

International solidarity in the Global Justice Movement: coping with national and sectoral affinities

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Abstract

The paper examines how relationships of international solidarity cope with sectoral and national affinities in the case of the Global Justice Movement (GJM). Drawing on interviews with activists in Italy, Germany, and Poland the paper shows that national, sectoral, and international solidarities are entwined in several ways – and in some respects depend on each other. While activists identify a variety of national and sectoral differences within the GJM, these differences are not seen to impede international solidarity building. However, national and sectoral affinities are considered to play somewhat different roles in building international solidarity. On the one hand, activists prioritise solidarity building across different sectors – identifying it both as the largest challenge and success of the GJM. On the other hand, solidarity building across countries is perceived as less problematic and believed to be a precondition for cross-sectoral solidarity building. The paper contributes to our understanding of transnational activism and considers ways in which to deal with national and sectoral affinities in transnational activism.

Keywords: International solidarity, internationalism, transitional movements, movement sectors, national affinities, Global Justice Movement

Introduction

The Global Justice Movement (GJM) – a network of left groups active mostly between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s – brought together activists from different countries and movement sectors. Engaged in various actions against neoliberal globalisation, the GJM consisted of geographically dispersed groups with different socio-cultural backgrounds, ideologies, and forms of organisation. Organisational structures ranged from institutionalised organisations such as trade unions, religious associations, and NGOs to grassroots groups and citizens' initiatives. The movement also included both reformist and radical approaches as well groups with different issue interests (e.g. precarious work, environmental protection or peace-building). This diversity posed challenges to building and maintaining international solidarity. This paper analyses how relations of international solidarity cope in particular with national and sectoral affinities in the case of the GJM.

Addressing this question, the paper not only draws on the assumption that international solidarity is essential in transnational mobilisation (as it paves the

way for cooperation and joint action). Its point of departure is also that international solidarity entails solidarity across countries as well as across different movement sectors. This approach differs from large parts of the existing literature on transnational social movement that focus on cooperation across countries and regions rather than sectors.

A transnational social movement is defined as a movement with “constituents in at least two states” (Tarrow 2001: 11), which targets “power-holders in at least one state other than their own or against a transnational institution or a multinational economic actor” (ibid.), and which frames problems and solutions transnationally (cf. Rucht 2001; della Porta et al. 2006). In addition, scholars more recently stressed that transnational movements also base on a series of distinctly local and national characteristics (e.g. Ugglå 2006, Cumbers et al. 2008, della Porta 2005). Sidney Tarrow (2005), for example, stresses the role of rooted cosmopolitanism in transnational activism: while activists physically and cognitively move beyond their country and region, they remain rooted in the social relations, resources, and opportunities of their places of origin. Similarly, Andrew Cumbers and his colleagues (2008) emphasise the role of place-based movements in transnational protests. Hence, examining the interplay of national and transnational dynamics is crucial in order to grasp the phenomenon of transnational movements (e.g. Tarrow 2011; Cumbers et al. 2008).

However, in order to understand transnational movements, it is also important to consider how national and transnational solidarities interact with sectoral affinities. Large transnational movements such as the GJM are characterised by bringing together activists not only from different countries, but also from different (left) movement sectors. Some scholars have considered this a new form of internationalism. For example Massimo de Angelis (2000) argues that new internationalism is characterised by jointly addressing different and previously separate issues such as labour and environment, human and animal rights – which often bring along differences in repertoires and forms of organisation. He argues that in this context, international solidarity is less about helping activists in other parts of the world with their struggle (based on sympathy and compassion) and more about seeing struggles elsewhere connected to one’s own (ibid.) A prominent example of this view is Zapatism, which inspired large parts of the GJM (cf. Juris 2008).

Against this background the paper will explore ways in which national and sectoral affinities interact with international solidarity. In order to do so it will analyse activists’ reflections about the GJM in Italy, Germany, and Poland. This analysis will show that national, sectoral, and international solidarities are considered to be connected in several ways – and in some respects are seen to depend on each other. In the following I will first elaborate the paper’s analytical approach and the data used. In a second part, I will analyse activists’ national affinities and the role they play in international solidarity building. A third part will examine activists’ sectoral affinities and their interaction with

international solidarity building. The fourth part discusses the findings and concludes.

1. Analytical approach and data

Accessing international solidarity

In order to examine how relationships of international solidarity cope with differences in activists' experiences and perspectives at the national as well as the sectoral level, this analysis draws on activists' reflections about the GJM itself – instead of analysing activists' networks or framing of problems. This approach bases on the assumption that activists' relations of solidarity can be accessed through a look at the social boundaries activists draw¹. Solidarity in social movements, as stressed in the introduction, entails the view to fight the same struggle. Hence, interests, world-views, and experiences need to be – at least to some extent – understood as shared.

The analysis below explores such perceived links in terms of the similarities and shared experiences that activists identify across countries and movement sectors. Particular attention will be paid to such perceived links in the context of international protest events. These are events during which activists from different countries and sectors meet. Hence, one can expect that while these events may be perceived as shared experiences, sectoral and national differences are particularly salient in these situations. Analysing recollections of these events promise interesting insights into how relations of international solidarity deal with national and sectoral affinities.

Interviews in Italy, Germany and Poland

The analysis draws on 48 interviews with Italian, Polish, and German GJM activists (15-17 interviews per country)². Analysing activist views from these three countries allows identifying – possibly common – patterns of dealing with national and sectoral affinities in relations of international solidarity across different national constellations of the GJM. In Italy, Germany, and Poland the GJM took very different paths – against the background of different constitutions of civil society, political opportunity structures, and movement legacies (Daphi 2013a; 2013b). In particular, activists' previous experiences of transnational activism differ³, which may lead to differences in how national, sectoral, and international solidarities are reconciled.

¹ While the reflections about the GJM are retrospective, they can provide insights into present social relations since collective memory is constructed in a certain present set of social relations (Halbwachs 1992).

² 16 interviews in Italy, 17 interviews in Germany, 15 interviews in Poland

³ In short, in Italy and Germany activists draw on a long – albeit different – history of transnational activist coordination. In Poland this is more limited due to 40 years of Soviet rule

The interviews were conducted between spring 2011 and spring 2012. All of the activists interviewed were involved in the GJM from its inception in the 1990s until the late 2000s. Their ages range between 30 and 78 years (in 2011). Furthermore, the interviewees belong to different sectors of the GJM. I interviewed activists with different ideological backgrounds, action repertoires and thematic orientation – following the existing distinction between an anti-neoliberal, an eco-pacifist, and an anti-capitalist sector of the GJM (cf. Andretta et al. 2003, della Porta et al. 2006): The anti-neoliberal sector (AN) is composed mostly of reformist groups that aim to control the market through politics; it includes trade unions, political parties, Attac, and other NGOs. The eco-pacifist sector (EP) encompasses environmentalist groups and organisations as well as secular and religious peace and solidarity groups. The anti-capitalist sector (AC) is composed of more radical groups, ranging from squatters to anarchist and Trotskyist groups, which oppose capitalist structures and often refuse negotiations with institutional politics.

The analysis below will proceed in two steps. First, I will examine activists' references to national differences and the ways in which these differences are seen to affect international solidarity building. Second, I will analyse activists' references to sectoral differences and how they are seen to interact with international solidarity as well as national differences.

2. National differences and international solidarity

This part will reveal that while activists identify a variety of national differences within the GJM, they do not consider these affinities detrimental to international solidarity building. In this vein, most international protest events are seen to help overcoming national differences rather than reinforcing them.

Prominent reference to national differences

National differences are very prominent in activists' recollections of the GJM. Most activists primarily focus on the development of the GJM in their respective country (when asked how the GJM developed more generally). But activists also show much awareness about differences in the constellation of the movement in various countries. In this vein, activists frequently compare the movement in their own country with that in others – mostly in form of rather neutral comparisons about different movement traditions as well as political opportunity structures. These comparisons mainly refer to other European countries and only marginally to countries beyond Europe. Polish activists often generalise in this context between Western and Eastern Europe and Italian activists sometimes distinguish between Northern and Southern Europe.

and despite some transnational activist links in the context of Solidarnosc (but limited, see Kaldor 2003).

Many of these references concern differences in the groups involved in the GJM. In this context, activists in all three countries refer to the different role the group Attac played – being very prominent in France and Germany and much less so in Poland and Italy.

In each country different actors employed the critique of globalisation in their own way and developed it further. In France, it [the GJM] was primarily linked with Attac [...]. In Italy, in order to make something like Genoa possible, the social centres and communist groups needed to support it. (Martin⁴, Germany/AC, §11)

Activists also stress the importance of particular types of groups in each country: For example, in Italy trade unions are described as having played a much stronger role than in other countries (in particular France and Germany). In Germany, environmental groups are considered to have been very prominent (in contrast to Italy and especially Poland). In Poland, anarchists are found to be much more central than in other countries, while religious groups were completely absent.

Other points of comparison are the different levels of public support as well as the different political contexts in which the GJM developed in each country – in particular among Polish activists. In this vein, Polish activists emphasise the lack of participation in issues of global justice in Poland (and Central-Eastern Europe more generally) in contrast to other (Western European) countries. They link this to a) the restraints communist rule imposed upon the development of critical citizenship and political opposition more generally and b) the delegitimizing effect communist rule still has on left criticism of (neoliberal) capitalism.

In Poland no mobilisation is really big, [...], you have to know the context of the total passivity of the whole society. [...] And for me it's still a result of this [...] free-market ideology that was put down in people's heads and the fact that they think that standing up for one's rights is not the right way to do it because it sort of smells like communism and it's not right, that you should find individual ways of solving it, and it may be their own fault if they don't manage. (Mateusz, Poland/AC, §11).

The activists interviewed refer to national differences most frequently in the context of recounting international protest events. Some of these references clearly have a negative tone and mirror the frustration of activists with remaining disagreements between activists from different countries – though not the majority. These negative evaluations of national differences refer to difficulties in building international cooperation. In some cases such difficulties in cooperation across countries is discussed self-critically, e.g. with respect to a lack of understanding of Eastern European symbolism in Western Europe.

[...] too many of us don't think at all about the factor that for progressive persons in an Eastern country our red flag are the flags of the dictatorship, of the

⁴ All names are pseudonyms.

oppression and until we are not able to understand it and [...] think about which can be the common flag [...], we will not reach them. (Daniela, Italy/EP, §12)

Mostly, however, negative references to national difference blame activists of other countries for lacking cooperation and understanding. In this vein, several moderate Italian activists (from the party *Rifondazione Comunista* and unions) for example highlight that the black bloc – perceived to disturb the planned peaceful demonstrations in Genoa in 2001 – came from other European countries, in particular France, Greece, Spain, England and Germany.

[...] the so-called black bloc – I saw them, and therefore nobody can say that it isn't so, [...] and I also stopped a couple of them from doing what they were doing and they insulted me in French, they called me 'merde'!" (Mateo, Italy/AN, §6)

In a similar vein, some Polish activists recount that in the context of the mobilisations against the Economic Summit in Warsaw in 2004 activists from Western Europe obstructed cooperation by failing to adapt to the local situation. Generally, the relationship between activists from Poland and from abroad – in particular from Western Europe – is often described as hierarchical. According to some this relationship even had “traces of a colonial kind of coming and basically using whatever they found” (Julia, Poland/EP, §78). Against this background, Jan, a Polish activist from a small socialist organisation, recounts how during the counter-summit in Warsaw Italian activists failed to grasp and respect the local situation. In particular, he accuses these Italian activists of ‘idiocy’ since they stayed at an expensive hotel. Since a common way of delegitimizing left activists in Poland is to refer to them as spoiled rich people, he laments that the activists’ stay at this hotel was quickly used to delegitimise the counter-summit more generally.

Ya Basta from Italy, booking in the Hyatt hotel, half of the hotel [...] you cannot imagine how stupid things they [journalists] could write in the first tables of press, I don't know where they [Ya Basta activists] took it, it's like there's some level of idiocy you can use it's like totally open (Jan, Poland/AC, §21)

Most of the references to differences, however, focus on how the difference in question was overcome in the course of the protest event and have a humorous note – possibly as a way of downplaying initial irritations (cf. Flesher Fominaya 2007). In doing so, activists partly draw on existing national stereotypes – German activists are described as dogmatic and Italians as impulsive. An Italian social centre activist, for example, amusedly recalls differences to US-activists discovered in the context of a workshop in Seattle. She continues, however, that despite the fact that she and her fellow Italian activists made fun of the American activists, this meeting led to a lasting cooperation with activists from New York:

[...] New York had been important from Seattle onwards. There was that positive [connection], I mean, of course [...] we had huge cultural differences. I remember the workshops from US historical activists telling us what a direct action is about and we would attend the workshop but we would also be almost laughing the whole time because for us [...] it was a different approach. But it was an important channel that had been opened [...] (Alice, Italy/AC, §14)

Similarly, another Italian anti-capitalist activist recounts how amusing he found certain differences with German activists discovered in the context of no-border camps in 2002 and 2003. Funny to him in particular was the German activists' somewhat dogmatic insistence on independence from commercial camp-sites. As in the example above, however, this activist also stresses how meeting up helped to overcome and deal with the differences:

A lot of Germans took part in the camp and for them the 'no border camp' is [...] a social experience. It was very funny because for us it was mainly the occasion to piss off the detention centre guards and allow some migrants to run away from it, so we didn't really care about [the social experience]. So, we went there [...] we found a part of an official camping, while, [...] the Germans were shocked about the idea to stay in a camping where just at 100 meters distance there was a guy teaching how to dance the Macarena. But then doing the action together solved all our problems. (Emiliano, Italy/AC, §55)

Finally, a German activist from an anti-fascist group recounts that the (positive) experience during counter-summits centrally built on certain impressions of national particularity – which he described both admiringly and mockingly:

[transnational meetings and protest events] strongly drew on impressions [laughs], [...] for example that the British left is a bit wacky because [they are] either Trotskyist or tree-huggers.[...] I have an[other] image in mind, at the ESF [European Social Forum] in Paris [...] suddenly there were hundreds of Italian comrades and set up their own disco by singing and dancing, what is a very nice thing and remained in my head. Yes, [...] they enacted a countercultural model [...] who enacted a kind of cultural model there. (Stefan, Germany/AC, §80)

International protest events: places of solidarity building

If considered in isolation, the various references to national differences discussed above – and their sometimes very negative connotations – may suggest that national differences are considered to stand in the way of building international solidarity. However, if placed into the context of activists' more general view of international protest events, the picture looks different. Activists consider international protest events as primarily furthering solidarity building across countries rather than reinforcing national differences. This suggests that activists do not consider these differences as impeding international cooperation and solidarity building. In addition, part two will reveal that activists identify sectoral rather than national differences as major lines of division within the GJM.

As the last paragraphs of the section above already suggested, international protest events are understood as places of building cooperation across national differences. Indeed, in most cases activists consider international protest events to have facilitated lasting cooperation between activists from different countries rather than hindering or ending such cooperation. Activists in Italy, Germany, and Poland connect processes of solidarity building across countries to different international events. German activists refer to such growing international cooperation most prominently in the context of the counter-summit in Cologne

in 1999 (see graph 1). In this vein, a German activist from an anti-fascist group recalls:

It was a conscious decision [in preparation of the protests in Cologne 1999] to write hey, let's get to know each other internationally [Stefan, Germany/AC, §66]

Italian activists mostly associate the counter-summit in Seattle in 1999 as well as the protests against the war in Kosovo in the late 1990s with a more global approach to politics.

[...] at the end of the 90s [...] there was the war in Kosovo. [...] And, there was a huge demonstration in Aviano [...], the NATO base where the [...] bombing flights were leaving [from]. And I think [...], we can think about it as a sort of starting point [for] a global approach on Italian politics. (Chiara, Italy/AC, §6)

Polish activists primarily link the counter-summit in Prague in 2000 and early European Social Forums to processes of building solidarity across countries (see graph 1).

I think in Poland they [counter summits in Prague and Genoa] had this effect of recognizing or acknowledging the global context. People would be focused very much on what happens in Poland beforehand, and then they would realize that actually there are some others[...] the most important was actually a really genuine effort to share and communicate and cooperate, and I would say there was a lot of on both sides (Julia, Poland/EP, §78)

In addition to the large international events, solidarity building across countries is mentioned very prominently in the context of international meetings and mobilisations specific to certain movement sectors (see graph 1). Some of these sector specific campaigns, e.g. the Jubilee 2000 campaign, draw on long traditions of internationalism – such as the liberation theology or peace movements. In this vein, moderate activists consider the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and the Jubilee 2000 campaign as essential steps in building ties of solidarity across countries. Radical left activists frequently mention early no-border camps in building up cooperation across different countries (in the 1990s). For Italian and German activists this also includes meetings inspired by the Zapatista uprising, crucially the 'intercontinental meetings' in the late 1990s (see graph 1). In this vein, a German activist from an autonomous group describes lessons learned from the Zapatista's view on international solidarity during the first 'intercontinental meeting' in 1996:

Well, and subcomandante Marcos talked about how to connect our struggles [...] and that they don't want that [we] are [just] solidary with them, but that we fight our struggles and that people recognize that these struggles belong together [...] And I think this became the basis of the Global Justice Movement. (Olga, Germany/AC, §22)

Solidarity building across countries is not only interpreted as a matter of cooperation with activists in other countries, but also as a global analysis of problems – of seeing issues such as trade deregulation as a global, not a national problem. In this vein, international protest events are often described as places

of mutual learning and as processes of opening up the horizon⁵. In this vein, a German activist from a Catholic organisation recalls the World Social forums as processes of learning:

It is a process of learning, of course, [...] the horizon is broadened, you get an insight into the variety of international problems and how the own problems, for instance the German or European financial system, are the same for friends from Nigeria, Angolan, Brazil or the Philippines. (Christian, Germany/EP, §33)

3. Sectoral differences and international solidarity

This part explores activists' references to sectoral differences and how they are seen to interact with national and international solidarities. It will show that sectoral differences are perceived a larger challenge to international solidarity building than national differences. Furthermore, activists seem to consider cross-sectoral solidarity to depend at least partly on cross-national solidarity building.

Major lines of division: sectoral

Activists do not consider national differences to be major lines of division within the GJM, but sectoral differences are perceived as dividing lines. In particular, they identify divisions with respect to ideology and forms of organisation⁶: First, activists draw a line between moderate and radical approaches. This division is connected to the general issue of whether to oppose the system (of capitalism or representative democracy) altogether or whether to change and adapt it. Activists often connect this division also more concretely with different opinions about the necessity and legitimacy of cooperating with parties and governments, especially in Germany.

Second, activists refer to differences in organisation. German activists in this respect most often mention differences between more institutionalised and hierarchical forms of organisation and less formalised grassroots organisation. This issue is often connected to difficulties in working together with unions since their dependency on formalised structures makes them highly inflexible. Italian activists put more emphasis on the difference between an 'open space' perspective on politics, value exchange, and mutual learning in contrast to the emphasis on making political decisions.

The lines of division identified differ between Italian, German, and Polish activists in two regards. First, while disagreements about methods – especially about the use of violence – are central to German and particularly Italian

⁵ Such references to international solidarity building, however, are less frequent and elaborate among Polish activists, in particular among more moderate Polish activists.

⁶ Activists identify a number of internal lines of division, which vary between movement sector and country. In particular Polish activists identify different lines of division. The lines of division presented here are those found in all sectors and countries.

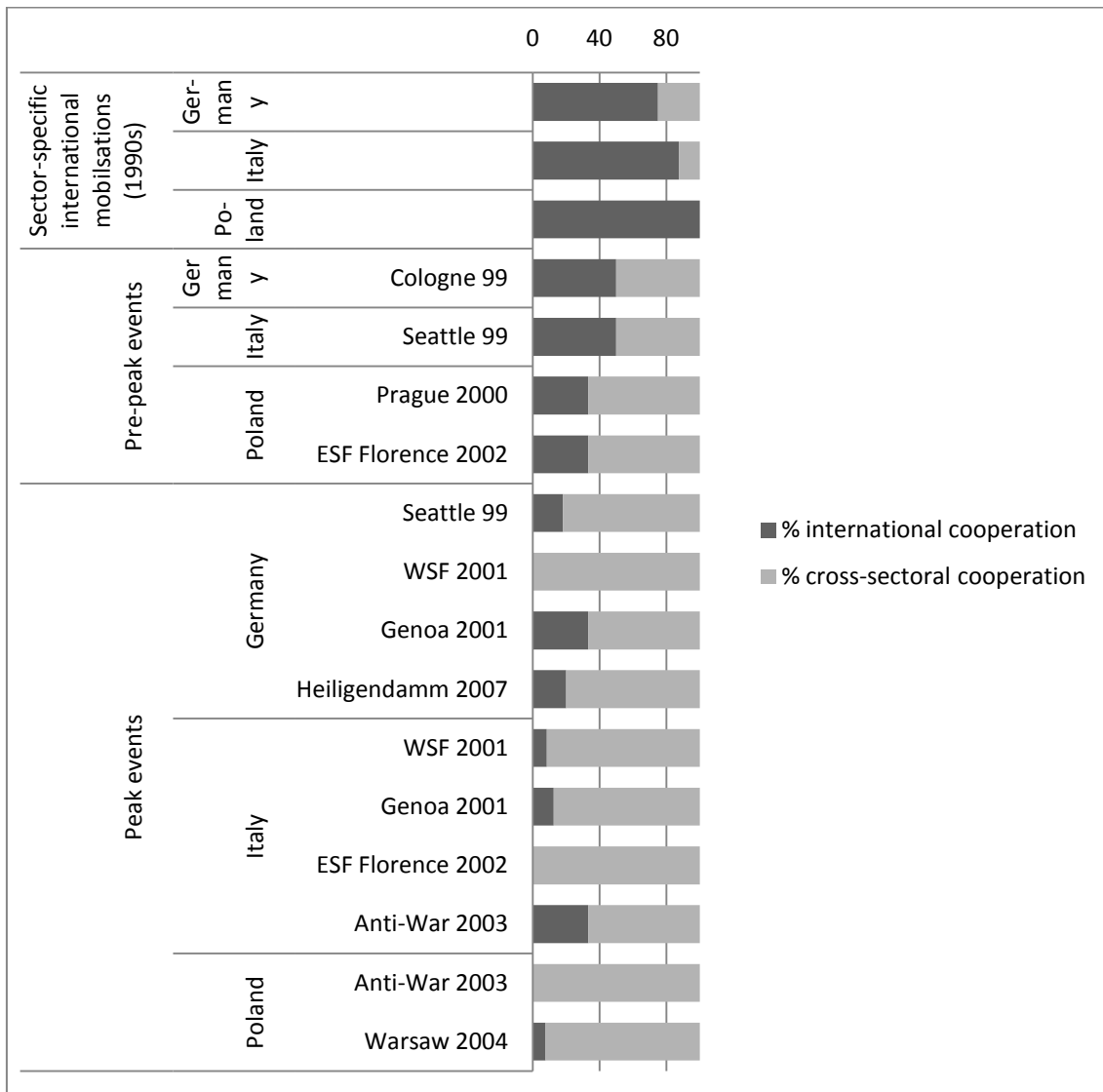
activists, to Polish activists they are not. Second, Polish activists prominently mention a line of division that hardly is mentioned by German and Italian activists, namely differences between local and global approaches. Problems, as Polish activists stress, can either be addressed in a general fashion, or with respect to local and national policies and issues. The latter is often associated with 'hands-on' work and favoured.⁷

Peak international events: building cross-sectoral solidarity

In the previous part I demonstrated that activists consider certain international protest events to be crucial in building solidarity across countries. Activists in Italy connect these processes of building solidarity mainly to the counter-summit in Seattle 1999, in Poland mainly to the counter-summit in Prague 2000, and in Germany mainly to the counter-summit in Cologne in 1999. In building solidarity across sectors, activists also consider international protest events to play a central role. However, the events most prominently associated with building cross-sectoral solidarity differ from those mostly associated with building solidarity across countries. More precisely, cross-sectoral solidarity building is primarily associated with the GJM's peak events, while solidarity building across countries is more prominently associated with events that precede these peak events (see graph 1). In previous research I demonstrated that activists identify specific peak events of the GJM, which differ across countries but are largely shared across sectors (Daphi 2013b). These peak events are described as climaxes with regards to a) succeeding to mobilise large numbers of participants, b) receiving broad and positive media attention, and c) influencing political decisions or public opinion.

⁷ Polish activists' distinction between local and global approaches can be understood to refer to national differences to some extent.

Graph 1: Overview of associations of international GJM events with building cooperation across countries and sectors⁸



According to Italian activists, the peak event of the GJM is clearly the counter-summit in Genoa in 2001. Other key events are the first World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre in 2001 (especially among the more moderate activists), the European Social Forum in Florence in 2002 and the demonstrations against

⁸ The graph shows the proportions of how often a certain event is associated with building cooperation across countries or sectors. The same event may appear in different categories of events depending on whether activists in Italy, Germany, and Poland define the event as a peak event.

the war in Iraq in 2003 (see graph 1). The counter-summit in Genoa, in particular, is seen as joining different left groups that were unconnected or even in conflict before (despite the fact that this event created considerable tension within the movement about legitimate forms of protests). Activists recount that this was largely due to the realisation that in the end, everyone was fighting for more or less the same thing. Also, activists often connect this to the development of more horizontal forms of organisation.

This spirit of the [first] World Social Forum – because Genoa in reality comes from this spirit of the World Social Forum – [...] produced [...] the feeling that we could overcome these divisions, [...] between the more moderate and the moderate and between the different contents. Porto Alegre spirit gave us the idea that a common front existed (Daniela, Italy/EP, §4).

In Germany, where a large counter-summit only took place in 2007 (the counter-summit in Cologne in 1999 remained comparably small), different international events previous to the counter-summit in Heiligendamm in 2007 are also identified as peaks, most centrally the counter-summits in Seattle and Genoa as well as the WSF in Porto Alegre in 2001 and the. As in Italy, these peak events are predominantly connected with building solidarity across sectors rather than across countries (see graph 1). In this vein, the counter-summit in Seattle is seen to have facilitated a broad coalition of left organisations which continued to exist till the counter-summit in Heiligendamm in 2007. This situation is frequently contrasted with the counter-summit in Cologne taking place just a few weeks previously, which is seen to have failed building cross-sectoral cooperation.

And shortly after this [protests in Cologne] in fact came Seattle and we were laughing up our sleeves because we said “this is exactly what we had in mind”. And we had bad luck with respect to Cologne [...] and we were right nonetheless and this is what Seattle made clear [...]. This circumstance [...] meant that we kept up the communication amongst a broad group ranging from church people, to NGO people and to leftist radicals. This communication did not break down until Heiligendamm. (Michael, Germany/AN, §11)

In Poland activists primarily identify the counter-summit in Warsaw in 2004 as a peak event as well as mobilisations against the war in Iraq in 2003⁹. Similar to the peak events in other countries, the counter-summit in Warsaw is associated more with cooperation between different sectors rather than with building solidarity across countries (see graph 1).

I would say that [the counter-summit in Warsaw] was the biggest moment for this movement in Poland. And that was the only moment when a lot of groups worked together [...] I remember that a lot of groups they went together to protests like anarchists together with some leftists and some communists and so on. (Kasia, Poland/AC, §9-10).

⁹ Moderate and radical activists, however, partly disagree on peak events in Poland. Apart from these two events, moderate and radical activists refer to different peaks. The more radical activists, for example, identify a series of work struggles in 2002 and 2003 as peaks of mobilisation too.

Interplay of solidarity across countries and sectors

As the findings above and in the last part suggest, international protest events are considered as playing central roles in solidarity building across both countries and sectors. Most events are associated with both processes of solidarity building (see graph 1). This implies that activists consider the two processes not only to be connected but also equally important. However, the temporal order of the events associated with these processes suggests that activists consider solidarity building across countries as preceding – and paving the way for – cross-sectoral solidarity building. In this vein, the events primarily associated with cross-sectoral solidarity building in each country succeed the events more strongly associated with solidarity building across countries (see graph 1). This implies that building solidarity across countries became less of an issue over time.

Several activists in addition explicitly argue that international cooperation helped building cross-sectoral solidarity. In this vein, an Italian activist from an NGO argues that ‘scaling up’ to the international level facilitated the cooperation between different sectors of the movement within Italy:

At the beginning the main effect [of the GJM] has been to bring people out of their internal borders. When we work in our countries we were used to have internal borders, each organisation against the other, with competition, prejudices, etc. When you had to scale up and work in a frame which was broader and more complex, you couldn't just rely on your own tradition, you had to change your way of thinking, of acting, of creating relations and so that helped to fluidify the relationship on the national dimension. (Fabio, Italy/AN, §15)

4. Discussion and conclusion

Exploring the interplay of national, sectoral, and international solidarities, the analysis showed that while activists identify a variety of national and sectoral differences within the GJM, these differences are not seen as impeding international solidarity building. In this vein, the first part of the analysis revealed that references to national differences are very prominent in activists' reflections about the GJM. These national differences, however, are not considered detrimental to international solidarity building as a look at the perceived effects of international protest events and activists' views on internal lines of division demonstrated: International protest events are seen as helping overcome national differences rather than reinforcing them. In addition, national differences are not considered major lines of division within the GJM (see part 3).

The second part of the analysis demonstrated that activists consider sectoral differences to be a considerable challenge to international solidarity building. In particular, differences in ideology and forms of organisation are perceived as major lines of the division. However, as in the case of national differences, international protest events are considered central in building solidarity across these differences – in particular with respect to peak events. The association of

peak events with cross-sectoral solidarity building furthermore suggests that in activists' eyes sectoral affinities are not only the largest challenge, but building solidarity across them is also the GJM's major success.

More generally, the analysis exhibited how activists make sense of a complex situation of mobilisation. It showed, on the hand, that activists largely consider national, sectoral, and international affinities to go hand in hand rather than to counteract each other. On the other hand, it demonstrated that activists do differentiate between different levels of solidarity building. In this vein, national and sectoral affinities are assigned somewhat different roles in building international solidarity. In particular, the findings suggest that activists prioritise cross-sectoral solidarity building over building solidarity across countries. This is not only apparent from the fact that sectoral differences are defined as major lines of division, while national differences are not. This prioritisation is also linked to activists' perception that solidarity building across countries preceded and facilitated solidarity building across sectors. This finding is particularly interesting if one considers that in fact cross-sectoral cooperation developed parallel or previous to cooperation across countries in various networks of the GJM.

Conclusion

The paper's point of departure was that transnational movements are not only characterised by activists from different countries but also by groups from different movement sectors. The paper's findings strongly underline this point: the large role of sectoral differences in activists' reflections about the GJM points to the importance sectoral differences have in large transnational movements. Hence in explaining transnational movements more attention needs to be paid to differences and ties across different sectors and how these interact with national and international solidarities. In order to do so, future research should address also other dimensions of solidarity building than this paper's analysis of discursively drawn boundaries.

Furthermore, the findings also emphasise the role national affinities play in transnational social movements. The paper displayed that national categories are very prominent in activists' perceptions of the GJM. First, activists were shown to refer to various national differences— in particular with respect to groups involved and different levels of support (see part 2). During international events, it seems, other activists are centrally categorised in terms of their nationality. Second, the findings reveal that activists' have country specific recollections of the movement's development. In this vein, events taking place in the activist's respective country were shown to be more prominent than others – including the peak events (see part 3). Third, the major lines of division differ between Italian, German and Polish activists (see part 3).

On a more practical level, the paper points to ways in which to deal with national and sectoral affinities in future transnational activism. The paper for example showed how humour and joint action can help in dealing with such

differences. The considerable knowledge of differences between countries and sectors which activists of the GJM demonstrated, probably also facilitates this. Furthermore, the paper revealed that solidarities across sectors and countries are somewhat co-dependent. In building international solidarity both should be addressed jointly.

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