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Cross-Movement Mobilization and New Modes of Solidarity in Times of Crisis in the Global North and South

ABSTRACT

Alliances between social movements constitute a vital part of understanding social movement mobilization. However, despite the advantages that come with cross-movement mobilization, the construction and maintenance of alliances remains a fundamental challenge for activists and movements. This special issue aims to uncover and deepen our understanding of cross-movement mobilization in the global North and the global South. In this introduction we suggest to move beyond cross-movement mobilisation as relatively static cooperation between formally organised and bounded entities. Instead we need to observe cross-movement alliances as a succession of convergences around events and longer lineages of actions linked through multiple, intersecting, and non-linear processes and actions.

Keywords: social movements; transnational activist networks; intersectionality; solidarity; North-South relations; alliance formation

The current Covid-19 pandemic and the state of emergency and social distancing it triggered is rapidly changing social life across the world. The fear of becoming infected can quickly turn into a fear of others in very generalised forms. Neighbours, friends, and even family members turn into potential dangers for one's own health. The spread of fear could trigger massive de-solidarisation, the rise of distrust amongst individuals, and a further fragmentation within and especially across societies. But times of crisis and emergency also hold the potential to live and explore new modes of solidarity. Some forms of solidarity, cooperation, and conviviality cannot be lived and practiced at the moment, but new ones are emerging every moment. This special issue was organized and comprised long before Covid-19 spread around the globe. Yet it is speaking to a very important topic, relevant in times of crisis and beyond: the formation of solidarities and new forms of collective organization through bridging of differences and forming alliances across different movements. We hope the contributions to this thematic issue can be a source of inspiration, and also help to think ahead for the coming research exploring new ways of solidarity production in the post-pandemic new world order.

As Charles Tilly has shown in his long-term history of protests, alliance formation is an indispensable part of social movement formation: “The art in social movements is precisely to draw a unique challenge from disparate and changing coalitions.”¹ This statement is best exemplified through the alter-globalisation movement, which emerged in the late 1990s. Scholars turned to the study of cooperation of various movements. In the global claims against neo-liberal policies, these movements found solid ground on which new alliances could be built.² The World Social Forum (WSF) became central to the global alliance of progressive movements and actors, and it was particularly successful in building alliances around a wide range of topics under the overarching theme of struggle against neo-liberal policies and a new focus on alternative proposals (“Another world is possible”) with increasing attention to the diversity of alternative paths.³ Twenty years later, the WSF has faded out. Building cross-movement alliances remains a main challenge for activists and movements, which also makes it particularly important for scholars to continue to study the formation and maintenance of movement alliances.

Cross-movement alliances are an indispensable part of social movement formation. Mobilisation can often be understood as a process of alliance formation between different groups and movements.⁴ Yet mobilisation research is largely focusing on a key set of explanatory factors, such as political opportunity structures⁵, resources, or framing strategies for the analysis of broad alliance structures. The frame analysis perspective⁶ focuses on the way particular claims and frames converge in master frames and how master frames are successfully constructed by activists. Such framing processes can, if successful, mobilise a broad set of movements into coalitions. The resource mobilisation theory shows how social movement entrepreneurs manage to mobilise activists and resources into alliances that go beyond the competition between civil society or social movement organisations. But these theories and efforts to uncover

1 Tilly, Charles: *La France conteste de 1600 à nos jours*, Fayard 1986, p. 546.

2 Breno M. Bringel/José Maurício Domingues (eds.): *Global Modernity and Social Contestation*, Los Angeles et al. 2015.

3 Geoffrey Pleyers: *Alter-globalization: Becoming Actors in a Global Age*, Cambridge et al. 2010; Janet M. Conway: *Edges of Global Justice: The World Social Forum and its ‘others’*, London 2013; Jenny Jansson: *Crafting the Movement: Identity Entrepreneurs in the Swedish Trade Union Movement, 1920–1940*, Ithaca 2020.

4 Nella van Dyke: *Crossing Movement Boundaries: Factors That Facilitate Coalition Protest by American College Students, 1930–1990*, in: *Social Problems* 50:2 (2003), pp. 226–250.

5 Sidney G. Tarrow: *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Cambridge et al. 2011.

6 Robert D. Benford/David A. Snow: *Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment*, in: *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), pp. 611–639.

alliance formation among social movements, only cover certain aspects of cross-movement mobilisation.⁷

This issue is also an invitation to pay more thorough attention not only to specific mechanisms and processes of alliances formation, but also to cross-movement politics and contestations, intersectional divides, as well as failures in alliance-making between individuals, between organisations, and across countries and around the globe, which tend to be overlooked. As the WSF demonstrates, it is difficult to uphold and manage continuity in cross-movement alliances. Often, alliance formation is confronted with differences and divides between the mobilising groups, or in other words, with intersectional inequalities between potential alliance partners.

Intersectional conflicts have rather been seen as barriers to cross-movement alliances. But this special issue debates how these alliances have negotiated intersectional inequalities. Intersectionality as a theoretical concept has proved fruitful in the analysis of interrelated inequalities according to categories such as class, 'race', migration, gender and sexuality.⁸ It has differentiated into diverse approaches, such as discursive or structural intersectionality. Processual intersectionality has been proposed as a concept to analyse the development of intersectional conflicts or alliances over time.⁹ Research on cases from the Global South has indeed made interesting innovations to researching and conceptualising how movements negotiate or contest different positionalities within and across movements¹⁰—but existing research often simply does not enter the English-language dominated international publication arena. This special issue contributes to closing this gap.

In this issue we empirically explore and further theorise the formation of alliances across social movements and organizations with different constituencies. The articles cover the topic of Cross-Movement Alliances from a wide range and scale, starting from cooperation at the local level, such as urban resistance in cities and communities, to cooperation on issues such as climate change, or political economy, with a focus on cross-movement alliances in the global South, across the global South and the global

- 7 Sabrina Zajak et al.: Talking about the Same but Different? Understanding Social Movement and Trade Union Cooperation through Social Movement and Industrial Relations Theories, in: *Industrielle Beziehungen/The German Journal of Industrial Relations* 25:2 (2018), pp. 166–187.
- 8 Beatrice Halsaa et al. (ed.): *Remaking Citizenship in Multicultural Europe: Women's Movements, Gender and Diversity*, London 2012, pp. 1–20.
- 9 Ilse Lenz: Intersektionale Konflikte in sozialen Bewegungen, in: *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 32:3 (2019), pp. 408–423, <https://doi.org/10.1515/fjsb-2019-0046>; <http://forschungsjournal.de/node/3128> (last accessed 5 June, 2020).
- 10 Supurna Banerjee: *Activism and Agency in India: Nurturing Resistance in the Tea Plantations*, London 2017; Simin Fadaee (ed.): *Understanding Southern Social Movements*, London/New York 2016; Sara C. Motta (ed.): *Social Movements in the Global South: Dispossession, Development and Resistance*, Houndmills 2011.

North divide. While research is beginning to explore the topic of cross-movement alliances in Europe and the U.S. e.g. from the perspective of increased political opportunities, pooled resources, or shared grievances through capitalist crisis, cross-movement alliance formation originating in the global South remains largely unexplored. Yet there is increasing empirical evidence, e.g. on alliance formation between the trade union movement and other social movements, which suggests innovative strategies for collaboration, despite significant political, economic, social or cultural barriers. Comparing perspectives from different world regions also sheds light on how different historical experiences, traditions, cultures, ethnicities, and political and economic systems shape how activists, groups, initiatives and organisations search for ways to collaborate. Our contributions cover examples from Asia (India; Japan), Latin America and Europe (Norway) in their local, national and transnational contexts and relations.

Bringing together perspectives from around the globe also facilitates going beyond the narrow scope of classical social movement theories. The different articles integrate and bridge literature from history, gender studies, post-colonial and labour studies. While each contribution has a specific focus, in general they discuss how and why specific types of alliances are emerging and look at the structuring of alliances. In particular, this thematic issue opens up new perspectives on researching cross-movement alliances through looking at the internal dynamics within cross-movement alliances, the exchange between movements and actors as source of learning and experience sharing but also at inequalities and hierarchies within cross-movement alliances, how actors deal with ideological differences and cultural images of 'others', existing forms of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization within alliances, and whether and how this is linked to the breaking apart of relations.

The contributions show that cultural factors can be the important adhesive holding cross-movement alliances together, but cultural aspects can also be divisive, keeping movements apart or breaking alliances. But maybe we also need to go beyond the idea that successful social mobilisation corresponds with maximized shared identity or homogeneity among the movements' participants. The contributions point out that friendship, affinity, and organic modes of solidarity can be key factors for cross-movement cooperation without significant hierarchy and lived power imbalances. They show that activism is a lived experience in and through which political subjectivities are formed. When cross-movement alliances work, they contribute to a deep reconfiguration of each of the movements involved. Cross-movement activities can also mean going beyond the binaries of women and men, agent or victim, belonging to one (ethnic, religious, social) group and not another. It becomes clear that cross-movement mobilisation is not the result of pre-existing political ideals and world views but is developed in and through the development of projects in complex and contradictory ways.

Times of crisis, such as the experiences of the consequences of Covid-19, help to remind us that solidarity and networks of support are often based on friendship,

love, care and affinity, which can work across and beyond the most severe barriers and challenges. In the following we will provide a short summary of the contributions to this special issue.

Janet Conway and Anabel Paulos delve into how cross-movement alliances deeply reconfigure each other. The claims and perspectives are not only combined, they coalesce and are reconfigured into something new. Janet Conway and Anabel Paulos trace this process through a genealogical approach of the alliance between feminist and food movements in Latin America. Taking the example of the World March of Women and its various autonomous National Co-ordinating Bodies (NCBs) in Latin America as the feminist presence in world-wide alter globalisation movements, as well as in struggles for food sovereignty, the authors show how the alliance was built and how it deeply transformed the claims and stakes of each of the movements. Cross-movements mobilisation was fostered by a reconfiguration of food and peasant movements and of feminist movements by re-conceptualising food sovereignty through including the gender dimension and its connection, along with a more general struggle against global corporation and neo-liberal policies. Their in-depth analysis also revealed how the cross-movement discourse became a site of power/knowledge and resistance, for example through the introduction of counter-discourses that trouble the prevailing consensus on valorising women's labour. Their article also makes a strong point in using a genealogical approach for studying dynamics of cross-movement discourse within and across countries, as this approach allows to transcend a flat presentation of the present and reach beyond a perception of protests as isolated incidents which can be understood through structural conditions only.

Juliana Luiz, Marco Antonio Teixeira and Priscila Delgado de Carvalho also focus on Latin America. Similar to Conway's and Paulos's contribution, they also address how moving to the international scale opens up new cross-movements alliances that are then reflected and implemented at the national level. Based on an insightful case study of the Confederation of Family Farming Organisations, the authors examine the multi scalar strategies which allow to take advantage of more favourable political opportunity structures. Social movement organisations, including trade unions with very different constituencies and claims, formed a cross-movement alliance to better grasp opportunities opened by the Mercosur free trade area that could then be used strategically at the national scale. But the authors also go beyond the conventional political opportunity structure approach on cross-movement alliances, by examining a series of factors and strategic motivations that lead social movement organisations to engage in international cross-movements alliance. The alliance, formed as a response to the common external threat that the Mercosur constituted, mobilised movements across national borders in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay.

Establishing connections across countries is a key aspect in many cross-movement mobilisations. Kei Takata's contribution looks at this topic through examining the role of culture in transnational activist networks in the Japanese New Left movements

that emerged during the 1960s. Tracing these new left movements' transnational connections and networks, Takata's study demonstrates the importance of culture and habitus for understanding transnational cross-movement mobilisation. Transnational activism, as well as the national cross-movement mobilisation that took place in Japan, was directly linked to shared culture within the different movements. This is substantiated by comparing the new left *Beiheiren* citizen's network for peace in Vietnam with the Japanese Red Army. Both movements came from different social backgrounds and developed distinct movement cultures. Based on their specific culture, they could build bridges to their international allies. *Beiheiren* could relate to the global and U.S. peace movement and the Red Army to the militant international and local groups in Palestine and Beirut. Shared culture became the vehicle for transnational mobilisation and cooperation.

Supurna Banerjee's contribution looks at cross-movement hierarchies and provides insights into how modes of organisation shape participation in specific ways. She points towards inequalities between groups, including marginalised ethnic groups and trade unions, due to historical trajectories, experiences of marginalisation and discrimination and (mis)uses of knowledge and power over interpretations of the process of mobilisation. Taking an in-depth ethnographic look at protests at tea plantations in India, she shows that although they were simultaneously protesting similar issues of labour, working conditions, and wages, two ethnic movements and the trade union were largely unable to overcome their differences. Semiotics of domination and debasement continued between the tribal workers and the non-tea plantation trade unions'—largely middle class, educated Bengali—leadership. The manner of speaking, dress, body-language reproduced what is called a *babu-coolie* hierarchy between the workers and their trade union leadership, which in particular devalued women. They basically have no opportunity to contribute and actively shape protest. Banerjee's case illustrates how social hierarchies tend to be replicated in organisational structures, including in civil society organisations, where for example gendered hierarchies play out in everyday work. This was the case even though women served as a protective shield against police violence and attacks during protest events, on occasion leading to severe physical harm to the women. Overall, the article points to one potential dark side of cross-movement mobilisation, the capability of more powerful actors in the network to frame and interpret the situation and gain exclusive ownership of the protest choreography and its perceptions. But Banerjee's study also reveals that cross-movement cooperation was still possible, at least on occasion, when solidarity was not based on a strong common identity but based on friendship, care and affinity.

Beatrice Halsaa investigates the tensions between mobilising for indigenous rights and against gender inequality over time in her rich empirical study of the Sámi women's movement in Norway and their interrelations to the Nordic women's movements. She analyses its development and the shifts from an inter-sectional perspective. Sámi women were positioned at the crossroads of transnational movements, and they had to

negotiate conflicting claims of solidarity and cooperation between global and local indigenous and women's movements. At first, indigenous rights overshadowed feminist issues. When Sámi rights were ensured, however, Sámi feminists organised and made use of available opportunities connected with the broader Norwegian and Nordic women's movement. The complicated relations to mainstream women's movements are analysed by investigating Sámi women's participation in the main conferences of the Nordic women's movements: They were marginalised in the Nordic Forum of 1988, participated in the preparation process and the conference in 1994, and again were hardly present in 2014.

In this issue, cross-movement mobilisation comes into view as a contested and contingent process riven through with inter-sectional tensions and conflicts as well as negotiations. But still, it is ongoing and innovative, producing new discourses and symbols for shared aims, new forms of mobilising and of organisations. Some important elements for cross-movement mobilisation have been identified in the contributions: The movements create and build a shared space in which discourses, aims, practices and activities can be negotiated. They relate transnationally or internationally and thus appropriate and redistribute local, national and global discursive and material resources. Movements' cultures and ideas of justice further open this space for negotiating shared activities, mobilisations and aims and reworking inter-sectional inequalities between participating actors. But as the mid-term and long-term empirical contributions illustrate, the study of cross-movement mobilisation rarely can be done with a simultaneous snapshot view. Genealogical perspectives or processional inter-sectionality may open up fruitful new ways of looking at the complex developments. Instead of understanding cross-movement mobilisation as relatively static cooperation between formally organised and bounded entities, we can observe it as a succession of convergences around events and longer lineages of protests linked through multiple, intersecting, and non-linear processes and actions. Such a view also gives great hope that despite of the horrible effect of Covid-19 on societies around the globe, the current moment of social distancing and the breaking of personal interactions will not be able to reverse or annihilate the historical phase of intense contact and collaboration unprecedented in scope and scale among different and geographically distant social movements. Future research on alliances and new modes of solidarities will tell.

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This thematic issue is complemented by a further article by Philipp Reick on approaches "Toward a History of Urban Social Movements" and a laudation by Jürgen Kocka on the occasion of Klaus Tenfelde's 75th Birthday that discusses "Social History as Commitment".

The issue closes with a review article by Philipp Reick, which examines the “Studies of Growth and Decline: New Books on the History of the Western Working Class” and one by Kevin J. Callahan on “A Decade of Research on the Second International: New Insights and Methods”.

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