. That said, while previous guest worker groups had established associations to improve integration into the labour market of their peers in the 1960–1970s, the shift from the governmental guest worker programme to long-term immigration and the establishment of a common intra-European labour market superseded their activity, and more specialised immigrant-related association started flourishing.

Organisations in the (un)employment field deal with immigration, albeit to a limited extent. Actually, the topic of immigration was often part of the interviews with the representatives of unions or unemployment associations. As immigrants play an important role in the labour market, these organisations are sensitive to new immigration policies, public opinion or international contexts. From their point of view, immigration is constituent of the labour market. Although some organisations have adopted programmes that focus on immigrants as a sub-group of workers, their focal point appears to be not on the integration of

immigrants into the labour market but on reducing the inequalities between nationals and foreigners once in the labour market. Again, this is an indication that immigrants are first and foremost seen as workers:

There is a lot of work to be done, in our opinion, to prevent greater disassociation, gaps and xenophobia between workers. This is the main contribution we make as a union: strengthen solidarity in the labour market with more protection to achieve more equality in the labour market, with immigrants but also with other categories of people who are excluded or who have difficulty returning to the labour market. (Unemp1 08/2016)

TSOs in (un)employment field are aware of the barriers immigrants face to access the labour market. Nevertheless, their solidarity lies with the workforce as a whole rather than solidarity with discriminated immigrant workers.

While some connection between immigration and employment exists, the substantial gap between these two interrelated domains concerns mainly immigrants' labour market integration and access. Immigration associations are little concerned with work integration, and employment associations are not specialised enough on immigrant issues. That said, our analysis also illustrates the existence of a handful of associations, developing programmes to enhance the integration of people with immigration backgrounds into the labour market. Our next section shows how they constitute a first attempt to fill the aforementioned gap.

Specialised Associations: An Attempt to Fill the Gap

As previously presented in Fig. 9.1, immigration and (un)employment associations traditionally adopted different reference groups to define their beneficiaries resulting in two apparently mutually exclusive types of beneficiaries. While immigration organisations delimit their target groups with regard to their immigrant status, (un)employment associations use the employment status as their benchmark. In this section, we present findings on the only two TSOs of our sample that simultaneously take into consideration immigration and employment status when defining

their target groups. These associations represent the overlap between the fields of employment and immigration. They help people who are unemployed and in precarious situations, and at the same time, they help immigrants who cannot directly enter the Swiss labour market. Whereas both groups of individuals are jobless, the organisational goals with respect to each of these groups are not the same. The associations differentiate between the target groups due to differing needs and demands:

We have a group of employees with a solidarity employment contract. They are long-term unemployed. With these people, the objective is clearly professional reintegration (...) [whereas] (...) The impact [for asylum seekers] is primarily on self-esteem. To be useful in society, to have a team, colleagues, to have a function in society. There are also more practical aspects to employability, such as mastery of French, knowledge of working customs in Switzerland: being on time, respecting a schedule, knowing work procedures and so on. (Unemp4 07/2016)

Additionally, these organisations benefit from a relatively institutionalised structure. Financially, they are partially supported by cantonal subsidies. The rest of their income comes from the services they provide outside the organisation in the solidarity economy. They also work in close partnership with cantonal institutions dealing with social assistance, unemployment or asylum issues. The organisations themselves presume this cooperation is crucial to their existence:

With the State, we cooperated in social domains (...) we have many collaborations with the social assistance [institutions] for training programmes, internships and solidarity jobs (...) without these collaborations, our association would certainly not exist. (Unemp4 07/2016)

These institutional partnerships reflect also a high degree of institutionalisation, but like associations dealing with the cultural integration of immigrants, these organisations also base the legitimacy of their scope of action on the legal framework. Thus, the reliance on state authorities both financially and legally depoliticises their discourse and activities:

Unemployment is regulated by federal law. Your contributions pay for this insurance, which ultimately allows you to be a part of the system so that people who lose their jobs do not fall into a void. So it can be said that it is a law that is solidary by definition, because it prevents the person from falling into a vacuum, into an emptiness where he or she no longer has enough to live. (Unemp3 10/2016)

However, these associations stand out from the most institutionalised organisations in the immigration field because they consider work as a means of integration. The first factor of integration is not a national language but the work itself. A job comes with an array of skills to learn and notably the language. Work is valued because the consequences are important in terms of integration:

I think integration is largely through work. We can realise that the differences between cultures are not as great as we sometimes imagine. And if you have a salary, you can pay taxes, get an apartment, and so on. (Unemp4 07/2016)

The activities carried out by these two TSOs illustrate a combination of services traditionally offered by cultural integration associations, such as language courses, and services usually undertaken by unemployment organisations like administrative help regarding the labour market and offers of a (temporal) place to work. Thus, we could consider that these TSOs respond to the most recent policy changes in the immigration and (un)employment fields, which will enter into force in 2018–2020 and define integration through employability.

As shown throughout our chapter, the interlinkages between labour policies and immigration policies depend on a variety of permits' duration and rights, which have mostly been approached independently within each field. These two TSOs are an attempt to respond to the traditional categorisation of beneficiaries by connecting various sorts of vulnerabilities between fields. Indeed, since the 1990s, at the institutional and associational level, there has been a debate on the cultural and economic integration of immigrants, and these associations could be considered a side product of this debate. As shown in Fig. 9.3, these associations

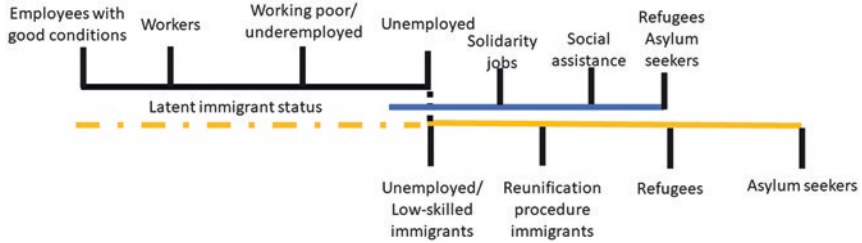


Fig. 9.3 Organisations across fields—an attempt to fill the gap

appear to address some of the gaps formerly discussed. However, several questions remain unaddressed. First, they only tackle people with a refugee status or asylum seekers, thus omitting support for the unemployed/working poor immigrants. Hence, we observe that the associational gap to address the double structural vulnerability of individuals with simultaneous precarious work and immigration status remains very present. Second, even though they are part of the solidarity economy, these organisations are not auto-sustainable; financially they are strongly dependent on public support. This raises another question on how financial and institutional dependency constrains the choice and scope of the organisations’ activities and therefore limits their capacity to potentially address the aforementioned associational gap.

Conclusion

By reviewing some of the organisational features of the sampled TSOs in the fields of immigration and (un)employment, we found that the diversity with regard to the type of solidarity frames across the two domains could be related to the policy environments that legitimise the organisational solidarity. Organisations in the immigration field predominantly mobilise vertical approaches of solidarity related to altruism and moral responsibility; in addition, they differentiate between immigrant groups with respect to their immigration status. Alternatively, (un)employment organisations mobilised horizontal frames of solidarity, considering their beneficiaries as a homogenous group of either workers, precarious

workers or unemployed people, while indirectly overlooking immigrant-specific vulnerabilities and characteristics. While we have outlined relevant differences across the fields' solidarity frames, we also suggest that with respect to levels of institutionalisation, TSOs across fields show similar organisational traits. In particular, we advance as in previous organisational studies that the level of formalisation and professionalisation of the organisations could also depend on their role in policy domains and access to institutional channels (Piven and Cloward 1977; Diani and Donati 1999; Kriesi 1996).

Additionally, the analysis revealed that immigration organisations struggle to address immigrants' labour market integration and focus mostly on the cultural aspects of integration, even though several of the activities carried out, such as language classes, contribute to immigrant employability. Their range of actions seems to be the result of the historical development of cultural integration associations that appeared once the Swiss immigration policy shifted from a "guest-worker-only" perspective to a more long-term immigration policy. Similarly, in the (un)employment field, employment organisations consider immigrants indistinctively as part of their target group: workers/working poor/unemployed. Even though we observed some awareness towards immigration-related issues, which were tackled by side programmes, once immigrant economic status deteriorates, (un)employment TSOs become less receptive to and capable of responding to immigrants' integration issues. Consequentially, these associations often refer immigrants back to TSOs in the field of immigration to deal with questions specific to migratory status. However, this leaves us to conclude that there is still an organisational gap when it comes to immigrants' integration into the labour market, despite the interconnectivity between the two fields.

Some additional elements, which also prevent us from addressing the interconnections between these fields are, on the one hand, on the "migrants' side", barriers related to the migrants' background and skills. The lack of knowledge of the local language, the lack of qualifications or the difficulty to get one's diploma recognised effectively hinders the entry of immigrants onto the labour market (Mexi et al. 2020). These are burdens not only for the integration of immigrants in the labour market but also for their access to organisational structures in the (un)employment

domain. “Ordinary structures” such as Regional Employment Centres, social assistance or education services are supposed to be accessible to all, but their “material access”, implies basic requirements like knowledge of the local language, which effectively prevents some immigrants from benefiting from these (Mexi et al. 2020). On the other hand, there are also burdens linked to the federalist structure of the Swiss (un)employment and immigration policy regimes. As the cantons are primary responsible for the implementation of national directives, the cooperation between federal level and local actors is weak and differentiated practice across cantons are enhanced (Giraud et al. 2007; Probst et al. 2019).

Furthermore, we advanced that a handful of organisations have started to tentatively overcome the gap between the two fields and address beneficiaries with overlapping vulnerabilities. In this regard, within the recent immigration policy framework, the *Swiss integration agenda* seeks to improve the employability of refugees and temporarily admitted persons by establishing national guidelines and new integration objectives (Swiss Confederation 2018). However, it remains to be seen whether these new policies enable the practical implementation of organisational solidarity across these two interconnected domains. For instance, the diversity of cantonal integration agendas and the complexity of procedures to gain work permits could hamper the development of activities and programmes of the associations beyond the local level. Thus, the complexity of the legal and federal structure could also obstruct the development of a national solidarity scheme targeting immigrant workers.

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10

Conclusions: Differing Contexts, Converging Experiences, Transnational Solidarity

Ulrike Zschache and Christian Lahusen

Introduction

Citizen groups across Europe are engaged in solidarity activism in a wider range of issue fields. Many of these groups and organisations have been active for many years, but this engagement has been stepped up considerably in reaction to the growing social needs and political demands provoked by the various crises that have affected European countries since 2008. The previous chapters have painted a rich picture of the organisational fields in a number of European countries, paying particular

The chapter takes up results of the research project “European paths to transnational solidarity at times of crisis: Conditions, forms, role models and policy responses” (TransSOL), which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 649435.

U. Zschache • C. Lahusen (✉)
Department of Social Sciences, University of Siegen, Siegen,
Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany
e-mail: zschache@sozialwissenschaften.uni-siegen.de; lahusen@soziologie.uni-siegen.de

attention to smaller and mostly local initiatives engaged in practices of transnational solidarity. In-depth interviews with representatives and activists from these citizen groups and civic organisations were conducted in Denmark, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and the UK in order to map solidarity work in the fields of unemployment, migration and asylum and disabilities, to better understand the experiences of these organisations, the challenges and constraints they have faced, the action repertoires and strategies they have employed and the national and transnational webs of cooperation they have been involved in. This book offers chapters summarising the main findings of their fieldwork at the grassroots level, giving a vivid account of the situation within each of the countries under analysis. The experiences of the analysed groups and organisations mirror the specificities of the issue field they are working in, as well as the specific features of the socio-economic, political and cultural context of their respective countries. However, the perceptions of the interviewed activists, the experiences they report and the lessons learned share a great number of similarities, testifying that citizen groups, while committed to local activism and restricted to a limited area of operation, seem to be part of a cross-national arena of transnational solidarity work, committed to a similar mission in a context of similar challenges and degradations.

Diverging Contexts and Converging Experiences

Engaged citizens are aware that solidarity work is confronted with increasing problems and challenges. In most interviews, we heard about growing deprivations, and in part, respondents spoke of apparent moments of crisis. In times of economic recession, mass unemployment, growing precariousness and high immigration, civic groups and organisations have to respond to growing needs, increasing external pressures and limited organisational capacities. Problems have increased in the wake of the financial and economic crisis since 2008, and additional challenges have emerged with the so-called refugee crisis, which announced itself through increasing inflows of refugees in the South European countries,

culminating in the dramatic summer of 2015. Solidarity groups have been exposed to these crises to varying degrees, depending on the issue field they are operating in and also on the country where they are located. However, accounts and experiences are surprisingly similar, as the various chapters in the book testify.

The Great Recession as a Joint Experience?

Citizen groups and civic organisations have had to respond to the socio-economic and financial crisis in a very different way. Greek organisations providing services and help to the unemployed, for instance, had to struggle with far greater difficulties than German unemployment groups or unions. However, it is important to stress that the Great Recession has had an impact on the work of almost all solidarity organisations, across countries and issue fields (Sanchez Salgado 2017; Papadaki and Kalogeraki 2017; Zamponi and Bosi 2018). In particular, three aggravations are mentioned everywhere: the socio-economic degradation due to the financial and economic crisis since 2008, the ongoing retrenchment of the welfare state and a new wave of austerity measures, and a growing disruption of social cohesion (Bermeo and Bartels 2014; Blyth 2013; Schmidt 2016). In most countries, these three elements of crisis are described with similar verve. In Italy and Greece, activists report exposure to economic, political and social degradation. In Poland, France and the UK, respondents stress the gravity of those deprivations that are tied to the political and institutional transformation of the welfare state, whose pace has increased since the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis. Engaged citizens in Denmark and Germany, finally, do not highlight current developments and short-term shocks but argue that the immediate impact of the economic and political aggravations is only part of a more general and long-term development that implies structural deteriorations of social cohesion within society. In this sense it is astonishing that the similarities between perceptions of aggravations and problems prevail, in spite of apparent contextual differences: while countries have been exposed to the Great Recession to varying degrees, activists across all countries share a similar diagnosis of their times, even though they emphasise the various elements of crisis differently.

In Greece, the conflation of all three elements of crisis was the most notable. Due to the severity and the length of the economic recession, Greek activists report that a considerable share of the Greek population was affected by the harsh fallout from the economic and financial crisis, the implementation of Troika Memoranda and drastic austerity policies. Over a million people lost their jobs, social and health care was minimised due to cuts in public spending, and most Greeks became frustrated and desperate. Also in Italy, interviewees underline that the global economic crisis increased social vulnerabilities, having a devastating impact on deprived population groups, as it increased unemployment and deteriorated the conditions of those living in conditions of precarious work and/or joblessness. In the years between 2010 and 2013, the economic and financial crisis provoked severe cuts in welfare services, which affected not only those groups within society dependent on social benefits but also the prospects of those wishing to be included more proactively in society, such as people with disabilities.

In other countries, the feeling of significant aggravations is shared, even though the financial and socio-economic crisis was not identified as the main catalyst of social degradations. In Poland, TSO representatives could not pinpoint moments of financial strain and economic degradation, given that Poland's economy was little affected by the global and European crisis. However, the Polish government seems to have used the more adverse economic context to push for austerity policies that aimed at the liberalisation and flexibilisation of the labour market, cuts in unemployment rights and welfare benefits for the disabled. In other countries, the Great Recession seems to have expedited a deeper transformation of the welfare state, already well under way at that point in time. Here as well, TSO activists largely agree on welfare retrenchment and austerity policies being the main reason for growing social problems and grievances. In the UK, decades of privatisation seem to go hand in hand with a roll back of the state and immediate impacts of austerity policies, which all had a significant impact on the living conditions of disabled people, sparked numerous redundancies, poorer working conditions and lower levels of labour security, an increase in non-standard forms of employment, and social benefits characterised by sanctions and compulsion. In addition, the sensibility to social degradations was fostered by

public concerns about potential job losses as a consequence of Brexit. According to French transnational solidarity organisations (TSOs), the global economic crisis nurtured a long-standing process of welfare retrenchment in their country as well. Social degradation is attributed not to the impact of the crisis per se but to austerity measures. The Great Recession is thus perceived as part of a long-term project to reinforce a neoliberal agenda of welfare cuts, privatisation of public services and increased exposure of citizens to market competition. Overall, there is a sense of a gradual welfare retrenchment that is associated with a crisis of the welfare state value and thus, consequently, of social cohesion. Similarly in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, the perception of living in times of substantial degradation is less tied to specific dates. In particular, the outbreak of the financial and economic crisis is less of a noteworthy event for our respondents in Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. This does not exclude, as some civic organisations indicate, considerable blows to the national labour market, a rising demand for social benefits and growing pressure on public finances, as well as increasing public debt. However, from the perception of activists, these financial and economic shocks were transitory and thus a specific episode of a long-term development. Danish activists, for instance, report that their country was hit much less forcefully by the 2008 financial crisis, and the stagnation in the initial crisis years was soon replaced by an economic recovery. Prior to the financial crisis, however, Denmark had been through a structural reform of the local government system that significantly changed social policies and implied cuts in the distribution of welfare.

German activists agree with this general diagnosis, because the financial and economic crisis of the years 2008 and 2009, which affected the German labour market considerably over a short period, is perceived as part of a long-term process of welfare retrenchment, rising social inequalities and problems, and declining levels of social cohesion and solidarity. Due to the economic recovery and growth in Germany since 2010, problems related to unemployment, social exclusion and poverty disappeared from the public eye, while debates about austerity measures and the financial sustainability of the German social model featured high on the public agenda. Activists are mainly concerned that unemployment and poverty are being pushed off political and media agendas, thus

contributing to the erosion of solidarity towards concerned societal groups. This also limits the possibilities of promoting the full equity and inclusion of people with disabilities in society.

For respondents from Switzerland, the global and European financial and economic crisis does not seem to have had any marked impact. Yet activists shift attention to the influence of the long-term restructuring of the welfare system. In particular, the development of a system of active labour market policies for unemployed people, or people with difficulties gaining access to the labour market, is seen as a factor that contributes to an increased divide between the insiders and the outsiders of the labour market, as well as a growing opposition between organisations representing the interests of people in employment, on the one hand, and unemployed people, on the other. Similar to their German counterparts, unemployment TSOs are concerned about a lack of public and political awareness of the structural reasons for unemployment, underemployment and poverty, and the erosion of solidarity towards the most vulnerable groups in society.

The current times are thus described as a situation of economic, political and social regression that substantially challenge the work of solidarity groups and organisations, even though activists are steering clear of a wholly doom and gloom portrayal of societal degradation, while underlining moments of change and opportunity. In this sense, the perception of crisis is nurtured by an inherent narrative of risks and opportunities. In regard to risks, our interviews underline that civic groups and organisations have to operate in a more difficult environment, implying more challenges, pressures and limitations. Local TSOs have to meet more needs and demands of unemployed people, migrants and refugees, and disabled citizens. At the same time, they have to operate with fewer (financial) resources, given rising public debt and austerity measures and more competition among civic groups and organisations for a smaller share of public and private funding. In part, these groups see the need to adapt their activities and services in order to survive. Moreover, the relations with public authorities develop more confrontational elements, particularly when groups stress their advocatory mission and militate for defending the political rights of the deprived groups they advocate for. In regard to opportunities, the current situation of crisis and

regression is also perceived as a situation of growing mobilisation of engaged citizens, the formation of new initiatives and experimentation with more advocacy and participatory action repertoires. Additionally, the activists' accounts testify a growing public awareness about the political underpinnings of socio-economic degradations, stressing the criticism of public policies of austerity, the retrenchment of welfare services and the questioning of citizens' social rights. In this context, solidarity has become more political in that it requires a struggle to preserve and extend social rights, to speak out on behalf of the demands of deprived groups on the fringes of society and to empower and involve them in collective actions.

In Greece, the regressive and permissive repercussions of the crises on the organisational field of TSOs have been most notable. In reaction to the economic recession, the Troika Memoranda, the austerity policies and the growing incapacity of the welfare state to respond, a wide range of solidarity groups and organisations emerged in order to provide direct support to cover basic, everyday needs. Greek respondents report that their country has experienced unprecedented growth in civil society organisations, which have also become stronger and more autonomous from state and partisan control, thus stepping out of the clientelistic framework of previous decades. In other countries, this experience of growth is less marked, given that civil society organisations are more widely spread and integrated into issue field-specific practices of political advocacy and public service provision. Activists thus describe the impact of the adverse economic, political and social circumstances as paradoxical pressures that increase public expectations, while limiting public resources. Italian activists report that they have sought to mitigate the impact of economic breakdown and austerity policies by stepping up both advocacy and service provision. With a certain unease, they see themselves engaged in playing a complementary role to the welfare state, thus correcting the mistakes of current policy developments. Also, British respondents stress that public debt, privatisation and austerity policies are creating a difficult funding environment which limits the ability of organisations to do more work with fewer resources. In addition, Polish respondents add that the lack of public funding cannot be compensated for by donations from members or supporters, thus pulling the plug on certain

activities and services. They all agree that these aggravations are primarily caused by inadequate government actions. Danish respondents share the conviction that the current situation is marked by a homemade crisis, thus stressing that they have become more critical of their government, which is undermining the traditionally close ties between Danish civil society and municipalities in providing welfare services, not only in the disability sector but also in regard to services for the unemployed, migrants and refugees. Against this backdrop, a more advocacy stance is being adopted by many civic groups, as is true for the situation among French civic groups. This situation, however, is not without contradictions and ambivalences. On the one hand, the retrenchment of the welfare state is increasing the complementary function of civil society organisations in the provision of services, thus opening a door for organisations to professionalise and institutionalise. On the other hand, however, the organisational mission of these solidarity groups is being politicised, underlining the advocacy approach of their work and introducing more confrontational relations with public authorities.

The So-Called Refugee Crisis: Aggravating Contexts and Regressive Tendencies

Solidarity groups had been confronted with a societal environment that was marked—according to the representatives of these organisations—by regressive tendencies and multiple hardships. The detrimental consequences of the financial and economic crisis and the limitations imposed by public policies of welfare retrenchment have not been, however, the only source of concern to TSOs, given that the so-called summer of migration since 2015 has multiplied problems and challenges for civic groups engaged in the field of migration and asylum and for citizens concerned with the situation of incoming refugees. Also, the so-called refugee crisis has had a differential impact on civic solidarity, even though all countries seem to have been affected to some degree (della Porta 2018; Zamponi 2017; Kousis et al. 2020). Countries on the transit route of refugees fleeing from war, persecution or famine—such as Greece—and countries of destination—such as Germany—experienced a considerable

mobilisation of civic solidarity as a consequence of the inability of public authorities to respond to human tragedies and individual needs, true also for solidarity groups in the other countries with no or few incoming refugees. Activists testify that the so-called refugee crisis has changed public perceptions and policies, thus calling for more proactive and advocacy work in solidarity with non-citizens, migrants and refugees. While the so-called refugee crisis had positive effects on the mobilisation of support for solidarity initiatives in the short term, activists rather tend to insist on the risks and pressures the summer of migration has brought about in the long term.

The momentum of public mobilisation was the most pronounced in Greece, Germany and Italy, following the reports of TSO representatives. In Greece, solidarity groups committed to fighting social exclusion have stepped up their activities in order to integrate refugees and immigrants, but these activities were not dissociated from initiatives working on behalf of the disabled and/or unemployed people. As a consequence of the dual crisis, many new TSOs were established in the fields of migration, disability and unemployment, and in many cases, members and activists had already been active in civil society organisations and social movements. Civil society has not only experienced moments of considerable growth; it has been exposed to an internal integration in terms of cross-cutting needs, constituencies and demands. The Italian experience deviated in one important aspect from the Greek one, because in Italy, a web of civic groups and organisations working on behalf of migrants and refugees had already been in place, which expanded and intensified their current activities. This has to do also with new funding opportunities for TSOs as an immediate reaction to the so-called refugee crisis, which helped to support the organisational work, mainly concerning services for immigrants and refugees.

The situation in Germany deviates from the Greek and Italian experiences, because the German economy had largely recovered before the high inflow of refugees and migrants from Syria, other regions of the Middle and Far East and Africa. Activists were generally very successful in claiming that Germany had a moral obligation to welcome people fleeing from war and poverty, which led to innumerable new citizen groups, initiatives and volunteers that started to assist the newly arrived asylum

seekers. This civic engagement was not confined to religious or left anti-racists' groups, but it mobilised ordinary citizens across political orientations and social milieus. The informal initiatives and groups were able to emerge across the whole country, also because these organisations could build on a well-developed network of civil society organisations, activists and members. However, welcoming culture and pro-refugee groups were confronted with public reservations from the very beginning, often struggling with committing public authorities to provide sufficient services and goods. Additionally, their activism was paralleled by growing counter-mobilisations, which tried to discredit their solidarity work and push public opinion towards a more restrictive approach to immigration and integration.

The constraining effect of public hostility has also been experienced by activists from other countries, even though these countries had been much less exposed to the inflows of refugees than Greece and Germany. Denmark and the UK were among those countries with a limited number of Syrian refugees, while Poland resisted any attempts to participate in burden-sharing, even though the number of migrants from Ukraine was quite substantial. TSOs in these countries aimed primarily to confront restrictive immigration and asylum policies that had been introduced by the national government. In Denmark, the so-called refugee crisis provoked a wave of mobilisation, with many citizens volunteering in grassroots movements engaged in practical help and support activities. This mobilisation, however, had to struggle from the very beginning with a public opinion leaning towards populist and anti-immigrant sentiments, thus limiting their scope of activities considerably. Similar to the experience in France, TSOs working on behalf of migrants and refugees are confronted by restrictive migration policies and less supportive programmes of social integration. Under these circumstances, solidarity groups are forced to focus on more urgent needs (such as food, housing and health). Even though many organisations in Italy, France, Denmark and the UK underline their advocatory mission as struggling for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, their political activism seems to be much more severely challenged within the public sphere.

Solidarity Activities and Cooperation Structures

Solidarity groups have been shaped by the aggravating social conditions of their societies. Both crises—the Great Recession since 2008 and the crisis of the European migration regime emerging since 2012—have left their imprint on the organisational fields in all countries under analysis. Even though the exposure to the dual crisis was very different between TSOs, depending on which target groups they addressed and in which countries they operated, it is true that all of them were directly or indirectly affected by growing socio-economic grievances, more restrictive social and immigration policies, and a less permissive and supportive opinion climate in regard to excluded groups. While the Great Recession and the so-called refugee crisis called for more solidarity between European governments and citizens, national policies and public debates tended to regress towards national conceptions of solidarity.

This context has encouraged TSOs to maintain an activism that remains committed to transnational solidarity. The two crises have quite markedly impacted on the organisational fields of TSOs, even in those countries with a short-lived economic downturn and comparatively low numbers of incoming refugees and asylum seekers. They have encouraged activists to broaden the concept of solidarity, given that TSOs questioned more overtly the distinctiveness of different target groups, calling for more integrated, intersectional approaches to meet the needs of the unemployed, migrants or refugees and disabled people, and engaging in a more concerted struggle in favour of an inclusive, open and fair society. While many TSOs have been prioritising the charitable dimension of solidarity when providing services and goods to meet the immediate needs of those groups exposed more severely to the dual crisis, activists across issue fields and countries tend to stress the limitations of such an approach, agreeing on the need for a more political approach to rights-based advocacy. Additionally, TSOs have seen the need to engage in cooperation and networking activities and to continuously develop their action repertoires in order to more effectively conform to their goals and missions. As we will see in the following, activists in all countries under analysis seem to be part of a shared learning environment.

Politicisation and Contentiousness

Unquestionably, this book has something to add to the literature on the subject of the politicisation and contentiousness of TSOs in the three analysed fields of vulnerability. In this regard, some similarities emerge across countries. At the same time, relevant differences exist that require us to draw a more nuanced picture. Generally, it appears that the smaller, grassroots-based and mostly locally embedded solidarity organisations are more often than not political, critical and contentious (also Zamponi and Bosi 2018). Moreover, the findings of most country chapters reveal that action repertoires are in many cases characterised by a strong combination of service provision and political activities (also Zamponi 2019). Hence, many TSOs have a “hybrid” character (Minkoff 2002) and bridge the divide between service- and policy-orientation, evidenced in previous research (Baglioni and Giugni 2014; Baglioni 2001). In direct confrontation with urgent needs and grievances, providing direct help and support is the first response of many solidarity organisations. Nevertheless, many of them pursue a political mission or agenda. What is more, in many instances, TSOs have been duly created out of the political motivation to counterpose and mitigate insufficient public policies in times of state retrenchment, austerity and crises.

On closer inspection, it appears that action repertoires vary notably with respect to different fields and countries. Basically, a first distinction can be made with regard to the question of whether TSOs centre their activities more strongly on service provision or on political action. Secondly, we can distinguish between different types of political activity. On the one hand, there are more moderate and cooperative forms, such as awareness raising, advocacy, lobbying and campaigning. On the other hand, we find more critical, contentious, confrontational and radical forms, involving protest and strike action, and social movement campaigns. There is wide agreement among the findings across the eight countries under review that TSOs from the disability field usually focus more strongly on service provision and that their political activism is mostly based on moderate and cooperative forms of action, like awareness raising, interest representation and lobbying. However, when it

comes to the other two fields, the findings are not so clear. In large parts, we see that TSOs from the unemployment and migration fields tend to follow a hybrid approach, combining practical help and political mobilisation invariably without prioritising one over the other. To a certain degree, service-oriented and political action are, in fact, inextricably interlinked because providing direct practical help to their target groups is regarded as a political statement in itself. However, this pattern does not apply equally to all countries. In the UK, for instance, there is a clearer division of labour between service- and policy-oriented migration TSOs. Moreover, the smaller, grassroots-oriented unemployment and migration TSOs often appear more critical and contentious compared to the disability TSOs, and a minority of them are indeed quite radical and confrontational. Yet again, this observation is not true for all countries. In Italy, for instance, the analysed TSOs across all three fields are rarely heavily politicised and tend to engage in more moderate forms of political action, like awareness raising, advocacy and lobbying, while only a few are overtly contentious and more radical. This is in sharp contrast to Greece, the second country analysed in this book that is strongly impacted as a consequence of the dual crisis. Here, we found the highest degree of politicisation and radicalism among the smaller, grassroots-oriented TSOs forming the focus of this book.

Cooperation and Transnationalism

For the smaller scale, grassroots-oriented and mostly locally based citizen groups and organisations, mutual help, sharing and pooling of resources and cooperation with other civil society organisations is an important strategy in order to face hard times of austerity, state retrenchment and crises. Accordingly, trends show that grassroots transnational solidarity organisations have both tightened and expanded their cooperation with others over the past decade. For the vast majority of these groups and organisations, cooperation within the domestic context has been prioritised. Since most of their activities are geared towards responding to urgent needs and grievances in their direct local environment, interrelations of mutual support and exchange with other local initiatives,

organisations and networks prevail. This local focus applies particularly strongly to the migration and refugee help organisations. In addition, many of the analysed organisations are involved in regional to national forms of cooperation and networking.

Yet, the way in which cooperation is organised differs notably among the fields, and these differences are similarly patterned across countries. Overall, disability organisations typically belong to rather formal national associations or umbrella organisations. Moreover, cooperation and inter-organisational relations of solidarity among disability organisations are markedly structured according to particular types of disability or disease, thus leading to considerable fragmentation in this field. In comparison, organisations from the migration and unemployment sector are much more embedded in informal networks and platforms, unless they are trade unions that also tend to be part of formal associations and umbrella organisations. What is more, there seems to be a widespread trend that particularly labour and unemployment organisations, but also organisations from the migration field, respond to the challenges of the past years by building alliances with and extending their solidarity relations towards organisations and networks from a broad range of other sectors and issue fields, including precarity and atypical working conditions, poverty, migration, housing, rising nationalism, anti-neoliberalism, austerity or women's and ethnic minorities' rights. They bridge differences, identify common concerns and join forces in order to mobilise broader constituencies, enhance public and political attention and promote political change (also Diani 2018; Gumbrell-McCormick 2011; Kirton and Greene 2005; Marino et al. 2015). The latter also reflects the fact that most organisations from the unemployment and migration fields pursue a political mission and engage in political action. Indeed, observed differences in the type of cooperation and networking should not be attributed to the field of activity alone. We also have to remember that the three analysed fields differ in their degree of contentiousness. As described previously, disability TSOs tend to be more service-oriented and more moderate and consensus-oriented in their political activities (such as awareness raising, lobbying and campaigning), while unemployment and migration TSOs are often more politicised, critical, contentious and protest-oriented. These variations in the level of contentiousness further translate

into the ways in which inter-organisational relations are coordinated and organised.

If cooperation within national contexts prevails, what is the proper role of transnational exchange and collaboration? In this regard, the findings of this book provide striking evidence that smaller scale, grassroots-oriented solidarity organisations are engaged in activities of transnational solidarity, but it follows unique patterns that distinguish it from the more salient transnationalism of larger and more formalised civil society organisations (Kohler-Koch and Buth 2013; Sanchez Salgado 2014). Indeed, as we have already proposed elsewhere (Kousis et al. 2020; Lahusen 2020), the country studies at hand corroborate and illustrate in detail that smaller, mostly informal and locally based citizen groups and organisations are more likely to pursue forms of soft transnational solidarity that involve rather loosely coupled, horizontal forms of cooperation and informal networking across different countries. Moreover, the locally embedded and grassroots-centred action repertoires through which TSOs respond to urgent needs and demands in their direct environment translate further into forms of transnational cooperation that have a decentralised structure and are immediately bound to specific local organisations and/or constituencies in other countries. In other words, transnational solidarity manifests itself primarily as cross-national cooperation between different local groups (also Lahusen et al. 2018; Mattoni and della Porta 2014; Tarrow 1998). It consists typically of information exchange and sharing ideas, learning about best practices and potential solutions to current challenges across borders. Furthermore, such loose forms of transnational cooperation comprise ad-hoc campaigning and collaboration of different local groups or grassroots organisations in specific, non-formalised ad-hoc projects. In a small number of cases, cross-national cooperation also involves direct service provision and financial support for local (self-help) groups and people in need living in less developed regions of the world. In comparison, forms of hard or strong transnational solidarity, where cross-national activities are coordinated in a more formal and structured way, play only a secondary role. Cooperation is seldom organised in formalised European or transnational platforms, networks or campaigns. Some TSOs engage in joint transnational projects that are funded, for instance, by the EU or other international

funding sources, which can also be regarded as a form of stronger, more systematic transnational cooperation.

In addition, the minority of the analysed solidarity organisations are involved in forms of vertical Europeanisation, thus participating in a “scale shift” (Tarrow and McAdam 2005) towards the EU (also Kohler-Koch 2010; Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2013; Monforte 2009; Sanchez Salgado 2017; Taylor and Mathers 2004). Here, TSOs are organised as members of a more formalised European or international umbrella organisation, platform or network—either directly or indirectly through their national umbrella organisation. Through their membership, these TSOs can benefit from the advocacy, lobbying and campaigning activities of their umbrella organisations and thus gain access to legislative processes and consultations at the supra- or transnational level.

Moving beyond the distinction between (soft or strong) horizontal and vertical solidarity interlinkages, the country chapters of this book evidence that both the prevalent type and the extent of transnational solidarity are pre-structured by a set of different factors. Firstly, and similar to domestic forms of cooperation, the very field of activity and the degree of contentiousness make a difference as to whether TSOs privilege soft or hard transnational solidarity practices. Soft forms of transnational solidarity are predominant in the migration field and widely diffused among TSOs from the unemployment field. TSOs pursuing soft transnationalism are also those that are often more politicised and critical and, in many cases, also more contentious and protest-oriented. These types of transnational solidarity organisations opt for horizontal relations of reciprocity and mutual exchange because they target the grassroots level of direct demands and grievances. However, due to their critical and often contentious character, they also aim to avoid the adaptive pressures implied by more formalised and vertical forms of Europeanisation (Kohler-Koch and Buth 2013; Sanchez Salgado 2014). In comparison, stronger forms of horizontal cooperation and vertical Europeanisation are more common among TSOs from the disability field, trade unions and some employment-oriented TSOs. These interlinkages manifest themselves mainly in the membership of a transnational network or European umbrella organisation, or sometimes of structured projects or programmes on the basis of EU funds, such as Erasmus+ and the European

Social Fund. TSOs favouring harder, more formalised or fixed forms of transnational solidarity and/or vertical Europeanisation tend to be more service-oriented and apply a more consensus-oriented, mainstream approach to their political activities.

Secondly, the extent and type of transnational solidarity relations are decisively influenced by organisational capacities and the exploitation of external opportunities. The extent, intensity and eventually also the question of loose and ad-hoc or more structured transnational cooperation are to a significant degree conditional upon organisational resources. Many respondents across the different countries reported that they could barely afford to engage systematically in transnational cooperation and networking. What is more, existing transnational interlinkages often had to be scaled back or given up in recent years due to the immense workload they encounter in their direct environments at home. Relocating their efforts from the European to the local (and national) level of cooperation has clearly been prioritised in times of state retrenchment, austerity and crises. This observation applies most strongly to the small, informal citizen groups and organisations operating exclusively with volunteers. In comparison, organisations that are somewhat larger tend to be more resourceful and are better prepared to engage more systematically and strongly in transnational solidarity relations. In part, these organisations are also more formalised and involve some paid staff. Thus, the question of whether and how a solidarity organisation can afford to become active transnationally is largely a matter of size and partly due to the degree of formalisation (Durán Mogollón et al. 2020).

At the same time, size and formalisation have an influence on an organisation's readiness to seize external opportunities, such as access to an additional arena of lobbying and influence-taking on political decisions and to new, alternative funding sources at the supra- and transnational level (also Kousis 1999; Císař and Vráblíková 2013; Sanchez Salgado 2017). In this regard, once again the bigger and more formalised solidarity organisations are able to utilise these opportunities. As discussed earlier, a higher degree of formalisation often goes hand in hand with an organisation's membership of formal European umbrella organisations or networks. Hence, through this membership, the more formal TSOs may seek to impact on supranational policy-making in order to

compensate for insufficient influence-taking at home. In addition, country reports similarly point out that it is mostly the larger and often the more formal TSOs that have the capacities to apply for funding from European and transnational funding sources in order to make up for reductions in and harsh competition over domestic funding and as a way to respond to rising demands among their constituencies. In particular, the financial opportunities offered by supra- and transnational funding are a driving force for them to engage in structured joint European and transnational projects and more long-lasting collaborations with partners from abroad. In contrast, smaller, informal, low-resourced TSOs usually do not have the capacity to apply for EU and transnational forms of funding (with uncertain success), as they have to focus their resources on the pressing demands in their immediate environments (also Lahusen 2014). Thus, what we see is that the already better-equipped TSOs are the ones that are able to take advantage of supra- and transnational opportunities to further secure their survival in hard times of state retrenchment and crises, while those that are already struggling to make ends meet are in a disadvantaged position. At the same time, though, we need to remember that higher degrees of contentiousness may also lead them to distance themselves more overtly from the EU as a system of governance.

Social Learning and Innovation

A third major finding is that the solidarity work of the analysed groups and organisations is considerably shaped by collective learning processes. Respondents from the different countries widely agree that they have developed and employed new approaches and practices in recent years in order to respond to changing social realities and new challenges in times of austerity, state retrenchment and crises. Indeed, they report that poor resources and insufficient or transformed political frameworks, on the one hand, and a surge of people in need of support as well as a rise of new grievances and demands, on the other, have urged them to adapt their strategies, concepts and activities to these new circumstances. In addition, new practices have emerged because of TSOs making use of new

opportunities and adapting to new routines of constituencies and stakeholders, particularly with regard to the latest communication technologies. Overall, these revised and altered approaches and practices are not, *per se*, completely new. Nevertheless, they involve innovative elements because of the ways in which these solidarity groups and organisations experiment with new activities and instruments or adjust existing ones in order to respond to new needs and cope with transformed circumstances (also Kousis and Paschou 2017; Papadaki and Kalogeraki 2017; Zamponi and Bosi 2018).

Across the different country chapters, a number of similar patterns have emerged. First of all, interviewees from various countries reported that their group or organisation extended the scope of solidarity towards new target groups that usually did not belong to their core constituency. In practical terms, this meant an expansion and adaptation of the TSOs' repertoire of action in order to be more inclusive, reach out to more diverse beneficiaries and target multiple and partly intersectional needs. On the one hand, this broadening of solidarity action is a means to cope with upcoming urgent needs and to adapt to changing grievances and demands (for instance, due to an increase of migrants and refugees, the flexibilisation and precarisation of employment conditions); on the other, it is a strategy to safeguard an organisation's survival in the face of multiple crises, restructuring of the welfare state and austerity. While this trend emerged in most of the countries under review, there are notable differences as regards the fields of vulnerability. Indeed, broadening the scope of solidarity action and opening up to new target groups is most prominent among unemployment organisations and trade unions (also Diani 2018; Gumbrell-McCormick 2011; Kirton and Greene 2005; Marino et al. 2015), while it is almost absent among organisations from the highly fragmented disability field. In addition, there are also exceptions to the general observation of an expansion of solidarity. Interviews with TSOs from Switzerland, for example, showed that both migration and (un)employment organisations work for closely defined and almost mutually exclusive circles of beneficiaries, reflecting distinct policy traditions and frameworks and a related functionalist approach towards target groups. Indeed, according to the interviews, fragmentation and specialisation are so far-reaching that there are hardly any interlinkages, save for

opposition, between Swiss unemployment organisations, on the one hand, and trade unions and other labour-related organisations, on the other.

Secondly, and resonating well with the broadening of target groups, several TSOs across different countries led enhanced efforts to engage in new forms of alliance building with a broad range of organisations, networks and movements from other areas and fields. Bridging differences, identifying common concerns and aims, and joining forces on behalf of them is a strategy that has gained momentum in recent years in order to reinforce public and political attention, renew organisational legitimacy foundations and increase the policy impact (also Borland 2010; Diani 2018). Again, this approach was reported in particular by organisations from the unemployment field (including trade unions) (also Milner and Mathers 2013), while it was only marginally addressed by TSOs from the other two fields.

Thirdly, establishing new solidarity groups and organisations is another salient form of response to crises, changed circumstances and resultant new grievances and needs. Many respondents underlined that their group or organisation was created during and due to the recent economic and/or migration policy crisis because the state and existing civil society organisations appeared to be insufficiently prepared to cope with the pressing direct needs at the grassroots level. While new unemployment TSOs were mainly founded in countries with a shorter history of civic participation, like Greece, new migration and refugee help groups and organisations emerged in a larger number of countries that were directly or indirectly affected by the recent rise in the arrival of migrants and refugees in Europe (also Baumgarten 2017; della Porta 2018; Kousis and Paschou 2017; Sotiropoulos and Bourikos 2014; Vathakou 2016; Zamponi 2017). Given that this organisational field is comparably young, diversification and emancipation from the established large charity organisations is just a recent development, providing momentum for the emergence of new and alternative collective actors in the field. Yet, the economic and refugee crises were not the only circumstances that encouraged the establishment of new TSOs. To some extent, it was also the redesign of welfare systems, state retrenchment and austerity that triggered the creation of solidarity organisations seeking to respond to

newly arising concerns and grievances and to meet the needs of new vulnerable groups (also White 2015).

Moreover, the findings across various country chapters show that the smaller, grassroots-oriented and often rather informal TSOs have developed a specific bottom-up understanding of solidarity. This bottom-up approach privileges horizontal relations between providers and receivers of solidarity action, building on ideas of reciprocity, mutualism, equality and participation. It is opposed to a vertical, top-down solidarity approach guided by philanthropic and humanitarian ideas. TSOs favouring a bottom-up conception of solidarity aim to overcome relations of charity and care because they do not want to treat their beneficiaries as passive objects of help (Fernández G. G. et al. 2020). Instead, empowerment, emancipation, self-initiative and self-representation, as well as the realisation of human rights, are their important guiding principles. The bottom-up solidarity approach is not in itself new and was already practised among smaller, locally based solidarity organisations in previous decades (Moulaert and Ailenei 2005). However, the enhanced restructuring of welfare states, harsh austerity policies and the impact of the economic and migration policy crisis as well as the growing importance of the human rights discourse (e.g., with regard to the rights of disabled persons or refugees) provided an important impetus for the proliferation of this concept. In this respect, the findings suggest in particular that these circumstances provided momentum for the diffusion of a bottom-up approach as they opened a window of opportunity for the engagement of new individual and collective actors from different backgrounds, and with alternative and often critical and politicised visions and understandings.

At the same time, this bottom-up approach of solidarity appears to shape the notion of inter-organisational relations and transnational solidarity. As mentioned earlier, the smaller, grassroots-oriented and mostly locally embedded TSOs analysed tend to engage in horizontal, decentralised and more informal, loose forms of soft transnational cooperation and networking with local-level partners, rather than vertical and more formal forms of hard transnationalism. Similar to relations with beneficiaries, the principles of reciprocity and mutualism are valued highly. And even when transnational cooperation involves a certain asymmetry (mostly in cases with partners from outside the EU), TSOs are

committed to empowering local partners through capacity building, responsibility sharing and leaving the implementation of solidarity activities to the local organisations. The importance of this bottom-up approach of transnational solidarity is closely interlinked with the fact that the smaller grassroots-based TSOs analysed in this book, apart from being concerned with direct needs and grievances in their local environments, are more critical, contentious and politicised in their missions and practices. Against this backdrop, they seem to favour and work towards the establishment of an alternative concept of transnational solidarity that builds an active and critical transnational civil society across borders from below (Kousis et al. 2020).

Finally, collective learning processes widely involve the development and use of new forms of communication and outreach. In this respect, the transnational solidarity organisations analysed in this book contribute to a general development among social movement and civil society groups and organisations towards digitalisation and internet activism (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Earl and Kimport 2013; Earl and Rohlinger 2018; Kousis et al. 2018). Websites, internet platforms and social media have become important channels to engage more efficiently and interactively with target groups and stakeholders. A number of TSOs also led considerable efforts to experiment with and create new online tools, platforms and mobile apps as a proper service instrument for their constituencies.

While many of our interviewees reported having used the recent challenges in the face of austerity, state retrenchment and crises as an opportunity for learning and the development and usage of new approaches and practices, there were also some voices that uttered scepticism in this regard. Concerns were most explicitly expressed by representatives of various service-oriented, small TSOs from France, which suffered the harshest competition over funding in an efficiency-driven system where performance is measured in pure numbers. Against this backdrop, these TSOs had little margin to experiment with alternative approaches and practices if they wanted to survive. As a result, several TSOs that used to be creative in the past, lost their innovative and original character in order to stay afloat in times of state retrenchment and austerity.

Outlook

Civic groups and organisations have testified their ability to support vulnerable groups in times of crisis. Most of these groups are committed to a local scope of operation, thus mirroring a grassroots approach to solidarity that allows them to mobilise active citizens in support of emerging needs in their immediate surroundings. This web of civic initiatives and groups is part and parcel of a transnational arena of civic engagement because these groups feature aims, activities, beneficiaries, contacts and collaborations that transcend local and national physical and imagined borders. The analysis of civic engagement in the fields of unemployment, disabilities and migration has shown that this wide range of TSOs is confronting a growing challenge. Activists across our eight countries tend to converge in the opinion that their capacity to work is being limited by a social and political context exposed to regressive tendencies (for instance, reduced public funding, restrictive social rights or counter-mobilisations), while the range of needs they wish to meet and the issues they are committed to speaking out on is increasing. Overall, civic groups and organisations are currently Europe's fire brigade, responding to societal problems that await political solutions. This organised civic solidarity, however, is exhibiting moments of fatigue and retreat, resulting from the intensity of activities in the dual crisis period.

The experiences of civic solidarity groups thus highlight urgent challenges that need to be addressed. Public and private funding is often short term and discontinued; moreover, funding schemes at local, national and EU levels are poorly coordinated. Activists are also concerned about the side effects of established policies, given that social policies limit the engagement of welfare recipients as non-formal work experience is not recognised or even prohibited. Additionally, legal and financial exigencies encourage the professionalisation, formalisation and bureaucratisation of their work, which means that formal, professionalised and larger organisations seem to benefit in the eyes of many activists, to the detriment of newer and smaller citizen groups. Additionally, civic solidarity seems to depend on a proactive welfare regime. It is true that several TSOs are engaged in alternative forms of organisation and problem-solving beyond

the institutionalised welfare state. These activities involve alternative forms of production and consumption (such as food banks, collective purchasing groups, repair cafés, free legal advice or medical services), which are often tied to political forms of contestation and protest. Many of these initiatives and groups see their main aim as promoting empowerment; they do not see their role as auxiliaries of the established welfare system but define themselves as instruments of social change. However, most activists militate for a more proactive welfare state, because they highlight the responsibility of the welfare state to promote and support solidarity, for instance, by granting social rights that guarantee greater equality, inclusion and integration.

Finally, most initiatives, groups and organisations described in our chapters are engaged in solidarity work with a primarily local focus. While most activists stress that their activism is marked by elements of transnational solidarity, when taking into consideration the organisational goals, partners or beneficiaries, the range of organisations engaged in a truly European scope of activities is more restrained and more diffused among TSOs with a higher proportion of formalised groups with Europeanised organisational structures (Kousis et al. 2020). Most activists stress the merit and necessity of transnational cooperation, yet, in practice, structured forms of transnational cooperation often play a rather marginal role. This has to do with many practical challenges, for instance, problems of language barriers, the high workload concerning the TSOs' core activities and the little added-value of transnational cooperation for their immediate activism. However, TSOs are legally and financially tied to the nation-state when looking at funding opportunities, legal status or taxation policies. Even though the European Charter of Fundamental Rights grants freedom of assembly and association at all levels explicitly, there is still no European legal framework encouraging and promoting European associations. Overall, it needs underscoring that civic solidarity is not an incessantly chugging resource, a horn of plenty, but a practice that is exposed to situations of overburdening and is thus in need of concerted public care and concern.

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