Contesting Post-Socialism

Transformation of the Czech Economic Protest between 1989 and 2021

Habilitation thesis

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1. Double movement after socialism

A growing body of literature focuses on the collective mobilizations all around the world related to globalization and the diffusion of capitalism and market economy (Almeida 2007; Almeida, Pérez Martín 2022; Aslanidis 2016; Azzellini, Kraft 2018; Bailey et al. 2020; Bandelj, Shorette, Sowers 2011; Bojar et al. 2021; Burawoy 2010; Della Porta 2015; Evans 2008; Gemici 2015; Munck 2006; Nowak 2019; Silver 2003; Silver, Zhang 2009). This study contributes to these analyses by applying the Polanyian perspective on the under-studied post-socialist economic contention using theory and methods of social movements studies and relational sociology.

After 1989, former socialist countries went through a more or less quick pathway from state-dominant economic order towards a laissez-faire capitalist model. This process was parallel to the global establishment of the neoliberal model of governance, which originated in the United States and United Kingdom in the late 1970s and became hegemonic worldwide (Ther 2022: 38). This meant profound and lasting economic and social changes broader transformation which have been sometimes paralleled with the Polanyian account of how laissez-faire capitalism in 19th century led to disruption of social structures and communities and spurred a reaction from society which aimed at social protection (Bohle, Greskovits 2012; Scheiring 2021; Hann 2021; Ther 2022). This reaction was organized dominantly (but not exclusively) by the workers ‘movements and trade unions, which succeeded in influencing the political powers and establishing growing state interventionism and protectionism (Ther 2022: 33).

Inspired by the Polanyian perspective, this study formulates three research problems and general strategies for dealing with them. First, it builds on the notion of broad societal counter-movement against the forces of liberal capitalism, which assumes that rapid imposition of economic liberalism and dis-embedding of the market forces from the wider societal context generates a response (resistance) towards these forces, which aims at re-embedding the economic relations. Contrary to other perspectives dealing with the economic conflicts in society – especially the one provided by Marx – it offers a less exclusive perspective and more relaxed assumptions regarding the actors, conditions, and overall dynamics of economic conflict. While Marx´s theory builds on the concept of making and empowering new social classes by the process of capitalist production, which results in a stage-like nature of the economic conflict (Armbruster-Sandoval 2005; Brooks 2007; Sen, Waterman 2009), Polanyi stresses the more complex (and sometimes chaotic and non-ideological) reactive mobilizations of social classes but also other social – both formally and informally organized – groups being made but also unmade in the process of institutionalization of the free market economy, which

leads to pendular character of this resistance reflecting the processes of commodification and de-commodification (Alcock 2021; Alcock 2024; Silver 2003: 16:20; Gemici, Nair 2016). It is precisely this multivocality, non-linearity, and variability of this resistance over economic issues that this study aims to explore. To capture the detailed dynamics of this resistance, it makes a reduction and focuses exclusively on collective (organized) economic protest[1] or political activism[2] explicitly targeting socio-economic issues.

Second, the concept of embeddedness illustrates how activities in certain areas of social action are integrated within actual, enduring systems of social relations (Granovetter 1985: 487); dis-embeddedness, on the other hand, captures how specific processes and collective actors foster disintegration, which in turn weaken/threaten the pre-existing social ties, leading to greater insecurity and unpredictability of life (Olofsson 1999: 42). On the micro level, the concept of embeddedness has become an essential explanatory scheme in economic sociology, illustrating the role of social relations in economic action (Granovetter 1992: 32) or in political sociology, illustrating the role of social networks in political participation (Lim 2008). On the meso-level, the role of *collective* interactions for promoting and sustaining political activism – or contentious collective action, or collective protest – has also been analyzed (Diani, Bison 2004). Focusing on the contentious collective action, this study follows the assumption that the capacity of society to promote, scale-up and sustain any protest mobilization in certain areas of social life critically depends on the extent to which the collective actors engaged in this area establish, coordinate and join inter-sectoral alliances and contribute to the emergence of broader inter-organizational structures in which to other collective (but also individual) actors may become embedded (McAdam 1986; Gould 1991; Passy 2003). Thus, the problem of "weakness" or "patience" of many post-socialist societies towards the radical economic and political transformation after the fall of socialist regimes (Greskovits 1998; Howard 2003) may

[1] This study by no means claims that the resistance of society in reaction to dramatic commodification processes is represented exclusively by collective protest mobilizations. One of the channels for the frustration is also "exit" of some social groups or their electoral preference for populist political parties (Greskovits 1998; Hann, Scheiring 2021; Scheiring et al. 2024).

[2] The concept of political activism is defined here as extra-parliamentary political participation advocating or refusing certain policies and social measures by means of collective, organized action (cf. Cisar 2008: 8; Ekman, Amnå 2012: 292). Political activism thus represents one of the forms of collective action, as opposed to individual political participation. At the same time, this study differentiates the concept of political activism from the concept of social movement: while these both are one of the forms of collective action (as well as crowd, interest-group, or gang behavior, revolutions etc.), social movement is narrower phenomenon as it relies on temporal continuity and broader collective identity (Snow et al. 2004: 10). While political activism may include strategic coalitions of various collective actors, disperse activist organizations following a similar goal or population of subcultural groups, social movements are different in extending both their practical exchanges (sharing of information, exchanging the resources, etc.) and symbolical boundaries beyond the single collectivity (broader collective identity) (Diani 2015: 16). In other words, social movements represent cohesive and rather enduring way of coordinating political activism.

be reformulated as the problem of quality of integration of meso-level civic infrastructure – campaigns, alliances or platforms providing *enduring* opportunities and incentives for mobilization of both collective and individual actors.

Third, the study makes another use of the concepts of embeddedness: analyzing embedding, dis-embedding, and re-embedding of economic institutions within a broader social environment through commodification, de-commodification, and re-commodification processes aims to capture the changing relations between economic and social actions and institutions. These suggest the changing dynamics of social protective counter-movement to the existing level of commodification and thus the dis-embeddedness of economic institutions (Crouch 2003; Howell 2005; Ibsen, Tapia 2017: 173). In other words, this study aims to inspect the role of the changing socio-economic and political context in the structure and dynamics of economic protests.

While inspired by Polanyi in formulating its research problems, this study combines three analytical principles which confound its *theoretical perspective*. First, it relies on the social movement studies to explore popular discontent with emphasis on its enduring (organizational), public (visible, manifest), and contentious (conflicting, mobilizing) aspects. It builds on protest event data representing public contention over economic issues. In other words, rather than following specific actors, it focuses on how the collective action manifests in its variety and across different periods. Second, it applies the perspective of relational sociology and tools of social network analysis, which privileges the study of social relations instead of relying solely on actors´ attributes or frequencies. Thus, it studies economic collective action as a result of broader economic and political transformation and focuses on inter-organizational coordination and cooperation rather than on intra-organizational characteristics (membership, leadership, ownership). Third, reflecting the longitudinal aspects of collective action, the study aims to identify different political-economic contexts and compare the characteristics of coordination of economic protests across these contexts.

The combination of these three principles leads to the application of the concept of the field of economic protest and its empirical analysis. For this study, the field of economic protest is defined as a meso-level arena of collective action where organizations, social groupings, networks, and/or individuals converge around protest events related to social or economic issues (cf. Knoke et al. 2021: 135). The study aims to surpass existing studies of the contentious politics of economic transformation, mostly from industrial relations or economic interest groups. Instead, it aims to analyze a broader, relational picture of economic contention across three decades of rapid economic transformation from state socialism to liberal capitalism (with

its recent variant, a technocratic populism). The optics of fields of collective action enables us to analyze both structural and dynamical aspects of the economic contention. The study formulates the following general research questions:

- What is the structure of collective actors engaged in the field of economic contention?
- What are the relational strategies of collective actors engaged in the field of economic contention?
- What are the patterns of protest cooperation in the field of economic contention?
- How do these aspects change across different constellations of political-economic context?

To answer these questions, the study is structured as follows. First, it introduced a basic Polanyian perspective of the counter-movement against the imposition of laissez-faire economic principles in society. This introduction is complemented by the existing empirical and conceptual applications of this perspective on more recent mobilizations against economic liberalization and (global) neoliberal transformations. Second, the study introduces its main theoretical and conceptual framework: it reviews existing approaches to the study of (post-socialist) mobilizations against economic restructuring, detects major determinants of these mobilizations, and identifies the key contextual determinants. Third, the relational concept of collective action – together with the key concept of collective action fields – is introduced and a detailed analytical outline is formulated. Fourth, the data, methods, and the case used in the analysis are described. Fifth, the first part of the empirical analysis of the collective actors in the field of economic contention is introduced, focusing on their structure and relational strategies in the changing political-economic context. Sixth, the empirical analysis of relations in the field of economic contention is conducted, focusing specifically on the role of strong and weak ties, as well as intra- and inter-sectoral cooperation. The final part is dedicated to the conclusions and discussion.

There are several reasons why this endeavor is worthwhile. First, the transition of societies to the market economy and its development induces various societal responses, as has been suggested by classic social theorists such as Durkheim, Marx, or Weber. This study uses the broad perspective of "double movements" in society experiencing the rise of the market economy (and neoliberalism alike) – a planned, political transformation causing social dislocation and suffering – necessarily (and spontaneously) strikes back calling for social

protectionism – a "double movement." It is not a coincidence that the Polanyian perspective has become attractive in the study of post-socialist transformations (Bohle, Greskovits 2012; Hann 2019; Gabrisch 2020; Hann, Scheiring 2021). While Polanyi was silent about the detailed dynamics and collective action engaged in the double-movement, he was clear in describing the political reactions to the consequences of dis-embedding the market (or economy in general) from the social fabric of society. Rapid establishment of new liberal economic models of organizing society consisting of rapid economic liberalization, privatization, and deregulation led to collective mobilizations and protests demanding political elites to slow down or turn back the economic reforms and re-embed the market (Zajak 2019). This transformation of the economic environment affecting the labor collective action can be approached via existing political economy and comparative capitalism approaches: these capture a whole set of economic institutions that induce the societal reactions to economic processes in general and labor relations and conflict in particular (Zajak 2019: 95). Basically, comparative capitalism approaches differentiated between liberal market economies with more intensive labor conflict and market-driven coordination of society, and politics and coordinated market societies with more corporatist logic of coordination (Hall, Soskice 2001). However, the perspective of political economy provides a blurred, fuzzy idea about how the implementation of new economic institutions is reflected, perceived, and contested in the realm of civil society.

Second, the study is answering the call for the return of capitalism and economy back into the study of social movements (Della Porta 2015; Hetland, Goodwin 2013) as well as for the analysis of the relationship between growing social inequalities and their political representation (Gethin et al. 2021), the study aims to fill the gap outlined above and to analyze the post-socialist economic protest in changing economic and political environment. First, it focuses on the area of economic protest to capture struggles around the economic aspects of post-socialist societies, which have been largely overlooked so far. Second, it aims to include not only trade unions but also other types of collective actors who are active in the field (social movements, business associations, political parties, NGOs, and others). Third, it applies the method of protest event analysis, which puts collective protest action at its center to capture as many protest activities as possible. Fourth, it aims to capture the longitudinal aspect of the economic protest from the beginning of economic transformation until recent economic downturns to study how it relates to the political, institutional, and economic context.

Third, this study attempts to fill the research gap on the research of contention over "material issues" in post-socialist societies. There is a rich and still growing literature on social movements, protests, and civil society organizing in post-socialist countries. This may be

divided into three generations. In the first decade after the regime change, generic concepts of civil societies, trust, and social capital dominated the study of post-socialist collective action (e.g., Arato 1990; Ekiert 1991; Rose, Mishler 1994). Later on, the debate became much more focused and actor-centered. However, it either privileged analyses of post-materialist (or "new social movement") types of political activism (environmental, feminist, human rights, anti-corruption, subcultural) or did not discriminate between these types of activism at all (e.g., Baker, Jehlička 1998; Císař 2008; Fagan 2004; Flam 2001; Hašková et al. 2006; Jacobsson, Saxonberg 2013; Jacobsson 2016; Vermeersch 2006; Vráblíková 2017). More recently, the focus has turned to the issues of radical right or populist mobilizations (reflecting the thesis of democratic backsliding and the 2015–2016 refugee crisis), thus again overlooking the contention over socio-economic issues (e.g., Buzogány, Varga 2021; Caiani, Císař 2019; Navrátil, Kluknavská 2022). However, the focus on economic contention has been rather scarce. Some aspects of post-socialist economic contention were captured by the analyses of alter-globalization movements in which some trade unions and left activist groups with economic agendas participated (Gagyi 2013; Navrátil 2016; Piotrowski 2017). There are studies focused on housing struggles in CEE (e.g., Florea et al. 2018; Polanska, Piotrowski 2015). Building on a protest event analysis Wenzel (2016) investigated labor and employers´ protests in Poland between 1989 and 2011; Vanhuysse (2006) analyzed the role of public policies in pacifying and preventing the economic collective action in CEE; Císař and Navrátil focused on the relations between the partisan and activist activities in the field of economy in V4 countries (2015) and analyzed three episodes of Czech economic contention in varying political economy (2017). Economic contention in CEE was also analyzed in the context of the Great Recession: drawing on data also from CEE countries Kriesi et al. (2020) show how the recession after 2007/2008 had an impact on electoral behavior and party systems via protest mobilizations through which the blame to decision-makers was attributed, and Bojar et al. (2021) illustrate that economic downturn affected timing and type of austerity policies but was only partially related to the development of contentious episodes responding to these policies. However, the relational and longitudinal perspective in the study of post-socialist contention is still missing – also in the context of existing research on the labor movement and shifting class relations within post-socialist society (Vandaele 2011; Vandaele 2016; Kelly 2015) or on the relationship between growing social inequalities and their political representation (Gethin et al. 2021).

2. How to study economic protest in post-socialism: a theoretical framework

This study aims to analyze the long-term evolution and structure of economic protest in post-socialist society, i.e., after the fall of state socialism in 1989 and during the key processes of political-economic transformation. The twinned expansion of property rights and citizenship rights also requires combination of the analysis of economic transformation and political transformation, and more precisely, the relation between the two (Stark, Bruszt 1998: 1). This is why this chapter covers both key aspects of Polanyian concept of a counter-movement (or, double-movement) and the mechanisms of its emergence, and then proceeds to empirical and theoretical applications of this perspective on the more recent mobilizations against the economic liberalism and (global) neoliberal transformations.

2.1 Great transformation and double-movement

To understand the long-term societal responses toward large-scale economic transformation, this study implements a broader Polanyian perspective of how large-scale economic transformation and related social processes are linked with societal responses in various forms (e.g., in the form of contentious collective action). Polanyi´s model of social transformation has been applied to the transformation of post-socialist countries into liberal capitalisms by many analysts (Bohle, Greskovits 2012; Ther 2022). This framework has been applied to the study of various phenomena here, such as the analysis of the emergence and transformation of post-socialist capitalism(s) (Bohle, Greskovits 2012). Here, the Polanyian framework is useful for enabling the studying and understanding of capitalism as a highly dynamic multilevel form of political economy which may both produce wealth and emancipation and maintain permanent conflict between laissez-faire forces (self-regulating market mechanisms) and protective efforts (typically regulatory, welfare and social policies). This conflict or tension has a large destructive potential for the human and natural substance of society (Polanyi 2006: 9). In contrast to different accounts of capitalist dynamics, it also reflects the role, importance, and (at least partial) autonomy of political institutions (and political actors). Therefore, it may also be employed to understand the diversity and trajectories of post-socialist societies, which differed in terms of the scope, speed, and consequences of the installment of capitalism and thus represented different pathways (Stark, Bruszt 1998).

Polanyian perspective is inherently sociological as it studies the transformation of society by studying the transformation of its key social institutions, one of these being the self-regulating market. Polanyi claims that the idea of a self-regulating market is a dangerous utopia, as the market economy is always embedded in the society and its institutions – politics, community, state, religion, and others. The norms and rules that are quintessential for the functioning of a market economy have been provided by these (non-market) social institutions. These institutions often provide social norms, rules, and regulations that govern economic interactions and help prevent pure market-driven outcomes (Polanyi 2006: 51-52).

This helps us understand and analyze the complex relationship between economics and society – one of the key concerns of sociology. This relationship has been described as (social) embeddedness: all human activities, including economic ones, are socially constructed. Economic behavior is not determined solely by individual self-interest but is shaped by the cultural and social norms of a given society – by their environment. People act not to satisfy their interest in material things but to secure their social status. Material goods are thus valued

only insofar as they fulfill this function. According to Polanyi, the economic system is thus driven by non-economic motives (Polanyi 2006: 51). At the same time, economic processes are influencing society and vice versa – they are influenced by society. Institutions that constitute the realm of the market economy – markets, money, or property rights are not just a discovery of eternal truths, basic logic, or "spirit of nature", but have been invented, produced, secured, and enforced by concrete actors during specific historical developments and institutionalized.

Once the illusion that a self-regulating market should be established as the key principle of economic production and distribution in society and related policies was promoted, there were tendencies to separate the sphere of economy and politics, and society was persuaded to follow the fictional principles of the self-regulating market (as the market economy may be functional only in a market society). This implies – among other things – that labor, soil and money – basic means of production – are considered as commodities and mediated/distributed by the means of the market (Polanyi 2006: 75). However, no society may withstand effect of the functioning of these pure fictions without any restriction: leaving pure market mechanism as the main "director of human fates" is inevitably leading towards the destruction of society: it deprives humans of the shelter of their social and cultural institutions, brings social disorganization, normlessness, and suffering (Polanyi 2006: 77). At the same time, these process of social erosion and dis-embedding have been – first silently, then openly – accompanied by "protective counter-movement" which aimed at dampening the effects of self-regulated market mechanisms (Polanyi 2006: 80). Polanyi is tracing these counter-movements back in various time periods of rapid promotion of non-regulated market measures such as land enclosure movement in England (since 17th century) during which common lands were privatized and commodified, industrialization and the expansion of market economy (since 18th century), and establishment of global gold standard and laissez-faire economics (since 19th century). He illustrates how all of these waves of expansion of market forces were met by societal counter-movements in the form of aristocracy, labor movement, or the rise of the welfare state.

However, Polanyi´s account of societal differentiation of early modern societies would not be complete without acknowledging the autonomy of the political sphere, which was pushed by the deregulation of the market forces. Apart from the dis-embedding tendencies of the market (i.e., economic sphere), society may also be threatened by the breakdown of political institutions and by the loss of their legitimacy – and the political system may itself become a source of the societal crisis (after being pushed by unsolved erosion of social institutions from the part of the self-regulated market) as was the case of Germany in 1930s. To avoid any large-

scale crisis of any sort, the society must evade social disintegration, economic disorganization, and political breakdown (Bohle, Greskovits 2012: 15). Polanyi thus recognizes also the autonomy and the role of the political sphere in navigating societies through history.

This study is concerned precisely with the relationship between the deregulation of the economic sphere, protective societal double-movement, and political institutions. Polanyi described the dynamics of modern society as being determined by it: it was the continuous spreading of free market principles, which was consequently contested by the countermovement limiting this shift in certain areas, trying to protect them from the market forces (Polanyi 2006: 133). In other words, the rapid expansion of laissez-faire principles in society is met by the countervailing, contesting societal forces that attempt to protect existing social structures and institutions by various means. Society experiencing the rise of capitalism (and neoliberalism alike) – a planned, political transformation causing social dis-embedding, dislocation, and suffering – necessarily (and spontaneously) strikes back, calling for social protectionism – a "double movement." This movement aims at regulating (embedding) unleashed market forces, and Polanyi describes this regulation mostly at the level of restrictions. One example is the Speenhamland system, an amendment to the Elizabethan Poor Law designed by the local "reactionary paternalist" elite. The system was established in England and Wales at the end of the 18th century as a response to high grain prices and rural poverty and, more specifically, as a prevention of dangerous social discontent related to the growing number of poor. Systemically, it was an unconscious counter-measure against the establishment of the labor market, the last remaining piece of the rising capitalist system in England at the time. Polanyi also shows how unexpected social consequences of such protective measures (due to the interaction with already established capitalist mechanisms such as marketization of land ownership and constitution of the class of employers) contributed to the full-scale establishment of the labor market. Once the utopia of the labor market was established and institutionalized, it became immediately contested by factory laws, social legislation, and various social movements (labor, trade unions). In other words, social protectionism may be pushed by various actors – be it aristocracy in the case of land enclosure, conservative elites in the case of rural poverty, or trade unions in the case of a full-scale labor market. So, are there any specific class interests involved in the counter-movement against unregulated market mechanisms?

The countermovement aiming at social protectionism often relies on the support of those for whom the impacts of a laissez-faire economy were most harmful – often working class and landowners who are using the methods of protectionist legislation, interventionist policies, or interest organizations (Polanyi 2006: 135). However, and in contrast to Marx, Polanyi – while

acknowledging an essential role played by class interests in social change – avoids economic determinism and class reductionism, which suggests that any protectionist policies were simply a function of advocacy of material class interests – be it land aristocracy or industrial workers. Without denying the existence of social classes, he insists that a complex understanding of the long-term shifts in society cannot rest just on the analysis of class interests: class is more determined by the needs of the society than the society by the needs of class: according to Polanyi, class interests emerge in certain social structures but when these change, the class interest itself may be transformed. Also, to promote its interests, every class needs to mobilize outside support and thus needs to promote interests that are broader than the interests of the particular class. Furthermore, social change affects various social groups variously, and thus, those who want to bring another social change necessarily have different interests (Polanyi 2006: 154). Finally, class interests cannot be reduced just to economic logic. For Polanyi (as well as for many other social theorists later), class behavior is primarily driven by social recognition rather than by direct material suffering. In other words, class interests are primarily defined by the social status or position of certain classes within the societal universe. Understanding the nature of class interests means analyzing activities that were not necessarily in direct relation with explicit economic class properties such as income, property, and others. Therefore, in response to the expansion of the laissez-faire economy, we may identify attempts to establish, protect, or improve various public goods and services, such as health, social insurance, education, or cultural institutions – and not just the pay rise or absolute poverty. This leads to a much broader understanding of societal interests, which are driving the counter-movement for societal protection. The laissez-faire economy threatened not the narrow economic interests of a certain class but the broad social interests of various and mutually different parts of the population belonging to various economic classes, which, in response, unwittingly unified to contest this threat. Moreover, this perspective also admits that the goals that these parts of the population followed might be incompatible and even mutually exclusive (Polanyi 2006: 156-157).

The problem, according to Polanyi, is not *why* various social classes and groups aim at protectionist goals but *how* they aim to achieve their goals – *how* they coordinate various actors and social groups from various social sectors to enable them to response to social change, which is brought by external forces – wars, trade, environmental disasters, and others. To explain any social change thus means to identify social groups who made this change, or more specifically, who initiated it. However, Polanyi is largely silent in this regard and elaborates rather few instances of how counter-movement emerges and asserts. It is important that it is at the national

level where double movement becomes institutionalized, and state authorities in modern society remain crucial for imposing protectionist policies and pushing the pendulum from the self-regulating marker to the other side. The protection of society against the mentioned eroding mechanisms is up to the governing elites, which may assert their will, while other parts of the population are making their claims and mobilizing: church and agrarians were mobilizing people against factor owners, workers were demanding factory owners stop the free use of machines in the production, Owenist movement represented the desire of ordinary men to master the machines, workers organized in trade unions to promote industrial revolution by nonviolent means, chartist movement made claims to the government through formal, constitutional means. These and other actors were using a manifold repertoire of actions such as community organizing, establishing cooperatives and self-help unions, introducing independent currency, organizing strikes, lobbying, and industrial action.

To conclude, Polanyi sketches a complex picture of how social change is perceived, absorbed, and reflected by society. To fully grasp this complexity, one cannot rely on studying actors of a certain type or sector, analyzing the strategies of specific social classes, or focusing on the institutional level. There are too many processes and interactions among various actors and institutions; new actors emerge, and some become obsolete and disappear. Last but not least, the national state and elites play a key role in both regulatory processes of free market forces and as a point of access for dissatisfied parts of the population.

2.2 Contesting neoliberal capitalism and globalization

Polanyian insights regarding social resistance towards free market expansion have been explicitly reflected and, to a different extent, elaborated and implemented into existing analytical frameworks in recent social movement studies. Most importantly, Polanyian perspective was applied in (or inspired) the area of identification of emerging social and political conflicts over the rapid installment of laissez-faire economics (Bohle, Greskovits 2012; Ther 2022), occurrence of new actors emerging in the processes of neoliberal[3] transformation and economic globalization (Starr, Adams 2003; Munck 2006; Císař, Navrátil 2017), structural identification of dynamics of collective mobilization in contemporary capitalist societies (Silver 2003), or analysis of cross-movement alliances against the neoliberal restructuring (Zajak 2019). This chapter aims to identify the actors, mechanisms, and forms of their mobilizations as seen from the Polanyian perspective to sketch the basic constellation of the modern counter-movement against economic liberalization.

[3] This study defines neoliberalism as political ideology claiming that „optimal outcomes will be achieved if the demand and supply for goods and services are allowed to adjust to each other through the price mechanism, without interference by government or other forces – though subject to the pricing and marketing strategies of oligopolistic corporations“ (Crouch 2011: 17).

2.2.1 Who: collective actors

As the Polanyian perspective anticipated, the processes mentioned above establishing and culminating the rise of economic neoliberalism and globalization after[4] the post-war era since the 1970s were met with various local, national, and transnational resistance waves of protest which explicitly disputed shape and social impacts of these processes across various countries around the globe[5]. These waves and their actors had various locations in the global economic system. First, there was resistance outside economically developed countries in direct relation to processes of commodification and liberalizing economic reforms. Later, some of these actors became established and famous and became part of the transnational movement, which was mobilized against economic globalization also in North America and Europe (e.g., the Zapatista movement[6]). Second, some counter-movements linked protests in the global periphery with economic protests in the economically developed countries and focused on the economic consequences of globalization both in economically more and less advanced countries – as was the case of the Peoples' Global Action (PGA) network[7]. Third, some protest waves focused almost exclusively on the impact of globalization on economically developed countries – often referring to the impact of neoliberal reforms on the welfare state, public services, or workers´ protection. Mobilizations of this type have been gaining momentum in developed countries since the Berlin protests in 1988 (cf. Gerhards, Rucht 1992; Ibarra 2002; Karapin 2007).

[4] Obviously, the counter-movements to rise of laissez-faire economy have been identified also in the previous periods in the transnational historical mobilizations against economic integration that have taken place since the end of the 18th century such as the movements for the abolition of slavery or the activities of the First International (Broad, Heckscher 2003; Podobnik, Reifer 2005). Later on, it was followed by the Second International and Communist International and series of national liberation movements and anti-colonial struggles in Africa (Munck 2006: 40-52).

[5] Several waves of mass mobilizations took place between the second half of the 1970s and the end of the 1980s, especially in the newly industrialized countries of the Third World (cf. Starr 2000: 46; Munck 2006: 58; Sen, Waterman 2009: 57). These popular demonstrations, strikes and riots took the form of food riots (Morocco, Brazil, Haiti) or violent actions that spread after a wave of non-violent demonstrations and public protests (Sudan, Turkey, Chile) or general strikes (Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia). All of these protest mobilizations shared essentially the same goals and their roots are often linked to the nature of the global political economy and its institutional arrangements (Walton, Ragin 1990: 876-877). In particular, these were national or local protests against IMF policies (and the increasing influence of developed countries through these policies), whose market-oriented structural programs had widespread negative socio-economic impacts on large parts of the population, or on their environment or human rights situation (cf. Johnston et al. 2002).

[6] The Mexican Zapatista movement is organizationally anchored by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which emerged from Marxist organization in the 1980s in Mexico. It began to attract worldwide attention after 1994, when it declared war to the federal government in response to the implementation of the NAFTA free trade agreement. It has become as an ideological and symbolic precursor to Western alter-globalization movements (Starr 2000: 103-109; Kingsnorth 2004; Munck 2006: 62-66; Fernandez 2008: 35).

[7] The PGA was a globally coordinated network of radical social movements, campaigns and direct actions primarily directed against capitalism and its social and environmental impacts. It was officially launched in 1998.

In this context, the Polanyian perspective was utilized to show that the processes and impacts of economic globalization and their neoliberal underpinnings directly led to the rise of a variety of collective protests that were attempting to derail or reduce them while typically arguing for social protection on various levels and in various societal sectors (Munck 2006). What social movement scholars added to the picture of the counter-movement against laissez-faire capitalism was the role of the political context in general and political institutions in particular. Since the mid-1990s, the resistance against neoliberal globalization, both in terms of formal organization and program, took a rapid shift, which was supported by the change of political structural conditions: creation, "thickening" and institutionalization of transnational political ties and a significant increase in the influence of international organizations (e.g., the series of international thematic conferences organized by the UN), combined with the increased availability of new means of communication or transport and technologies, providing new opportunities and further enhanced protest mobilizations (cf. Keck, Sikkink 1998; Smith 2008: 94-95; Juris 2008). The increasing number and role of international governmental organizations in economics and their pressure on national states regarding economic policies and sanctions, conditionalities, or trade liberalization led to increased interest from political activists, which has sharply risen since the mid-1990s.

However, increased interest in global or transnational politics did not automatically translate into the transformation of existing collective actors into global or transnational actors. There are many ways political activism has interacted with supranational economic and political processes: taking part in transnational public opinion, building cross-border coalitions and networks, translating global and transnational issues into domestic politics, or negotiating with supranational institutions or other actors (Andretta et al. 2018: 607). We may differentiate between supranational mobilizations as a level of collective action coordination and scale of collective action target (see Table 1).

Table 1: Typology of mobilizations related to economic globalization.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">target level</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td>national</td><td>transnational</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">level of coordination</td><td>national</td><td>domestic actors</td><td>rooted cosmopolitans</td></tr>
<tr><td>transnational</td><td>cooperative transnational</td><td>collective transnational</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Andretta et al. 2018: 608.

Domestic actors typically target national and subnational institutions related to economic globalization (e.g., protests of U.S. or Mexican workers against the national adoption of the NAFTA agreement). Rooted cosmopolitans build on their local and national ties and resources but engage in transnational campaigns (e.g., national actors protesting against the preparation of ACTA or Occupy protests). Cooperative transnational mobilizations coordinate on the transnational levels but target national institutions (e.g., an international solidarity campaign against measures taken against Greece after the Great Recession by international financial institutions). All these types of economic activism may be captured on the level of a national state – either by targeting it and/or mobilizing in it. However, what about the collective transnational mode of mobilizing? This is represented most importantly by the global justice movement (Andretta et al. 2018: 608).

Global justice movement

This actor was sometimes called the movement of movements as it absorbed many existing collective actors and mobilized them alongside the new ones (Andretta, Reiter 2009). In theory, this collective actor has been dealing with global politics, which is based on global framing, transnational networking, and coordination (Tarrow 2005). However, does it completely avoid the space of a national state? Detailed studies of the global justice movement in various European countries showed that it differs in various countries and that the nation-state level is still its most important political context – studies of global justice activism in various countries revealed how they differ in terms of issues, structure, or composition, (Della Porta et al. 2006; Della Porta et al. 2007) and also suggested that members of global justice movement also engage in other parallel activities (typically on the national or local level) (Johnson et al. 1996; Graeber 2002; Della Porta, Mattoni 2014; Piotrowski 2017). Furthermore, analyses of transnational campaigns for global justice how revealed that to achieve their goals, the global justice activists must focus on the national state as a solution to problems they try to solve: national states are members of multilateral organizations affecting global policies, and it was on the level of national states where supporters of neoliberalism succeeded with their political takeover and re-directed its resources (Smith 2008: 231). In other words, analysis of economic activism on the national level, even in times of heightened processes of globalization, does not miss important aspects of such activism.

The global justice movement has become one of the key collective actors challenging neoliberal globalization on various levels. As it has consisted of multiple actors and their networks, it is not surprising that it had largely divergent views both on the definition of the problem

(identification of major grievances stemming from the globalized economy) and on the proposals for remedy (how to re-embed the globalized economy back to the society).
The counter-movement – which in some regards revived the ideas of old economic struggles – oscillated dominantly among three key definitions of the problem:

- *Inequalities and social injustices of global division of labor*: this problem consisted mostly of the issue of indebtedness of the Third World countries, the role of (responsible) international financial institutions and the impacts of international trade liberalization and corporate practices on countries in the Global South (labor conditions, environment, behavior of political elites, political and social rights): one of the key actors promoting this issue was the Jubilee 2000 movement in the UK in the mid-1990s, which followed on earlier activism by development agencies, trade unions, church organizations and other groups from the early 1980s onwards. It succeeded in spreading to more than 60 countries and achieving mass mobilizations in the late 1990s, particularly in Western European countries (Starr 2000: 49). Another important actor was the U.S. 50 Years is Enough movement, founded in 1994. This was a diverse coalition of smaller groups and organizations.
- *International economic order and liberalization of international trade*: here, the problem lies in the architecture of the international neoliberal order being represented by the international economic institutions (WB, IMF, WTO), which spread from the Third World to the economically developed countries in the late 1990s, creation, and impact of free trade areas (FTAs), and other international agreements perceived as strengthening the influence of multinational corporations at the expense of nation-states (MAI, GATS). One typical actor mobilizing around this issue was, for example, the PGA network, which was founded in 1998 in Geneva in direct continuity with the Zapatista movement (see above) and also included several different organizations from the South and developed countries (Bandy, Smith 2005; Maiba 2005; Osterweil 2005).
- *Threatening the welfare state*: the problem was strongly represented, especially in continental Europe (France, Belgium, Germany, or Sweden), and was also related to the critique of the processes of economic globalization and liberalization. Here, emphasis was placed on the impact of neoliberal globalization on developed (especially European) countries in terms of their social and political systems. In French-speaking countries, this stream of activism was sometimes referred to as the "return of the social question" (Aguiton, Bensaïd 1997). In France, the mass strikes and riots at the end of

1995 as a result of the efforts of the right-wing government of A. Juppé to reform the social security system led to the emergence of a broad protest coalition of students, workers, cultural elites, and the socially excluded and consequently to the birth of the French anti-globalization movement (cf. Della Porta et al. 2007: 106). Apart from the coalitions of the middle class, European countries also witnessed the revival of the activities of the movements of the unemployed (Mathers 2007). The most famous example of activism that emerged from this revived tradition of European social struggles was the ATTAC network, which emerged as a resistance to the reduction of social rights and opposition to the MAI, the WTO, and the neoliberal aspects of the European integration process (cf. Ancelovici 2002).

As a result of the varying emphasis on the aspects of economic globalization, also the proposals for alternative political economies of various streams in global justice activism remained quite dispersed and attracted actors with different ideologies (Starr 2000).

- *Contestation and reform:* the first broad group of collective actors aimed at critique and regulation of key proponents of economic globalization – multinational corporations (in terms of taxes, ethical practices, or environmental standards) – and at the restoration of the power of national states. The most important representatives of these actors were peace and human rights groups, squatting movements, anti-growth movements, corporate reform movements, and others.
- *Globalization from below*: the second broad group of actors aimed at democratizing and transforming the existing – undemocratic, unaccountable – political and economic institutions at national and international levels. Specifically, the goal was to replace neoliberal establishment in contemporary institutions with populist, direct-democratic, or self-organizing political mechanisms representing people or masses. The most important representatives of this idea were trade unions and socialist organizations, environmental movements, movements inspired by Zapatistas, and others.
- *Delinking/re-localization*: here, the proposals are aimed at restructuring contemporary societies through voluntary cutting off from global markets, corporations, international institutions, or neoliberal states. The goal was to establish autonomous, localized, and self-sustainable localities and thus bypass existing globalized economic and political order. The most important examples of this idea were anarchists, sovereignty movements, religious movements, DIY movements, agricultural movements, and others.

One of the aspects of mobilizations against neoliberal globalization and its consequences was the integration of so-called new social movements[8]. While these have been theorized as replacing the "old" nationalist and labor movements in the late modern welfare state and promoting post-class post-materialist issues, many of these became quickly engaged in opposition towards changing economic relations and speeding neoliberal globalization and its consequences (human rights violations, environmental impacts, or wars). The combination of "old" and "new" collective actors in the anti-globalization protests led not only to their structuration and division of labor but also to different activist modes: while many new social movements engaged in broad advocacy coalitions, workers or peasants rather articulated embedded, localized resistance (Munck 2006: 94).

Trade unions

While trade unions also took part in the mobilizations against economic globalization and neoliberal policies, their engagement very much depended on the national context: in France or Germany, large trade union confederations extensively participated in the process of building and mobilizing movement against economic globalization. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom or the Czech Republic, the engagement of trade unions was less extensive. In general terms, however, the engagement of trade unions within the movement against economic globalization was still rather a minor one, as trade unions have traditionally used various tools and channels to secure their influence and achieve their imminent goals[9]. While the movement targeting economic globalization – after its decline related to the consequences of attacks in 2001[10] – had left a large-scale political impact, the story of organized labor in Europe after the rise of neoliberal governance is a story of faster or slower decay for various reasons (Ackers 2015; Murray 2017): changing structure of economy led to changing structure of employment in terms of rising platform economy and increasing service and knowledge employment where trade unions never existed or hardly find any new members. Class and job-related identities have become rarer: we may still see them in traditional spheres of the economy (steel workers,

[8] The central defining features of this type movements are considered to be their postmaterialist ideological and value set, non-hierarchical and decentralized organizational structure and form, focus on the area of civil society (goals, style) and less elite-oriented repertoire of action, and finally the cross-class social base (Laraña et al 1994: 6-9; Pichardo 1997: 414).

[9] After replacing protest movement of the "working poor" in late 19th century, unions (first craft unions, then general unions and later industrial unions) focused on collective bargaining, political industrial action and tripartism instead of political activism (Streeck 2005: 269).

[10] See Navrátil (2012).

miners, or workers in car manufacturers), but these have largely disappeared from elsewhere (IT, gastronomy, culture, public services). The membership has been declining as it has not remained automatic as it was in the previous generations of workers. Generations Y and Z, in particular, have to be persuaded that trade union membership has more pros than cons (Waddington, Kerr 2002; Waddington 2015). The economy has become increasingly globalized, which makes every national or even local social movement or interest group advocating the interests of employees in particular sites less effective. There are still more companies with less formal relationships with employees (such as sub-contracting or free-lancing), which prevents the establishment of representative trade unions. Last but not least, both in West and East Europe, the idea of trade unionism and its values has been eroded in cultural terms after the fall of authoritarian socialism in Eastern Europe.

These trends and transformations have had particular consequences, which have been sorted – most notably by industrial relations and political economy scholars – into two broad areas. First, from the bottom-up perspective, trade unions have loosened their touch with society, most notably through losing members and union density. Second, from the top-down perspective, trade unions lost a lot from their bargaining coverage and political influence in general (Avdagic, Baccaro 2014; Streeck 2009; Visser 2013). However, the empirical studies of the transformation of trade unions as collective actors in terms of their organizing and public activities have often been left out of the picture. Growing literature on trade union revitalization suggests that the future of trade unions very much depends on their organizing and mobilizing strategies, not on their actual outcomes (political power, economic resources, membership, and others) (Kelly 1998; Undy 2008).

Some authors suggest that one of the major strategies to strengthen contemporary trade unions is mobilization, re-organization, coalition building with other social movements, and rebuilding of power resources (Kelly 1998; Hyman 2007; for an overview, see Ibsen, Tapia 2017). More particularly, some claim that unions can revitalize only through organizing, mobilizing, and regaining power over ideas about injustice at work (Kelly 2015). This points to the social origins of every trade union organization – the sphere of civil society organizing (Mathers et al. 2018; Brueggemann 2014). The social movement scholars targeted class-based movements for a long time and renewed their interest after the start of the Great Recession at the latest (Silver, Karatasli 2015; Kriesi et al. 2020). Labor movements are understood as large social entities that (may) have a profound impact on society. Even if their mobilizations are not that frequent, "when labor rises, it can shake a social order to its very core, exposing basic fault lines, unsettling deeply rooted social hierarchies, and revealing the degree of social power that can be

realized in collective action" (Fantasia, Stepan-Norris 2004: 555). Throughout many instances, trade unions seem to behave as interest groups or lobbyists. However, they continuously adjust their strategies and show their real social and political power: strikes, lockouts, massive mobilizations such as during the wave of alter-globalization mobilizations, during the Great Recession, or a recent wave of protest in France against pension reform.

Self-organized workers

After the disintegration of the Golden Age of Capitalism in Western societies, several trends pushed towards further differentiation of collective actors mobilizing against neoliberal policies. These trends included the rising renewal of visions and practices of radical democracy (within global justice activism, but also after the Great Recession 2008/2009), innovative forms of a repertoire of contention, different modes of organizing and goals, migration, working outside the realm of traditional industries and sectors, rising international division of labor, blurring class identities, rising social and economic inequalities, digitalization, platformization of labor and society, or emergence of new global precariat class (Standing 2011; Piketty 2017; Azzellini, Kraft 2018: 1; Della Porta 2023). Consequently, recent workers´ claims and initiatives mobilizing against economic and social issues were not always compatible with the established strategies and practices of institutionalized and bureaucratized trade unions. In general, trade unions (specifically those in neo-corporatist settings) have adjusted to the rise in neoliberal policies and have lowered their expectations regarding social standards, workers' rights, and the level of labor commodification. This led to the rise in self-organized workers´ mobilizations outside established hierarchical organizations. This trend has also been described as a deeper tendency to oppose the politics of representation as such (Sitrin, Azzellini 2014). Non-representative organizing of workers has become more common while mirroring the fragmentation of the working class and clumsy, tamed, and bureaucratic trade unions. The rise of workers´ mobilization outside established unions occurs under diverse conditions (typically their combination) and is context-specific: there might be grievances stemming from bureaucratic strategies of major trade unions in corporatist settings (Kumar, Samaddar 2018), open repression of workers from the state in combination with non-representative trade unions (Sinwell 2018), a deep crisis of neoliberal economic model discrediting the compliance of established trade unions (Broumas et al. 2018), variation in the interests of workers and trade unions in declared socialist settings (Azzerllini 2018), ignorance or underestimation of workers in certain sectors as "un-organizable" from the part of established trade unions (Però 2020), a will to organize from below combined with non-effective representation of workers´ interests

and tensions with trade unions – and at the same time – later cooperation with unions (Rizzo, Atzeni 2020). All these and other forms of collective action may, in the long term, contribute to the rise of new subjectivities and collective identities and lead to the emergence of structured organizations (Della Porta 2023: 17). So, depending on the trajectories and conditions of specific workers' communities, these may evolve from loosely self-organized communities towards fully established trade union organizations in the later period.

Political parties

Even if, for modern social science, the political parties are the least usual suspects in taking part in counter-movement against the orthodox market forces, Polanyi explicitly mentioned this type of collective actors as becoming engaged in the process. In continental Europe, the political parties were established out of the working class, and in England, these were established out of trade unions, which brought continental trade unions closer to socialist ideologies. In contrast, in England, the ideology of new political parties remained closer to the ideology of trade unionism (Polanyi 2006: 177-178). All in all, political parties – in the context of universal suffrage – gradually became the tool of social protectionism and aimed at disrupting the capitalist logic in the sphere of the labor market.

In late modern societies, the role of political parties has changed. While in the post-war period, the willingness of political parties to engage in extra-institutional or anti-institutional mobilizations was rather high, and the strategies and goals of political parties were mixed in general, the rise of new collective actors and societal conflicts in the 1970s (and in 1990s again) changed this pattern (Kitschelt 2003). After that, there has been an increase in the differentiation in the patterns of interest articulation and mobilization among parties, movements, interest groups, and NGOs, when political parties have largely professionalized and institutionalized, focused mostly on electoral mobilization, adjusted their original ideological stances to new communication technologies and changing class structure, and became part of the political order (Della Porta 2007: 242-243; Borbáth, Hutter 2022: 254). At the same time, new parties have emerged to challenge this status quo: first, these were left-liberal parties with their origins in new social movements with a focus on individual autonomy and environmental issues, and second, these were radical right parties focusing on immigration and European integration (Borbáth, Hutter 2022: 255). However, there are some important differences in party protest strategies in terms of their political alignment. While right-wing parties have used extra-institutional strategies primarily for institutional goals (mobilizing voters and succeeding in elections), political left parties occupy a protest arena more often and in a parallel manner to

electoral strategies (Hutter 2014: 125). Therefore, and not surprisingly, there were many instances of involvement of political parties – typically from the political left milieu – in protest mobilizations against economic globalization and subsequent economic crises.

The global justice movement consisted of many organizational forms, including informal groups, transnational organizations, trade unions, NGOs – and political parties (Saunders, Andretta 2009: 132). Even though the relations between the global justice movement and political parties, in general, were hampered by the elitism, professionalization, hierarchy, focus on the median voter, abandonment of Keynesian economic policies, and adherence towards neoliberal ideology (such as "Third-way" program of British Labor Party) (Della Porta 2007: 242-243; Andretta, Reiter 2009: 177), in some countries (Greece, Italy) parties (typically moderate left) even represented key collective actors engaged in the movement against economic globalization. They provided other civil society organizations with various resources, and their ideological profiles perfectly matched the general claims made by the critics of economic globalization. Furthermore, many political parties – specifically radical left (such as Communist, Trotskyite, or Socialist) – used the mobilization against economic globalization and its consequences as an opportunity to change their political marginalization (Della Porta 2007: 244). Saunders and Andretta (2009: 137) showed that members of political parties were heavily present at important protest events organized against economic globalization, both in domestic settings and abroad. Quite surprisingly, members of political parties showed a very similar (in some cases even more radical) profile in terms of engagement in various movement activities as members of less formalized organizations (ibid. 138). At the same time, many political parties that supported political activism against economic globalization followed a double strategy: they were also participating in standard political processes and asserting their goals through institutional means. While traditional socialist parties often had ambivalent relations with other actors in the movement, radial left parties generally played a much more important role: these were typically autonomist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist actors who opposed the process of Europeanization as part of neoliberal globalization and often concentrated on (national) social state agenda or self-organization (Andretta, Reiter 2009: 181). Furthermore, even after the decline of global justice activism in the U.S. after 9/11, emerging anti-war activism with roots in previous global justice mobilizations became linked with one of the two major U.S. Parties – Democrats – and even helped the party to electoral victory in 2008 (Heaney, Rojas 2015: 238).

A similar situation of engagement of political parties in mobilizations related to processes and impacts of the capitalist economy took place during the next protest cycles – related to austerity

policies imposed after the Great Recession in 2008 and to the rise of the Occupy movement in 2011. The Great Recession, which started in the United States in September 2008, soon became paralleled by national political crises and changed the ways how political parties typically think about protest mobilizations: apart from changes in their programs (moderation or critique of unregulated financial markets or introduction of new welfare policies) some parties got engaged in the coalitions with movements and other actors and participated in the street protests to mobilize (new) voters (Borbáth, Hutter 2020: 258). Typical cases were the Five Star Movement in Italy, Syriza in Greece, and Podemos in Spain (emerging from the Indignados movement). However, some of the established political parties, like the Labor Party in the United Kingdom, went through internal shifts and elected new leaders with anti-austerity agendas. After the spread of the Occupy movement in the United States – collective actors aimed at long-term changes in the structure of capitalist economies and societies (reduction of inequality, the introduction of regulatory policies in the financial system, new taxes, decent jobs, or strengthening democratic control over the economy) – the cooperation with parties weakened, but did not vanish. While the U.S. branch of the movement denied cooperation with established parties (Heaney, Rojas 2015: 236-237), in the European context, the movement cooperated with liberal-left and socialist parties.

To summarize, many types of collective actors have become a subject of inquiry in Polanyian-inspired analyses of resistance toward processes of rapid economic deregulation. One of the usual suspects was a global justice movement explicitly targeting neoliberal *economic* globalization and its social consequences. It was this collective actor who reflected the expansion of economic processes in the era of globalization and – although internationalism is not new to the movements contesting capitalist economy – initiated the scale shift in terms of target and level of coordination. At the same time, political parties and trade unions represent other types of collective actors engaged in the revolts against economic liberalization. One of the common features of these analyses is the emphasis on the formally organized actors, with very few exceptions, such as analyses of the mobilization of self-organized workers. This is one of the omissions this study attempts to avoid.

2.2.2 Why: economic threats and political context

Contemporary analyses have applied the Polanyian concept of counter-movement while tracing current counter-movement back to the demise of embedded liberalism in the 1970s (Zajak 2018: 89). This was followed by the rise of neoliberal ideology, which legitimized austerity policies and renewed and consolidated capitalist class power (Harvey 2012: 17). In the 1980s, the political economies started to experience profound changes, generally characterized as secular expansion of market relations both inside but also across borders of national states. This was the start of the transformation of post-war organized capitalism and its shift towards new political-economic settings through the process of liberalization (Streeck, Thelen 2010: 2). Even if each political economic system had it specific transition path, there were several commonalities of the process leading from the phase of organized towards dis-organized capitalism: the key norms promoted by this political wave were non-interfering of government into the market (but at the same time maintaining the protection of financial institutions by the state), weakening of national political institutions and lowering redistributions, revision of welfare policies, declining of political responsibility of national governments for maximum employment, strict fiscal discipline in public budgets, discreditation of collective solution to social problems and accepting the "autonomous logic of the market" in previously regulated areas and political-economic systems (Lash, Urry 1987; Streeck, Thelen 2010: 3-4). Codification and institutionalization of neoliberal policies were accomplished through the formulation of the Washington Consensus after 1989 – an explicit set of universal policy recommendations authored by U.S. economists aiming at the constitution of "underdeveloped" or "ill" economies all over the world into the "advanced" ones (with core principles of fiscal discipline, privatization, liberalization of international trade and foreign direct investment, deregulation of financial markets, tax reform, and others). Even if similar economic reforms were conducted and contested since the 1970s, the pendulum of the increasing market autonomy has reached a new elevation with a sharply rising flow of goods and capital one decade later (Ther 2022: 38). During late 1990s and 2000s, the doctrine of self-regulating market together with accelerating disorganization of financial and industrial capitalism (and advances in science and technology) intertwined in the economic dimension of globalization – both the cause and the outcome of market deregulation. International economic institutions (IMF, WB, WTO), multinational companies, and investment banks were identified as the key actors pushing the deregulation of the market further (Crouch 2011).

These events and processes represent a recent transformation of economic conditions (altered further by the liberal or neoliberal movement), which, according to Polanyi, are supposed to spur a societal counter-movement. The effect of these conditions and their changes have often been conceptualized as grievances – often a function of material/economic (pressure theories) or structural conditions (breakdown theories). Typically, the former are conflicts over money, social status, or political power, as has been most notably suggested by Marxists: capitalist society builds on the mode of production consisting of two adversary social classes with different relations to the tools and means of production process. One of the classes (bourgeoisie) has political control and economically exploits the other one (proletariat). Once the internal crisis of capitalism (unemployment, overproduction, exploitation) deepens and the proletariat becomes unified not only in terms of its structure but also in its consciousness ("class for itself"), it mobilizes and attempts to change the existing socio-economic system. Similarly, dramatic changes in material conditions – an increase in poverty, unemployment, homelessness, physical oppression, and the like lead to mobilization and the rise of social movements (Mathers 2007). Another grievance-related explanation of how a change in underlying conditions leads to the societal counter-movement was offered by "strain" or "breakdown" theorists: due to the economic processes or countervailing economic trends, the social tensions increase, existing social arrangements and social regulations are damaged or questioned, existing social control weakens, and people are more vulnerable to take part in any social protest organizers calling them to participate (Snow, Soule 2010: 33). One of the classic studies critically demonstrating both grievance-related explanatory mechanisms was authored by Piven and Cloward (1979). They explore the dynamics and strategies that poor people and their organizations use to advocate for their rights and achieve social change. The authors focus on specific movements, such as the welfare movement, the housing movement, and the labor rights movement, and explore why some movements of the poor succeed and achieve social change while others fail. Generally, Piven and Cloward link the emergence of popular movements to the profound changes in a larger society and exceptional conditions that may turn lower classes defiant and asking for social and political change. More specifically, they use the term "social dislocation," which recalls Polanyian "social dis-embedding," which is the massive disruption of existing social institutions and relations by economic processes. Piven and Cloward argue that the success of poor movements is often linked to their ability to ignite a crisis or conflict in the system that creates and perpetuates poverty and inequality and generates political pressure and obstacles that force the institutions of power to change. Their explanation of how poor people´s movements rise makes use of existing traditional explanations, including Tocqueville´s,

Rudé´s, Moore´s, and Hobsbawm's accounts of pre-modern and early modern revolts and social unrests. Piven and Cloward discuss both "pressure" and "breakdown" theories on popular uprising. They criticize the former for treating social change as something extraordinary while stability and consensus prevail most of the time – even if capitalism itself builds on rapid economic transformation, which is continuously perceived as harming many social groups (Piven, Cloward 1979: 8). At the same time, also breakdown theories are insufficient in providing precise explanatory mechanisms linking broad (economic) processes and mobilization/recruitment on the ground: people often tend to blame various entities for their problems, so why should they blame the existing order and elite? (Piven, Cloward 1979: 12). Three factors related to subjective consciousness are listed. First, people need to perceive their situation (including relevant social or political institutions or policies) as wrong and unjust – i.e., as a problem of the system, not an individual (or other social group´s) failure. This means that existing (economic) systems or policies, which used to be considered self-evident and normal, have started to be considered illegitimate. Second, people need to perceive their situation as modifiable. This means that institutions and practices (such as economic relations, distribution, and policies) are understood as contingent, value-laden, and constructed, not as given, the only solution possible, or naturally existing. Third, people get a sense of their power or efficacy and start to believe that they can change these institutions and practices – e.g., by raising public claims towards the political elites using political activism. Furthermore, as added by Piven and Cloward, political elites may significantly contribute to this process (by inside fighting, eroding their authority, cooperating with claimants, or legitimizing their claims) (Piven, Cloward 1979: 12).

This analytical connection between "big" or "objective" economic conditions and processes towards the focus on the transformation of the perception of people to "construct" grievances and mobilize against them has been further developed within the theory of framing of collective action (Benford, Snow 2000). A framing perspective avoids the idea that social movements are just bearers of certain ideologies or ideas and suggests a much more complex and actor-oriented image. To challenge the existing situation or problem, the collective actors often make work of signifying and interpreting for their members, the public, or bystanders (Snow, Soule 2010: 51). Concerning grievances, the framing activity often focuses on diagnostic framing, i.e., identification and naming of the problem – event, social or economic condition, public policy, and others. (their assessment as problematic, unjust, illegitimate, worrisome), and attribution of blame or responsibility (who is to blame for the condition, what is the cause of the situation) (Snow, Soule 2010: 51-52). In other words, the explanation of economic protest against laissez-

faire policies and institutions is not caused directly just by an "objective" drop in economic indicators. Much effort is needed before any mobilization of counter-movement (both in terms of protest activities or political counter-measures) can take place: collective actors first need to disseminate the images of social injustice, identify a target, persuade citizens that the situation may be changed by taking some action and that the citizens are capable of changing the situation. Many of these issues do not necessarily need to be introduced explicitly and manifestly, as protesters may rely on existing sub-cultural or ideological knowledge which may be referred to (in case of economic protest, e.g., symbols or images of trade union traditions, history of social liberation struggles, movements engaged in similar protests abroad and others). Recent empirical exploration on the role of economic threat for collective mobilization has similarly highlighted the impact of positional – relative, comparative – positions of individuals within shared, consensual structural contexts, which serve as the base for assessment of the situation as just or fair (Gillham et al. 2018: 437). This points not to immediate economic hardship disrupting the life of individuals (as suggested by classics – see above) but rather to the collective interpretation of group positions, declining opportunities, and disadvantages, which need to be articulated and mobilized, often in conflict with public policies and political decisions. Furthermore, interpretations of group positions are strongly influenced by their belonging to social classes, which, in turn, are in different situations (less or more vulnerable to economic threats) in different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990). Therefore, it is not surprising that economic threats lead to mobilization when a social group feels vulnerable – both in its class position and within the institutions of the national welfare context (Dodson 2016).

While Polanyi has emphasized the role of the economy and the spread of the unregulated market as a stimulant for the emergence of societal counter-movement, he also cited the role of the nation-state and political elites as those who ultimately must take the appropriate action, the political decision. In other words, societal counter-movement contributes to social reconstruction and re-regulation mainly through institutions of a national state. The role of the national state and its institutions has been elaborated in social movement studies, however often through the concept of the political context of collective action, or more specifically, the concept of political opportunity structure (Tilly 1978). These have repeatedly illustrated that the role of (national) political context as the determinant in the emergence and transformation of protest campaigns and social movements has been of great importance (Tarrow 2005: 32-34). By political context, social movement scholars primarily suggest political opportunities and threats: while political opportunity is the potential that challengers will advance their

interests if they act collectively, threat denotes "the costs that a social group will incur from the protest, or that it expects to suffer if it does not take action" (Almeida 2003; Goldstone, Tilly 2001). Change in the political context producing threats or opportunities alter costs and benefits for protest strategies of activists and also transform the logic of both protest events and movements (Hadden 2015; Meyer, Corrigall-Brown 2005; Heaney, Rojas 2008; Staggenborg 1986; McCammon, Campbell 2002; McCammon, Van Dyke 2010). The concept of political opportunities has often been used for comparative analyses of various countries with different institutional designs (Kriesi 2006). The transformation of political context may be conceptualized as a contextual mechanism that links with other types of mechanisms, such as cognitive and relational mechanisms. Cognitive mechanism refers to the fact that the transformation of political context into the relations among activist organizations does not take place mechanically, but first, these events need to be perceived and interpreted as decisive by relevant actors (Koopmans, Olzak 2004; Meyer, Minkoff 2004).

For the study of the relations between the economic transformation and its contesters, however, the analysis of political strategies *towards challengers* and structure of power elite represents only part of the process: it has been shown how the political constellation may affect collective action repertoires and radicality of claims during various economic crises (Kousis 2013; Kousis, Tilly 1995), but in the context of political activism it has been rarely reflected how political institutions *act* as the main brokers through which economic processes are translated and economic policies are imposed, moderated, coordinated or revised. A few decades ago, the processes of the capitalist economy intertwining with the political institutions of the modern state were theorized. There are three internally related phenomena with the help of which late modern societies are able to respond to and, to a large extent, neutralize the systemic stresses of the capitalist economy: government (economic) interventionism, mass democracy, and the modern welfare state (Habermas 2000). In other words, two key sub-systems of instrumental action that decoupled (dis-embedded) from the lifeworld (capitalism, state) are interacting, and the economic sub-system is backfiring into the social structures of lifeworld only indirectly, through the institutions of the political-administrative system. This is where the economic crisis (stress, disbalance, hardship) is eventually transformed into a political crisis of legitimacy, and regulatory institutions become the target of political protests. While in the case of the economy, it is a crisis in the systemic sphere, the crisis of legitimacy is a social crisis, i.e., it is absorbed by the structures of the lifeworld (related, for example, to the identity of the individual). In early capitalism, with its direct and dramatic interactions between the economic system and the society, this crisis was epitomized by the rise of the labor movement as a consequence of

imminent outcomes of a self-regulated market economy, which drew attention precisely to the inconsistency between its socio-economic position and the official bourgeois legitimation of the capitalist social order as a "just exchange of free individuals" (cf. Crossley 2002: 158; Habermas 2000: 49-50, 89). On the other hand, late modern economic transformations are not perceived directly by society (and into economic contention) but are always mediated by political institutions: these introduce, adjust, and regulate legal systems, labor markets, financial markets, education/skill formation systems, research and science institutions, or ethical standard settings (Kriesi 2004; Hall, Soskice 2001).

This has been highlighted specifically in the industrial relations research: institutions establishing and regulating economic processes and their outcomes – institutional foundations of capitalism – differ significantly among national states and affect the strength of labor relations and labor activism (Hall, Soskice 2001; Zajak 2019: 95). Strategies of political elites regarding regulatory political institutions such as tripartism or other corporatist designs (their establishment, setting, adjustment, legitimization), are always crucial for understanding the character of counter-movement – i.e. economic protest (Ekiert, Kubik 1998; Iankova 2002; Béland, Marier 2006). Often, the approach to analyze the economic processes of social disorganization and their outcomes are studied from a comparative perspective as the embeddedness of institutional foundations of capitalism differs across national contexts. The transformation of the economic environment affecting the labor collective action thus can be approached via existing comparative capitalism approaches: these capture a whole set of economic institutions that induce the societal reactions to economic processes in general and labor relations and conflict in particular (Zajak 2019: 95). Basically, comparative capitalism approaches differentiated between liberal market economies with more intensive labor conflict and market-driven coordination of society, and politics and coordinated market societies with more corporatist logic of coordination (Hall, Soskice 2001). However, comparative capitalism approaches have seldom been used longitudinally, considering these two modes of capitalism as representing two general tendencies towards higher social embeddedness of economy or lower social embeddedness of economy.

For the purposes of the study of economic activism, this study aims to include the evolution of institutional settings of national capitalism into the study of economic contention and thus broadening the narrow concept of political opportunities/threats) (cf. Della Porta 2015; Hetland, Goodwin 2013). According to the Polanyian account of the relation between capitalism and political mobilization, it is the political elites who are targeted by the protest to make decisions and prepare policies to soften or erase the impacts of unleashed market forces. Economic

contention is thus not directly affected by material grievances arising from the market but takes place against the interface of later modern capitalist society – government orientation regarding the class structure of society (economic policies) and the welfare state (social policies). This interface works both ways: it represents the target for the counter-movement seeking embeddedness of a laissez-faire economy but also a tool of the political elite how to prevent the mobilization of the counter-movement or to de-mobilize (Vanhuysse 2006; Sirovátka, Ripka 2020).

To summarize, understanding the evolution of counter-movements that are contesting the spread of a self-regulated market economy depends very much on several key insights from previous studies in the field. First, comparative capitalism approaches and political context perspective illustrate that it is not just economic processes per se but rather the political and capitalist institutional compound – or multi-institutional politics – that affects economic mobilizations (Armstrong, Bernstein 2008; Zajak 2019: 96). Second, existing classic studies on economic mobilization revealed that economic processes do not mechanically translate into the mobilizing grievances but needs to be, first, perceived and framed as (economic) threats. Third, it has also been illustrated that these threats are often produced, channeled, and signaled by the political elites (who might also be made *responsible* by the challengers) via various institutions and policies. Therefore, in mapping the context that is driving the economic mobilizations, the analysis should closely follow the strategies of the government in three areas of governance: first, economic policies (generally oscillating between liberalism and Keynesianism; second, social/welfare policies (generally oscillating between austerity/social divestment and protectionism/social investment); and third, existing industrial relations and social dialogue (generally oscillating between pluralism and corporatism).

2.2.3 How: structure and dynamics of collective action

Polanyi was clear in describing the political reactions to the consequences of dis-embedding free market forces but remained quite silent about the detailed structure and dynamics of the counter-movement against this process: what was the coordination among various actors to promote the goals of the counter-movement? We have only a brief or selective sketch of some collective actors pushing the state towards social protectionism but without a clear idea about levels and modes of their coordination, types of actors involved in coalitions and types of actors acting on their own, or character of their repertoire. At the same time, it is not clear what the overall dynamics of the counter-movement was: was it a permanent protest cycle? Was it a series of protest cycles with the same actors? Or are these protest cycles organized by various actors and independent of each other?

Structure of a counter-movement

Since the beginning of the rapid disintegration of post-war welfare capitalism, many existing or emerging collective actors began to engage in promoting the counter-movement of social protective measures. However, these sometimes formed an internally dense but externally rather isolated milieus without any far-reaching coalitions. One of the factors blocking the coalitions among social movements has been theoretically captured by the concept of new social movements: these were movements emerging since the late 1970s along new types of conflict and bearing distinct ideologies, organizational characteristics, repertoire, and social structure of their members than the "old" ones – including trade unions (Laraña, Gusfield 1994: 6-9; Nash 2000: 102-103; Pichardo 1997: 414). While old social movements – specifically trade unions – during the post-war era gradually gained privileged positions in terms of access to the political system and its elites and adjusted to this position in terms of repertoire and strategies, new social movements often brought in new types of claims and open conflict with incumbents (Kitschelt 1993). At the same time, new social movements gradually evolved into more institutionalized actors, such as green parties, or penetrated traditional social democratic parties with new demands and perspectives (Della Porta 2007: 424). Also, the analyses of the declining power of trade unions after the 1990s – especially in Anglo-Saxon countries – revealed that unions are compensating for this loss by coalition building with other social movements (Ibsen, Tapia 2017). At the same time, trade unions have also adjusted (or reinvented) their strategies in late mobilizations within global justice activism or after the Great Recession. To summarize, external pressure and economic threats have both pushed trade unions to follow their original

movement-like organizing and to make alliances with other collective actors with similar goals, as social movement theories predict (Reese et al. 2010; Van Dyke, Amos 2017). Empirical evidence of coalition-making among collective actors contesting neoliberal policies is far from systematic. There are several studies related to the largest protest waves in specific regions, such as privatization and liberalization in Latin America, in the U.S., or Global Justice activism and anti-austerity protests in Europe.

Since the 1980s, Latin America has experienced an extensive process of democratization (after a period of military authoritarian regimes) combined with the rise of neoliberal economic policies, engagement of international financial institutions, and consequent austerity policies (Walton, Shefner 1994). The combination of emerging new political parties and mobilizing civil society (existing as opposition to the previous authoritarian system) led to the new cooperation pattern (Almeida 2010: 173). Analysis of protest campaigns against the neoliberal reforms in Latin American settings between 1995 – 2001 revealed the decline of labor unions in promoting protest cooperation (with relative activity of the public sector employees) and the rise of other movement sectors (Almeida 2007: 129). Coalitions were made dominantly within the public sector employees (education, health care), students, formal civil society organizations (NGOs), groups representing Indigenous people/peasants, feminist movements, environmental activists, religious organizations, and also political parties (leftist, in opposition) (Almeida 2007: 129-130).

In the United States, the speeding privatization of public (welfare) services led to multiple protests where labor unions (typically of public sector employees) made alliances with local communities (Reese 2011). Prominent, professional NGOs also played an important role (Della Porta 2007). Specifically, labor unions, faith-based organizations, and immigrant rights groups cooperated in welfare rights campaigns after the mid-1990s, whereas welfare rights activism was rather isolated before this period (Reese 2011: 168). In the case of contestation against privatization of water services, the coalitions were even more variegated and consisted of labor unions, environmental activists, students, and citizen rights activists (Robinson 2013). Labor unions participating in the movement were typically community and basis-oriented (such as reformed AFL-CIO). However (and despite several key protest events suggesting the opposite), the movement was not capable of establishing lasting collective action coordination between new ("turtles") and old ("teamsters") parts of global justice activism (Rose 2000: 110-111).

The case of European global justice activism was multifaceted, as it was built both on domestic and transnational alliances, contained many cross-issue networks, combined also old and new forms of action, and at the same time, very much depended on the national contexts (Della Porta

2007). Considering the multitude of actors and their milieus, Della Porta identified two different constellations of global justice activism:

- Dense networks combining old and new social movement organizations (labor unions, religious groups, squatters, farmers, environmental and peace activists) under the collective action frame of participatory democracy (typically in Italy, Spain, or France); labor unions are also present because of lack of other opportunities and fragmented system of industrial relations;
- Coalitions of professionalized (environmental, humanitarian, development) NGOs with sufficient resources and clear internal structure, without strong lings with old social movement organizations (labor unions) and under the collective action frame of associational democracy (typically in Germany, UK or Switzerland); labor unions are using a well-institutionalized system of industrial relations and contacts with global justice activism are infrequent and selective.

The cooperation between global justice activists and political parties consisted of interactions with the mainstream left parties (social democratic, socialist, labor), radical left parties, and the Greens. The mainstream left parties have become quite moderate in terms of their economic policies after withdrawing from Keynesianism, and the more they shifted towards the political center, the more tense relations they had with global justice activism (Dela Porta 2007: 246). Not surprisingly, some of the new social movement organizations succeeded in having better relations with these parties as these have not targeted dominant neoliberal policies. At the same time, more radical left parties (communist, post-communist, Trotskyites) typically welcomed alliances with global justice activism as an opportunity to spread their critique of capitalism – similarly to the Green parties (Della Porta 2007: 244-245). Still, relations between radical left parties and the global justice movement were not always ideal ones, as conflicts arose, e.g., over ideological focus and framing or modes of organizing.

Dynamics of a countermovement

There are two key aspects of the dynamics of the counter-movement against the commodification of labor and the intensification of neoliberal capitalism. The first one focuses on the overall trends and trajectories of this counter-movement. As suggested by Polanyi, counter-movement is mobilized against the imposition of pure, non-regulated market policies. Therefore, many studies have been tracing the broader processes through which the broad post-war economic consensus was deconstructed and gave way to neoliberal economic policies. This

point was identified in the 1970s (Almeida, Pérez Martín 2022: 2). As it was a process taking place in many countries and across many continents, its temporal and geographical variation was considerable. At the same time, some data suggest that protest campaigns against neoliberalism had very similar overall dynamics in both the global South and global North, at least until the mid-1990s (Almeida, Pérez Martín 2022: 20). One of the key questions here is what is the overall dynamics and intensity of the response to rising neoliberal policies: does the protest mobilize instantly to confront the neoliberal tendencies, or is it mere reactive response, i.e. it is rising gradually and in the long run? The global, general view based on the major anti-neoliberal campaigns (Almeida, Pérez Martín 2002) suggests the latter: since the 1970s, we see a slow and steady rise in the number of mobilizations – even if there are clearly identifiable peaks of these mobilizations. Does this counter-movement disappear when further neoliberal reforms are stopped or reduced? Again, looking at the global level and focusing on the global North, the trajectory of counter-movement against neoliberalism consisted of several large protest waves which were quite closely synchronized with deep economic recessions in early 1970s (oil crisis, stagflation), early 1980s (global recession), early 1990s (Western economic downturn) and protests against economic globalization (welfare state reforms, global justice activism), and Great Recession 2008/2009 (financial crisis and subsequent austerity policies). Typically, there was not a direct protest response to the economic turmoil itself but rather a reaction toward the consequences of public policies that dealt with the economic downturn (Biten et al. 2023; Almedia, Pérez Martín 2022: 23). Global data suggest that after the contestation of austerity policies in the global North, adjustment and reconsideration of these policies after 2014 led to a significant decrease in the number of major anti-neoliberal campaigns.

The second aspect of the counter-movement dynamics is related to the main proponents of the mobilizations: who is responsible for the mobilizations in times of heightened neoliberalism? Here, two key theoretical perspectives exist, as summarized by B. Silver (2003): following Polanyi´s concept of counter-movement, we know that protest is provoked by the excessive promotion of a self-regulated market, which erodes established social ties and existing social standards. Polanyi builds on the assumption that it is primarily the needs of the society that determine the needs of particular social classes: under pressure, the needs of the society may change the structure of society, which may further affect the chances of various actors to gain broader social support and satisfy the needs which are broader than just their own (Polanyi 2006: 154). In other words, the interests affected by the imposition of the free-market policies reach beyond mere economic interests of particular social groups such as specific working class

or middle classes – these may affect broader social interests of various parts of the population, which may bring together various collective actors which – to some extent unconsciously – coalesce and challenge these policies. Thus, the commodification of labor (a key dimension of commodification in relation to the counter-movement) is dangerous as such and for everyone. The resulting sense of injustice and threat leads to the mobilization of all social groups affected by (or threatened by) the commodification forces.

On the other hand, there is a classical Marx´s analysis of the fictitious nature of labor at the moment of production, which helps us to understand how capitalism is not only worsening the social conditions of the working class but at the same time increasing the power of workers´ movement. Specifically, while speeding capitalism is decomposing some of the old working classes (such as agrarian) and depriving them of their social status and also power stemming from their position in the production process (bargaining, associations), it is empowering the laborers in new sectors of production – most importantly in industry. Therefore, we should expect that there will be higher variability of various social groups in the various stages of counter-mobilizing against the neoliberal policies.

In general, none of the above questions may be answered using global data from transnational or even global waves of protest against economic policies. Apart from these protests, there were also national and sub-national campaigns that reflected national or regional situations and varied among different national states. To some extent, this was also the case of global justice activism or some of its national branches: even if global justice activism succeeded in synchronizing many protest mobilizations, which typically followed meetings of international financial institutions (in the forms of protests) or self-organized international gatherings (in the forms of social fora), some of the dynamics of this activism remained on the national or even subnational level. Following the Great Recession, the protests against economic policies became much more varied and lost global political vision. Even if it represents a part of the global wave of anti-austerity mobilization (Flesher-Fominaya 2017), it was not able – in contrast to global justice activism – to find common collective action frames and stretch these to transnational or even global levels. Therefore, protest responses towards the Great Recession and subsequent policies followed very much national patterns, and there was nothing like one big protest wave after 2008 in Europe (Kriesi et al. 2020: 4-5). One of the first major campaigns against the consequences of the Great Recession was the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, which mobilized against the rising economic inequality and the bail-out policies of the US government in response to the financial crisis of the large banks (Pickerill, Krinsky 2012). In Europe, a wave of protests against austerity after the Great Recession first started in Southern

Europe – Portugal, Spain, and Greece and continued to other countries. This said, the consistent analysis needs to carefully consider various levels of mobilizations within a clearly defined geographical context or, more precisely, in a specific polity.

To summarize, even if existing studies have explored the structure and dynamics of mobilizations against recent neoliberal restructuring, the overall picture of the actors and their prevailing patterns of cooperation is still rather blurred, non-contextualized, and often selective in terms of studied subjects. Typically, mobilizations of trade unions, left-wing political parties, and global justice movement(s) but also employees or students have been explored; however, their alliances and broader networks, which would indicate the strength of a societal reaction towards economic reforms, have been largely left unexplored. In terms of its dynamics, while some large protest cycles have been identified and studied, much less is known about how exactly this dynamic relates to the changing political-economic context across a longer period. Even if there are numerous studies of global justice or anti-austerity activism, we still lack more detailed empirical accounts of how exactly their regional or national protest cycles were related to the changing political-economic context and the processes of commodification in the long-term perspective.

3. Studying the post-socialist countermovement

Even if there are numerous studies on the rise of neoliberal policies and countermovement against these in Western countries or Latin America (after its democratization), much less is known about this phenomenon in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union. While in Western Europe, the U.S., and Latin American countries, the economic transformation was initiated during the 1970s and 1980s, Eastern Europe waited until the beginning of the 1990s. It was only then that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe began to push for libertarian reforms to unshackle individual states from the legacy of statist socialism. After these reforms were launched, there were concerns about how they would be received by society. There were widespread expectations about the short-term prospects of neoliberal restructuring in the post-socialist region and the rise of social unrest, anomic situations, the rise of political extremism, or even societal breakdown (Greskovits 1998; Ekiert, Kubik 1998; Ágh 1998; Walton, Seddon 1994: 327). However, no dramatic and large-scale social upheavals and the rise of radical social movements comparable to those in other regions (esp. in Latin America) took place. This chapter aims to map the imposition and intensification of economic (neo-)liberalism in the post-socialist region and reflect on the mobilization of discontent with this rise.

3.1 Post-socialist path(s) to neoliberalism

The region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) witnessed rapid economic transformation of former socialist countries after 1989. Even if, at the beginning of these transformations, there was a variety of analyses that classified trajectories of post-socialist countries as corporatist-like (e.g., Pedersen et al. 1995; Thirkell et al. 1995), a broad consensus has emerged that the nature and orientation of economic reforms that have been pursued in the countries of the region since the early 1990s can be broadly defined as neoliberal, despite the various trajectories of each country (Greskovits 1998; Ost 2000; Iankova 2002; Bohle, Greskovits 2003; Appel, Orenstein 2018; Hann 2019; Hann, Scheiring 2021; Ther 2022).

From the contemporary perspective, it might be seen that the path of post-socialist countries toward neoliberal capitalism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the only way to political and economic transformation from authoritarian statist socialist settings. The situation of countries of Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s was complicated by the simultaneous transformation of both economic and political systems – and expectations and realizations of these transformations necessarily interacted (Stark, Bruszt 1998: 1). At the very beginning of the whole process, embracing of liberal capitalist way was neither expected nor predicted process. It seemed clear that there must be a "split with the Communist past" and some transformation of state ownership and economic centralization, but without any definite idea of the resulting economic model: share of private property, the role of the state and the market, or forms of ownership. Also, all the reform proposals could be divided among those seeking quick transformation, and those asking for the gradual building of new economic and political institutions (Myant 2013: 47). The shock variant was generally advocated by experts and advisors from Western countries – it was framed as quick, possibly painful but uncompromising and future-oriented. Even if the pace of reform in various former socialist countries differed, the path they took was quite often the one following the neoliberal pattern and the logic of liberalization, deregulation, and market mechanism promotion. Thus, the initial transition from a state-controlled economy towards a market-oriented economy soon took a shift towards neoliberal orthodoxy while some of the post-socialist states (in transnational advocacy coalitions with Western policymakers and advisers) were first to implement policies of Washington consensus (Bohle, Greskovits 2012: 57).

Despite the initial expectations that the first radical liberalizing reforms would bring social tensions and popular discontent, which would generate protest mobilizations and political opposition and make reform elites rather hesitant towards further liberalization, the neoliberal

policies were pushed further even after the first dramatic economic problems during and soon after the first "shock" economic restructuring (Appel, Orenstein 2018: 3). Even there were various shifts and replacements of political forces administering the reforms and post-socialist left gradually became part of the governments, no dramatic changes in terms of the major direction of the political and economic development occurred (Tavits, Letki 2009).

The neoliberal reforms in post-socialist countries were not a one-dimensional or linear process but had specific features and consisted of several phases. While neoliberalism – as theoretically manifested, e.g., in Washington consensus – means increasing the economic freedoms of non-state actors (firms, individuals) and the role of the market relations in general (commodification of labor, land, and money as emphasized by Polanyi), while suppressing of the role of the state, it has been suggested that in the case of post-socialism, the neoliberal reforms in post-socialism built on the existing institutions of former socialist states. The mode – post-socialist neoliberalism was thus path-dependent and country-specific, creating hybrid and recombinant forms (Stark, Bruszt 1998; Iankova 2002; Bohle, Greskovits 2012). Some of the corporatist-like institutional remnants of socialist states remained present even after the start of dismantling socialist states and at the launch of economic reforms – specifically tripartism. Despite increasing liberalization, privatization, and deregulation, tripartism – institutionalized communication among governments, trade unions, and employers' organizations – remained in its place to increase the legitimacy of the newly emerging capitalist order: in most cases, economic policies of transition were consulted via tripartite bodies to maintain social peace and sense of fairness of economic reforms (Iankova 2002: 4).

Tripartism not only persevered but, in some cases, also flourished and scaled-down and decentralized from standard national to regional, sectoral, or even local levels, and included (especially right after the regime change) many other collective non-state non-business actors than just formal trade union organizations. This process contributed to the legitimization of the transformation process and its social acceptance from part of the population, thus ensuring the continuity of neoliberal restructuring and rapid economic liberalization (Orenstein 1994; Ost 2000; Iankova 2002: 17).

Apart from the interaction between existing and newly imposed institutions, the process of neoliberal reforms also shifted through various stages. While the timing and specific progress of these stages differed among the post-socialist countries or their groups (such as Central-eastern European countries vs. post-Soviet countries), they had similar or identical consequences in terms of restructuring the state and broadening the role of the self-regulated market economy. Three general phases may be identified (cf. Appel, Orenstein 2018; Císař,

Navrátil 2017; Drahokoupil 2008; Myant 2013; Saxonberg, Sirovátka 2014; Slačálek, Šitera 2022): nationally imposed neoliberalism, Europeanized neoliberalism, and avant-garde/austerity neoliberalism.

During the first phase (sometimes called the Washington consensus phase), the first liberalization measures were taken to open the post-socialist countries to the international economy. Here the task of privatization (banks, enterprises), deregulation (currencies, capital controls, and barriers), and liberalization (prices, trade) seemed the only direction toward economic development and protecting "young democracies", and reforms were often constructed in dialogue with foreign advisers or institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, OECD). The adoption of these reforms was supported by the incentives provided by international institutions (loans, debt reliefs).

Second-phase reforms were often related to the EU – both for post-socialist countries as members, candidates, or potential candidates for EU membership. Here, the main economic incentives were the joint European market with a free trade zone, access to structural funds dedicated to the redistribution of resources towards the less economically developed countries, and increasing opportunities to attract foreign investments. The economic incentives were intimately tied with political ones: in many post-socialist countries, EU membership was considered a natural "return" to Europe and confirmation of their new geopolitical position outside the former Soviet bloc (Hrubeš 2022). Accession talks included, among other things, a number of economic issues such as finishing the process of privatization and liberalization (large state-owned enterprises, banks), liquidation of "unviable" companies, limiting some regulatory/legislative powers of national public institutions, fully enabling the free flow of EU-based workers, goods, services, and financial capital.

The third phase of neoliberal reforms was launched both in relation to the Great Recession of 2007/2008 and well before that. While this wave spread already in the mid-1990s in Baltic countries, many post-socialist countries experienced it after the mid-2000s (Appel, Orenstein 2018: 26-27). It included further liberalization and privatization of public services and tax reforms. Typically, these included decreasing corporate taxes, privatization of the pension system, the introduction of (or approach to) flat tax, and further marketization of the health care or education system. Many of these policies were not required nor recommended by international institutions and organizations that were assisting during the previous waves of neoliberal restructuring. One of the explanations for this uninterrupted and even continuing series of liberalizing reforms is a theory of competitiveness among all post-socialist countries to become more attractive for foreign direct investments than the other ones (to gain and

maintain the confidence of international rating agencies because of the public debt and commercial investors because of employment rates and growth of GDP) (Iankova 2002; Appel, Orenstein 2018: 16).

3.2 Post-socialist countermovement and its determinants

Endurance and longevity of neoliberal governance and policies in post-socialist countries have been gradually identified as a puzzle: how was that made possible? Why was there no significant push to change the political orientation or slow down the expansion of self-regulated market forces, such as was predicted by Polanyi? Does this mean that no counter-movement against the intensifying self-regulated market economy occurred in the post-socialist region?

Unfortunately, the empirical evidence of political activism targeting the neoliberal reforms in the post-socialist region is rather limited. Even though there is rich and still growing literature on social movements, protests, and civil society organizing in post-socialist countries, this has remained focused on issues other than conflicts related to economic and social issues. Existing studies may be divided into three generations. In the first decade after the regime change, generic concepts of civil societies, trust, and social capital dominated the study of post-socialist collective action (e.g., Arato 1990a; Arato 1990b; Ekiert 1991; Rose, Mishler 1994; Bernhard 1996). Later on, the debate became much more focused and actor-centered, but either it privileged analyses of post-materialist (or "new social movement") types of political activism (environmental, feminist, human rights, anti-corruption, subcultural) or did not discriminate between these types of activism at all (e.g., Baker, Jehlička 1998; Císař 2008; Fagan 2004; Flam 2001; Hašková et al. 2006; Jacobsson, Saxonberg 2013; Jacobsson 2015; Vermeersch 2006; Štiks 2015; Vráblíková 2018; Dinev 2022; Dinev 2023). More recently, the focus has turned to the issues of radical right or populist mobilizations (reflecting the thesis of democratic backsliding and the 2015–2016 refugee crisis), thus again overlooking the contention over socio-economic issues (e.g., Buzogány, Varga 2021; Caiani, Císař 2019; Navrátil, Kluknavská 2022).

The conflict over *economic* issues in post-socialist settings has often been analyzed within the realm of political economy and industrial relations, with an almost exclusive focus on activities of organized and institutionalized labor. Initially, this conflict was often investigated in a more general and less systematic way by describing models of economic transition and identifying the "resulting" (often institutional) role of the labor movement, with the Czech case sometimes even defined as corporatism (Haggard, Kaufman 1995; Stark, Bruszt 1998; Iankova 2002). Initial expectations about the assertive post-socialist labor activism slowly vanished: close ties between labor and the state were defined as producing neoliberal outcomes, making labor accept its weakening and decline of the welfare state (Ost 2000; Bohle, Greskovits 2012). Particularly, its weakness was demonstrated in terms of levels of union membership, styles of

management, the strength of collective bargaining, number and impact of strikes, nature of political alliances, union impact on public policies or material well-being of workers (Crowley, Ost 2001: 4); increasing rivalry with other actors, struggling for legitimacy, exclusivity and attempting to monopolize constituencies while not being able to shape transformation politics, and frequently feeling an affinity to ruling political forces (Greskovits 1998: 86); trade union membership, density, coverage of collective bargaining, degree of centralization of wage bargaining, number of days lost to strikes and lockouts (Knell, Srholec 2005: 50-55; Mrozowicki 2014); or generally, in terms of the ability of trade unions to secure material rewards for its members and exercise a degree of authority in the workplace and concerning national policy (Crowley 2004: 400; Uhlerová et al. 2020). However, empirically oriented studies in a post-socialist context have remained still largely descriptive, avoiding the use of protest data and narrowing the focus down to trade union organizations (e.g., Crowley 2004; Kyzlinková et al. 2017; Kroupa et al. 2004; Mansfeldová 2005; Myant et al. 2000; Myant 2010a; Myant 2010b; Mrozowicki et al. 2010). On the other hand, focus on the institutionalized interactions between labor and the government revealed the importance of political opportunities for shaping economic political activism: economic policies are typically consulted via tripartite bodies, which provides trade unions and other actors with direct access to the government and thus – depending on the quality of this access – may tame their extra-institutional activities (Orenstein 1994; Ost 2000; Iankova 2002: 17).

The focus on post-socialist extra-institutional political activism or protest related to economic issues (and not limited to organized labor) has remained rather scarce. The pioneering study of Ekiert and Kubik (1998) analyzed Polish political protest at large during the transition from the old to the new regime (1989–1993) while also describing shared economic collective actions: they showed the repertoire and strength of economic protests (trade unions, peasants) in the emerging protest landscape in a country going through the transformation towards democracy and capitalism. Some aspects of post-socialist economic contention were captured by the analyses of alter-globalization movements in which some trade unions and left activist groups with economic agendas participated (Gagyi 2013; Navrátil 2016; Piotrowski 2017). There are studies focused on the class structure of economic protests (Dinev 2020; Gagyi 2021), the institutionalization of anti-austerity movements (Dinev 2023), or urban (Bituštíková 2015a; Bituštíková 2015b; Bituštíková 2015c; Dolenec et al. 2017; Novák 2021) and housing struggles in CEE (e.g. Florea et al. 2018; Florea et al. 2022; Polanska, Piotrowski 2015; Polanska 2016; Dolenec et al. 2023; Milan, Dolenec 2023). Building on a protest event analysis, Wenzel (2016) investigated labor and employers´ protests in Poland between 1989 and 2011. Vanhuysse

(2006) focused on a puzzle of low political mobilization during the economic transition after socialism: he analyzed the role of public policies in pacifying and preventing the economic collective action in CEE. Císař and Navrátil focused on the relations between the partisan and activist activities in the field of economy in V4 countries (2015) and analyzed three episodes of Czech economic contention in varying political economies (2017). Throughout all the studies, four key dimensions of political-economic context affecting the economic contention in the post-socialist realm may be identified.

Many studies of post-socialist economic contention dealt with the traditional material deprivation or grievance theories. Classic empirical assessments of economic theories of strikes assert that the higher the unemployment is – and the higher the lagged real age increase is – the lower frequency of strikes is to be expected (Kennan 1986: 1121-1123). However, this theory itself could not account for the differences between the post-socialist countries in transition, as lower number of strikes was not always related to higher unemployment and vice versa (Vanhuysse 2006: 37). Most of the recent studies in line with the general sociological theory questioned straightforward relation between the worsening material conditions and an outburst of collective action. Relative economic deprivation and discontent as a single source of political protest in post-socialist countries was also challenged by Ekiert and Kubik in their analysis of mobilizations in four post-socialist countries (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, East Germany) between 1989 and 1993 (Ekiert, Kubik 1998). They pointed out the importance of political institutions and context in shaping the magnitude of contention in post-communist countries (Ekiert, Kubik 1998: 581). Structural conditions influencing the number of protests in post-socialist transition were also analyzed by Greskovits, who compared East European transitions to those in Latin America: low levels of protests in post-socialist countries were related especially to the lack of extreme income inequality, smaller number of marginalized poor and lower degree of urbanization of population (Greskovits 1998: 85). However, Greskovits also showed how structural factors combine with other types of conditions such as political culture and political context. The indirect relation between material deprivation (economic downturn) and mobilization of post-socialist citizens has also been demonstrated during the Great Recession of 2007/2008: the role of economic hardship was found to be conditioned by other factors such as political opportunities and mobilizing structures (Beissinger, Sasse 2014; Kriesi et al. 2020). One of the key parts of the political-institutional structure affecting economic contention was national tripartite settings (Ost 2000; Iankova 2002).

Apart from the importance of political context (opportunities), the role of various types of political conflict salience in the processes of economic mobilization has been illustrated either

in the form of re-framing the grievances (Florea et al. 2018: 716-719), broadening collective identities of protesters (Ekiert, Kubik 2001: 133) or in the form of re-articulating claims raised by political elites (Wenzel 2016: 132). Generally, political contestation always contains certain issues or dimensions – typically, two key dimensions have been identified: economic (redistribution, economic regulation, or welfare policies) and cultural (collective identities, religious values, or lifestyles) (Kriesi et al. 2008; Rovny, Edwards 2012). On the one hand, it has been demonstrated that in terms of *issues,* there is a substitutive relation between party-politics and protest agenda (ceteris paribus when economic issues are high on the agenda of political parties, the economic protest is decreasing and vice versa) (Císař, Vráblíková 2019). On the other hand, however, broader political salience – *conflict domination* – arises from the activities of the political elites and mainstream media and, through public visibility, resonance, and legitimacy, may stimulate the mobilization of extra-institutional actors (Giugni et al. 2006; Koopmans, Olzak 2004). In this sense, extra-institutional mobilization is not a "residual" outcome of institutional politics, but there is a reinforcing effect between institutional and non-institutional collective action. In the case of economic contention in post-socialist countries, it has been demonstrated that regardless of the general volume of economic agenda articulated by political elites, it was crucial for economic protest that part of (oppositional) political elites employed critical, polarizing framing of economic situation, unemployment or wages (Ekiert, Kubik 1998: 150-152; Vanhuysse 2006: 37).

Apart from institutional and political-process factors, the role of economic policies that make room (or limit) the effects of self-regulated market forces was applied to account for the collective action processes (Císař, Navrátil 2015; Florea et al. 2018; Florea et al. 2022). A study of the housing field of contention in two CEE capitals pointed to the public economic policies and de/regulations (rising rents and energy prices, low population incomes, gentrification, housing privatization, and financialization) shaping the dynamics of housing contention (Florea et a. 2018: 272). Analysis of economic protest activities in Visegrad countries after the Great Recession illustrated that economic grievances are not only mediated but even constructed through public economic policies which ostentatiously attempt to deal with economic problems before they pop up (Císař, Navrátil 2015). Thus, the economic protest may be launched rather by sole economic (austerity) policies and public economic management in the moment when material hardship is missing (Císař, Navrátil 2015: 53). Importance of the political management of economic issues was further supported by Kriesi et al. (2020) who illustrated that there was no positive *direct* correlation between economic grievances and protest frequency in CEE countries during the Great Recession and that economic protest is most heavily influenced by

joint effect of political and economic grievances (Kriesi et al. 2020: 178). Political grievances here denote the dissatisfaction of citizens with the political elites and the working of the political institutions (ibid. 2020: 152). In other words, the performance of the political elites in the economic field may be expected to affect the economic protest.

The fourth key factor, which is identified as affecting the contention in post-socialist countries, also relates to public policies, more precisely to the social and welfare policies. According to Vanhuysse (2006: 44), an explanation using economic conditions and political structures is not sufficient as it fails to account for low levels of protest in post-socialist countries. Therefore, focus on strategies imposed through social/welfare policies in preventing political unrest and protests is suggested (Vanhuysse 2006: 44). The pacification of economic unrest during the post-socialist transitions was typically realized through selectively disconnecting the social networks of the target (deprived) population, increasing distributional conflicts or individualization (depoliticization) of economic inequalities via tools of social policies (e.g. tightening of unemployment programs and reducing unemployment benefits, providing disability or early retirements only for selected workers groups) (Vanhuysse 2006: 71-91).

3.3 Summary: key contextual factors

It was the quiescence or weakness of protest around economic issues in post-socialist countries that clearly demonstrated that objective material hardship – stemming especially from the economic transformation from centrally planned socialist economies towards neoliberal capitalisms – does not directly translate into protest mobilizations, in line with what was theoretically argued before (see section 2.2.2). The indirect link between economic problems and collective action does not exhaust the complex logic of explanation of generally weak protest response to economic restructuring in post-socialist countries: one of the channels for the frustration was also the "exit" of some social groups or their electoral preference for populist political parties (Greskovits 1998; Sippola 2013; Hann, Scheiring 2021; Scheiring et al. 2024). Key contextual factors affecting the post-socialist economic contention are primarily symbolic, and the effects they have stem primarily from the perception of how political and economic situations change. They almost entirely overlap those which were identified in the literature applying Polanyian ideas on the counter-movement against laissez-faire policies worldwide: economic policies, social/welfare policies, existing industrial relations, and social dialogue (generally oscillating between pluralism and corporatism) (see section 2.2.2). However, one feature is added – the main political conflict. The economic decline (rising unemployment or inflation, GDP decline, and other macro-economic indicators) per se does not produce collective mobilization unless its outcomes are perceived and evaluated as important, questionable and changeable (*main political conflict type*) while political elites are not seen as willing to make any concessions to challengers (*political opportunities*), to adjust to economic situation in favor of the various social groups within population (*economic threats*) and to compensate for perceived population´s hardships (*welfare policies*). Therefore, this study follows this set of major mechanisms/processes which combine to produce and change specific contextual constellations in which economic contention takes place (see also Table 2):

1. *Political factors*

1.1 *Main political conflict type*: state of the process of articulation and politicization of key societal conflicts existing in the country which further inhibit or tame extra-institutional collective action on economic issues (Kriesi et al. 1995; Wood 2016; Zamponi, Bossi 2018). The dimensionality of the political conflict has been generally identified as either economic or cultural – the more the conflict becomes focused on the economy, the better for economic collective action in general. In the Czech case, we may differentiate between saliency of

conflicts over the economy (taxation, privatization, fiscal strategies) or democracy (democratization, liberalization, populism, legitimacy of post-communist left) (Engler et al. 2019; Havlík 2019; Wyss 2021).

1.2 *The shape of political opportunities* affects the perception of the possibility of success with extra-institutional collective action; in case of economic contention, we typically differentiate between left-leaning governments willing to negotiate with organized labor, political activists and employees, and right-wing governments that are more restrictive in terms of providing access to these types of actors with socio-economic claims (Hamann, Kelly 2004).

2. *Economic factors*

2.1 *Economic threats* denote the perception of social or material insecurity or (potential) degradation of social or material interests of some social group(s) (Van Dyke, Soule 2002). This type of threat is often linked to the experience of economic uncertainty (Snow et al. 2005), which has primarily affected many social groups during the economic transitions of post-socialist states. The role of economic institutions is crucial here, as captured by various comparative capitalism approaches that differentiate between strategies of dominant economic institutions. Here, the study differentiates between prevailing tendencies of these institutions (signaling) either towards orthodox liberal market policies (with fiscal restriction, liberalization, decreasing redistribution of resources) – increasing the perception of economic threat by the many social groups – or towards coordinated market tendencies (fiscal expansion, corporatism, social investment, increased redistribution of resources) – which does not increase the perception of economic threat (Císař, Navrátil 2015; Baccaro, Howell 2017).

2.2 *Welfare policy ideas* denote the selection of government strategies to compensate for economic hardships and imbalances. While economic threats represent the worsening of social/material interests or expectations thereof, dominant welfare policy ideas are responses to these threats that are formulated, planned, and implemented by the political elites. Here, the study differentiates among various welfare policy ideas, ranging from cost-containment and activation of beneficiaries of welfare subsidies through pragmatist and universalist policies towards redistribution-oriented policies and social investment (Sirovátka, Ripka 2019). As already highlighted, the contention is not induced (and movement strategies

shaped) directly by material suffering but rather indirectly via the process through which the outcomes of the official policies are interpreted and framed as unjust or incompetent for (not) taking particular measures, (not) focusing on a particular social group (elderly, unemployed and other vulnerable groups), and/or (not) distributing sufficient resources (minimum wage, pensions) or threatening their status quo (e.g., selective provision or denial of social and welfare subsidies) (Vanhuysse 2006; Almeida 2007).

Table 2: Dimensions of a contextual constellation of economic contention

political dimension	***economic dimension***
Main political conflict type	Economic threats
Shape of political opportunities	Welfare policy ideas

In line with a constructivist argumentation related to all dimensions, it is also important to understand the shifts within these dimensions not as absolute but relative: what matters is the direction of the relative shift in a particular dimension, which is intercepted and interpreted by the relevant actors (typically public or activists), not its absolute value change. Furthermore, while the aforementioned contextual factors have been identified as shaping (post-socialist) economic contention in general, this study focuses on the relational aspects of economic contention on the meso-level, i.e., on the level of relations organized by collective action.

4. Economic contention from a relational perspective[11]

After specifying the general logic of counter-movement against neoliberal transformation, situating it into the post-socialist realm, and identifying its main contextual determinants, the very nature of this counter-movement (and consequently also a way how to study it) needs to be considered for further empirical analysis. So far, the counter-movement against the consequences of neoliberal transformations has been conceptualized in many ways: as activity of social movement organizations and mobilization waves of economic protest (Almeida, Chase-Dunn 2018; Chase-Dunn, Gills 2005; Silver 2003), as organizing structures and membership of trade unions and various economic interest groups (Bulow 2010; Zajak 2019), or as a conflict within ruling elites over the direction of economic development and protection of society (Harvey 2012; Varoufakis 2013). Often, analysis of economic contention has been focused either on qualitative aspects of economic mobilization (grass-root organizing, framing of the protest) or on the various quantitative attributes or outcomes of the collective action: number of strikes or other events, labor bargaining coverage, individual attendance at the protest events, individual attitudes towards economic policies or membership in organizations, or overall trends in negotiations over economic issues with the government. Either way, these analytical perspectives share a relatively small-scale focus or substantivist, non-interactive, aggregative, or attribute-oriented perspective in the study of collective phenomena, which imposes analytical limits on the study of economic collective action in its complexity.

Even if economic protest and related collective actions constituting the economic conflict take many different forms, its most intensive and manifest dimension might be conceptualized as public protest events and their series (campaigns) which arise from the direct or indirect interactions among collective actors who – at some point – sponsor, coordinate and converge at these events. It is through the joint coordinated participation of organizations in the chain of protest events that public protest campaigns emerge; it is through the joint engagement in the events that renews and strengthens the relations among various organizations, making them share and exchange various types of resources and deepens the ties of solidarity (Knoke et al. 2021: 135). In other words, the events and their coordination may represent the actual strength and forms of integration of collective action in the specific social area. This study aims to assess various aspects of the integration of collective action – consisting of interactions and relations arising among collective actors – through relational and, more specifically, network analytic

[11] Some parts of this chapter build on my previous work (Navrátil 2021).

perspectives on political protest and social movements. To assess the strength and dynamics of overall societal reactions towards the economic transformations in their entirety and dynamic, the study follows a relational perspective on the study of collective action and political protest (e.g., Diani, McAdam 2003; Crossley 2011; Diani 2015). It treats economic contention as a collective action field: as a system of relations among multiple types of collective actors engaged in economic and political activism through participation in public events (Melucci 1996: 20; Crossley 2002: 134). Understanding collective action as a relational phenomenon provides us with the framework enabling us to capture complex networks among actors promoting various kinds of economic protest activities and their transformations in relation to context change (Fligstein, McAdam 2012; Diani, Mische 2015). This chapter aims to introduce the relational perspective on collective action and political protest, conceptualize economic contention as a collective action field, and propose analytical tools to study it.

4.1 Relational perspective in the study collective action and political protest

The roots of relational perspective in economic collective action and protest may be traced back to Marx´s conception of social revolution and its material determination. In fact, Marx encoded a strong relational perspective into the exploration of the dynamics of modern industrialized societies and collective action as he predicted the mobilization of a social group (workers) by its interaction with (*dependence on/conflict with)* – the other social group (owners of the tools of production) which takes place within particular social-technological context (industrial capitalism). Marx hence illustrated how different collective actors – including those challenging the economic system – occupy different *structural roles and positions* in economic and political conflicts, and these structural positions push them into the political conflict. Later on, this relational, structuralist perspective on social conflicts was further elaborated by Althusser, who highlighted the role of social practices, organizations, and ideology: his conception of ideology transforming individuals into subjects and recruiting them (via their *relations* to other subjects and social institutions) resembles autonomy of social network structures.

The relational perspective in collective action studies is more explicit in historical-sociological perspectives on contentious politics. Most famously, Tilly revealed and discussed less visible yet important social processes leading to mobilization, collective action, and its transformation, as well as the change in the repertoire employed by political contention. He introduced the model of polity, which consists of the positions, relations, *and interactions* among political elites, insiders, and outsiders (challengers) (Tilly 1978). The model of polity was also combined with resource mobilization theory, which highlighted transactions at the organizational level of collective action as a key to understanding large-scale mobilizations. It focused on structural relations between social movements and the media, elites, and other collective actors, as well as interactions within the social movement field (e.g., movement coalitions or movement-counter-movement interactions) (Zald, Useem 1987).

The concept of the political context of collective action was also established as inherently relational. Political opportunity structure – part of the political environment that affects collective mobilization – was introduced by Tilly in his polity model to explain the basic logic of interaction between the claim-making actors (aiming at realizing their interests) and the vulnerability of their counterparts to these claims. Combining political opportunities with an analytical focus on organizational and consciousness change, D. McAdam established a political process model that explained how and why contentious actors interacted –in terms of cooperation and competition/challenge. This approach aimed to explain why contentious

politics occurs in specific periods, why there is a particular dynamic of this politics, or why strategies (including cooperation/competition) of various actors in different contexts differ (McAdam 1982).

Meanwhile, a theory of new social movements emerged in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, which treated social movements as inevitably embedded within society and its transformations. One of the new social movement theorists – A. Melucci – explicitly spoke about social movements as "movement networks or movement areas as the network of groups and individuals sharing a conflictual culture and a collective identity" (Melucci 1985). Melucci highlighted the importance of cultural processes taking place in politically invisible submerged networks of everyday life – networks of informal *relationships* connecting core individuals and groups to a broader *nexus* of participants, sympathizers, and users of goods produced by the movement (Melucci 1985: 799; Melucci 1996). He thus reformulated the problem of movement participation and mobilization as the problem of *interactive perceptions and interpretations*. In a more pragmatic, rationalist reading of collective action – but still in relational, interactive terms – the cultural, symbolical aspects of social movements and political contention were added through the theory of framing of collective action (Snow et al. 1986). It acknowledges that collective actors recognize, reflect, and communicate their structural and contextual conditions, thus bringing another analytical layer into the picture of mobilization and acting collectively. Frame alignment processes are defined as "the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations" to make a "set of individual interests, values and beliefs, and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary" (Snow et al. 1986). The culturalist perspective in collective action studies started to ask how *symbolic interactions* over issues, symbols, and ideologies among and within collective actors emerge, vanish, and are maintained.

Even if the concept of social movement as a network started to be used rather as a metaphor (Hathaway, Meyer 1993; Meyer, Rochon 1997; Caroll, Ratner 1996; Friedman, McAdam 1992; Taylor, Whittier 1992), the relational perspective on social movements soon started to be elaborated more systematically and empirically. Diani (1990) first employed a structural approach to the analysis of the Italian environmental movement using a formal SNA analysis, and then (1992) formulated a synthetical definition of a social movement, where he aimed at connecting resource mobilization and political process approaches with identity and social ties oriented "European" approaches. This resulted in the concept of social movements as "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, based on shared collective identities" (Diani 1992: 1).

Analytical instruments of a broader political process model, frame theory, and other empirical approaches were, later on, re-arranged into the ambitious Dynamics of Contention framework (McAdam et al. 2004; Tilly, Tarrow 2007), which aimed at more general theory of contention in Western and non-Western societies while using *realist relationist* perspective: "the doctrine that transactions, interactions, social ties, and conversations constitute the central stuff of social life" (Tilly, Tarrow 2007). It called for the inclusion of non-Western forms of contention and a mechanism-and-process approach (McAdam, Tarrow 2011; see also Hedström, Swedberg 1994). The relational aspects of collective actions were highlighted in the conceptualization of several key mechanisms, such as boundary shift, brokerage, or diffusion, which were identified as basic building blocks producing instances of collective action (Tilly, Tarrow 2007: 215). More specifically, the relational perspective in collective action studies has often been implemented through social network analysis, which was used both as a metaphor and as a tool for empirical analysis. As for the latter, many of these analyses focused on the linkages between individuals and organizations (recruitment, membership, and participation) on the individual level and the symbolical and virtual linkages in the processes of collective action.

Analyses of mobilizations or building social movements on the individual level have become one of the classic types of network analytic applications in collective action studies (Diani 2003). These continue in the tradition emphasizing the role of interpersonal ties in the mobilization processes but without formal network analysis (Oliver 1984; Snow et al. 1980; McAdam 1986). Notably, many of these studies have illustrated the role of pre-existing ties in the process of recruitment activists in social movements, the fact that movements tend to emerge along established channels of communication and develop in established social settings (as these enable activists to pool resources in a stable environment) and (McAdam 2003: 285). Passy (2003; ibid 2001) has explored several different ways networks affect individual participation and social movement building. First, social networks (based on trust and cultural proximity) create opportunities for participation and establish connections between participants and organizations, promoting collective action.

Moreover, through these interpersonal networks, the movement organizations are embedded within the more significant movement and other actors in the social movement field (e.g., state agencies or business organizations) (Stoddart, Tindall 2010). Second, social networks are essential for activation, socialization, and activist identity construction: they link the protest agenda with the predisposition for sustained engagement in the issue (Centola, Macy 2007). Third, networks play a role in the process of becoming a member of an organization when they

influence a decision made by an individual by providing meaning and value to the membership (Passy 2003: 41).

The micro-level analyses have also shown how the linking between individuals and organizations works. One of the key concepts connecting micro and meso-level in the study of collective action is a collective identity. It denotes the process through which individuals understand themselves as members of a broader social group and are recognized as such by other persons (Della Porta, Diani 2007: 91). In the research of collective action, collective identity became understood both as a precondition for collective action (Melucci 1996; Krackhardt 2003), and as a sense of belonging which is constructed and re-constructed through collective action (Della Porta, Diani 2007: 91). The key mechanisms constituting collective identity are the mechanisms of boundary formation, boundary shift, or boundary de-/activation which lead to the emergence of new answers to the questions “who are we?” (Tilly, Tarrow 2007: 2015-216). These shifts may be observed and analyzed on various levels. Starting with the micro-scale, formal network analysis was applied to analyze the ties on the personal level and demonstrate the rich content of these interactions (Kitts 2000). McAdam and Paulsen (1993) have described how the successful linkage of movement and identity and the support for this linkage from persons who usually act to maintain the identity in question contribute to movement recruitment (McAdam, Paulsen 1993: 662). Strong individual identification with a particular collective identity – supported by organizational or interpersonal ties – considerably supported activists´ participation. However, solidarity ties that bind members or sympathizers of a group together and are at the core of shared collective identity are not per se automatically a tool for promoting collective action – contrary to that, sometimes activists with weaker – more distant – positions towards the interpersonal networks may take over some key costs of collective action (Oliver 1984).

The differentiation between weak and strong ties is also important for the analyses on the meso-level: Saunders (2007) demonstrates that various parts of the environmental movement have different collective identities and that to define the identity of the movement, one needs to specify the symbolical network that binds various parts of the movement together. She demonstrates that it is the practical collaboration among environmental organizations that might lead to a shared identity, not any weaker forms of connections such as information sharing (Saunders 2007: 240). Analyzing the case of the Czech alter-globalization movement in 2007/2008, Navrátil (2016) has illustrated that once emergent, the collective identity (shared perception of who is “in” and who is “out” combined with self-identification with the

movement) might be maintained even when there are almost no intensive collaborative ties among the members of the movement.

To summarize, the relational perspective in collective action studies has initiated various research paths, reformulated and operationalized existing concepts, answered existing research problems, and also formulated new ones. Clearly, if relational perspective and methods of network analysis provide useful tools for a delicate micro-analysis of the social embeddedness of collective action or sophisticated exploration of symbolical processes in which they are enmeshed, they necessarily provide great instruments also for the inspection of more visible patterns on the meso-level: linkages among organizations and groups (movement structures and coalitions) and collective action fields which arise from these linkages.

4.2 Movement structure(s) and coalitions

The most widespread application of relational perspective in collective action studies focuses on the collaborative ties at the meso-level, i.e., among collectivities – groups and organizations. Generally, four key types of inter-organizational ties may be conceptualized (Diani, Mische 2015: 310-311).

First, organizations and groups make and maintain direct relationships, typically collaborating, sharing information, or exchanging resources. Various aspects of cooperation among advocacy organizations (or horizontal transaction activism) were also explored by Císař and Navrátil (2015) and by Mazák and Diviák (2017). The latter dismantled the concept of cooperation while differentiating between ordinary "associative" ties and more robust "interlocking" ties. Surprisingly, their analysis of one of the most professionalized Czech advocacy coalitions revealed only a limited amount of the latter. Cinalli and Füglister (2008) addressed the problem of networking patterns in unemployment across three countries – the UK, Switzerland, and Germany. Instead of focusing exclusively on political activism, they also included institutions, policymakers, and political parties active in the field. The analysis builds on cooperation networks among various actors and inspects the average distance, density, average degrees, and centralities in these networks. It shows how network exchanges and positions of crucial actors interact with collective action and political conflict and how these interactions differ in the three national contexts. One of the instances of applying a blockmodeling approach was presented by Saunders (2011). In her study of a network of Friends of the Earth International, she focused on the cooperation of national chapters of the organization in campaigns and analyzed the resulting cooperation network. Using the blockmodeling approach, she showed how the cooperation within the network is regionalized and fractured also in terms of issues that reflect specific regional contexts. Maybe, more importantly, Saunders points out some problematic aspects of blockmodeling for social movement studies.

Second, ties between two organizations or groups occur when these become members of a coalition, umbrella, or network – they are co-members of another collectivity. Movement coalition-building processes are typical cases for the SNA application. The relation between organizational identity and its position in inter-organizational networks was studied by Heaney and Rojas (2015). These focus on organizations with hybrid identities – i.e., those that cross single movement identity (LGBT+ or anti-war) – and apply the concepts of network centrality in co-contact and co-membership networks. Such collective identities enable organizations to become inter-movement representatives in various coalitions and central actors in the various

networks of cooperation. Bülow´s (2011) study deals with the protests against the free trade agreements in the Americas around the turn of the millennium and aims to explore the brokerage mechanisms through which large transnational coalitions of civil society organizations were built. Combining an exploration of social network data with qualitative analysis of their content, von Bülow uncovers various paths of civil society organizations on how to engage in transnational collective action. She also points to the temporality (low sustainability) of brokerage roles as other actors also establish their transnational connections.

Third, organizations share ties when they share similar ideologies, values, tactics, and/or goals: their symbolical engagement through sharing discourses, framing, or repertoire of contention may be represented as a connection among them. The relationship between values, communication, and coalitions of civil society actors in the case of Indonesian forest tenure activism is inspected by Di Gregorio (2012). She claims that it is the density of networking among organizations that differentiates between instrumental and more coherent coalitions. Her findings suggest that the density of coalition among organizations is primarily a function of their communication based on a shared understanding of reality and discourses. Also, the cooperation of civil organizations is enabled by the compatibility of their values.

Finally, a relationship among organizations arises when they share the same event: by co-attending any event (e.g., protest or cultural), organizations jointly articulate and reflect their social context. One of the earliest formal social network analyses of collective protest was conducted by Bearman and Everett (1993). The tie was defined as co-occurrence at the event or participation at the events with the same issue, and the blockmodeling approach was used to inspect basic network patterns. The study explored the social structure of inter-group relations, identified their position, and showed how this position affects the repertoire employed at the protest. One of the findings was the continuing relevance of organized labor at the protests despite the growth of new social movements. In their structural analysis of Greek protests against austerity (2010–2012), Diani and Kousis (2014) defined and analyzed two types of networks: one as consisting of public events connected by shared claims and the other as consisting of claim types connected by the events where they were made. Applying network regression procedures on the claims network (predicting the structure of the network by its structure in the previous period), they analyzed its dynamics in three periods to follow the dynamics of the campaigns. The analysis highlights the complex interaction between the political and economic dimensions of the protests. It illustrates how the claims related to sovereignty and austerity measures were interconnected through the claims on democracy.

What are the factors affecting the creation of inter-organizational ties and networked collective action? Here, four clusters of circumstances have been listed and empirically illustrated (McCammon, Moon 2015: 328; Van Dyke, Amos 2017). First and not surprisingly, it is social/cultural sameness: shared ideology, interests, goals, or identity are the factors that contribute to the emergence of inter-organizational ties (e.g., Meyer, Corrigall-Brown 2005; McCammon, Campbell 2002). Second, pre-existing ties are a strong predictor of the emergence of new social relationships or interactions, as previous experience with the partners often enhances mutual trust and predictability (e.g., Van Dyke 2003; Navrátil 2023). Third, the role of resources is emphasized, as these are critical for the collective action itself: while competition for resources might divert the cooperation, resource sharing and exchanges are also crucial for successful mobilization (McCarthy, Zald 1977). All these factors – ideologies, pre-existing ties, and resources – are often confounded by the final set of factors – environmental ones (McCammon, Moon 2015: 331). These have already been discussed in section 3.2 as the factors that are also key for affecting (not only post-socialist) political protest: it is a political environment. Several general mechanisms have been identified in existing empirical studies: opening political opportunities promotes coalition building as it enables one to fully grasp the opportunities (Staggenborg 1986; Navrátil 2023). Mounting a threat plays a similar role: it brings together actors who would rarely cooperate as they need to combine their resources and weaken their separate identities to achieve their shared goal (Meyer, Corrigall-Brown 2005; Dixon, Martin 2012; McCammon, Van Dyke 2010).

More specifically, Diani, Lindsay, and Purdue (2010) aimed to illustrate the role of political context for the coalition-making of civil society organizations in two British cities. Using concepts of network density and protest event analysis, they failed to show the effect of context on the general level of an organization´s involvement in protest events. However, they showed that the political context affects *which types of organizations* get involved in coalitions organizing public protest events. The analysis disentangles coalition-making and social movement activities, showing that coalitions do not necessarily assume shared movement identities. The role of context on networks in localities was also explored by Eggert (2014) in her study of organizations active in immigration in two cities – Lyon and Zurich. She applies standard network measures of inter-organizational cooperation – density, structural patterns, and distribution of ties in two theoretically different environments. She concludes that while closed political opportunities for the respective field of collective action promote a combination of both identity and resource exchange ties, open opportunities lead to a preference for weak – resource exchange – ties, following previous analyses of the context effect on collective action

networks, Eggert and Pilati (2014) aimed at a more detailed model of interaction between the two. They explore migrant organizations in five European cities and focus on the forms of engagement of migrant organizations and their determinants – most importantly, political context and inter-organizational networks (while applying various measures of network centrality and differentiating between bonding and bridging ties). Both contexts and networks were found important: in a restricted political environment, networks enhance political engagement through protest, while these networks push for involvement in conventional politics in a more open environment. There are also cases when migrant networks rather aim at creating separated subcultures, which is typical for the context of cultural assimilation.

In the same way, Navrátil (2017) explored the differences in the cooperation networks of radical and moderate left organizations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia between 1989 and 2010. Two countries with different cleavage structures gave rise to different cooperation patterns of the left: while the dominance of traditional socio-economic cleavage resulted in alliances of moderate and radical left with less politically institutionalized actors (NGOs and others.), the opposite applied to Slovakia with its plurality of political cleavages. Here, both streams of the left prefer cooperation with political parties.

To summarize, the protest event perspective offers a clear theoretical advantage in the study of the economic protest in post-socialist settings. Analyzing the co-presence of collective actors at public events brings us closer to understanding how social context interconnects with the logic of inter-organizational cooperation: public co-occurrence combined with joint claim-making *demonstrates* certain alliances, which are further *certified and approved* through participation of multiple members or adherents, both *inwards* (to the constituencies of participating organizations) and *outwards* (towards the recipients of the claims and the general public), and connects these alliances with a clear message – claims and framing – which is the result of how these organizations *perceive*, *reflect* and *respond* to the patterns and changes in the social environment. However, following Polanyian idea of a broader societal response to the establishing market economy, a broader conceptual perspective on inter-organizational relations needs to be sketched and interconnected with the role of the political and economic environment (as its role for cooperation among collective actors has been repeatedly illustrated).

4.3 Collective action fields

More recently, acknowledging the importance of social interactions for the emergence of collective action, its maintenance, and evolution, its orientation towards its social context, or its strategies towards other instances of collective actions or institutions, the analytical need for more complex social systems avoiding substantialist focus on collective action emerged. This view led to the elaboration and distinction among several layers of collective action: apart social movement "bases" (membership, recruitment, organizational layer, and interactions such as intra-movement processes, coalition processes, or inter-organizational transactions) and social movement "campaigns" (interactions among events, frames, claims, and actors), more complex view on the multiple systems of social relations has come to the fore elaborating the concept of collective action fields (Crossley 2002; Diani, Mische 2015). This concept provides us with a connection between the study of inter-organizational structures, broader social context, and processes in the study of social and political change, such as the neoliberal restructuring and broader counter-movement that is targeting it.

The concept of organizational fields – broader systems of collective action – was formulated decades ago. In organizational research of the 1950s and 1960s, the notion of the field was spelled in the work of urban ecologists who emphasized the role of a geographically bounded set of organizations that behave in a similar way using the notion of inter-organizational community (Scott, Davis 2006: 119). Later, more functionalist and institutionalist versions of organizational fields were formulated, which also emphasized the role of organizational interdependencies stretching beyond the geographical proximities – such as the resource exchanges and environment control among various types of actors (Pfeffer, Salancik 2003). The institutionalist perspective stresses the role of norms, rules, and symbolic systems that organize the interaction of organizations in certain areas and thus constitute a social field: here, organizations interact more frequently among themselves than with "outsiders" (Scott, Davis 2006: 120). The concept was widely used even with different names: in social movements studies, the concepts of social movement *sector* or *industry* became a part of the standard analytical framework, contributing to the organizational field perspective that emerged later on (Mayer, Useem 1987). The concept of fields was introduced in several research areas and is often related to the sociology of organizations. DiMaggio and Powell used it to denote a set of organizations – e.g., key suppliers, resource consumers, regulatory agencies – that produce similar outcomes (values, products, services) in order to capture the "totality of relevant actors" while at the same time acknowledging the importance of their ties/interactions and mutual

positions – e.g., hospital or public-school fields (DiMaggio, Powell 1983: 148). In this perspective, the field structure does not have any universal patterns. It is an outcome of the structuration of a certain population of diverse organizations, which becomes institutionally defined in the end: the organizational field is created as interactions among sets or organizations increase, inter-organizational cooperation, and power structures; increase in the information load related to the activity in the field and development of mutual recognition among the actors in the field. One of the important aspects of the organizational field is its tendency to reduce the heterogeneity of strategies and forms. On the other hand, the organizational field does not necessarily consist of (only of) actors with established direct relations among themselves. (DiMaggio, Powell 1983: 148).

A further important step towards outlining the theory of fields was made by P. Bourdieu, who explicitly promoted relational thinking about the social world (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 96). For Bourdieu, the field is primarily a *network of relations* that exists objectively between particular social positions, do not depend on individual´s perception or will, and do not represent social interactions or intersubjective, symbolic ties. These positions impose specific constraints on actors who occupy them as they are linked with the distribution of various forms of power/capital. In this sense, the field parallels some games played by individuals – with players, stakes, rules, engagement, and other aspects of the game (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 97). Bourdieu differentiates among various types of games with their *necessities and logic,* which are specific and incompatible and therefore constitute distinct games – fields – such as artistic, religious or economic one. The structure of every field depends on the relations of force between various players. In contrast, the power of each player depends on the volume of various types of capital s/he possesses (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 99). Bourdieu´s perspective was applied to the realm of political activism and social movements: this account of the social world may help to explain the rise of social movements and mobilization (differences in habitus), to conceptualize various social areas of contentious politics (differences in stakes), and also to conceptualize both inner and external environment of social movements as a social field (Crossley 2002: 182-183).

More recently, the concept of strategic action fields was elaborated on by Fligstein and McAdam, who focused again on the organizational level and collective action. Strategic action fields are defined as central elements of collective action in society: meso-level social orders consisting of actors who interact with each and share the ideas about the purpose of the field, recognize the relations among other actors, and understand rules of conduct in the field which are perceived as legitimate (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 9). This perspective stress the

institutional elements of such field and combine them with constructivist view: fields are socially constructed arenas rather than objectively arising systems of positions structured by social power: membership, borders and positions are always perceived, inter-subjective and negotiated and in this sense establish institutionalized order for collective action (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 11). The fields consist not only of common collective actors, but often also of internal governance units (typically professional associations, supervisory bodies, or norm imposing agencies which supports the status quo of the field). Other collective actors are either incumbents (enjoying strong influence over the field) or challengers (having little or no influence over the field): they pursue different goals and occupy different – more or less favorable – positions within the field. Importantly, the notion of conflict is introduced: when some of the actors – typically challengers – contentiously interact with other actors, bring in innovative forms of actions, power relations of the field are questioned, and the structure of the field becomes uncertain (Fligstein, McAdam 2012: 21).

One of the latest contributions to the matter was offered by Diani and Mische (2015) and Knoke et al. (2021), who conceptualized the collective action field and clarified several key issues: definition of the collective action field and the nature of ties and structures in the field, types of ties and their determinants. The field is defined as a "localized relational arena characterized by mutual orientations, positioning and (at times) joint action among multiple kinds of actors engaged in diverse forms of collective intervention and challenge" (Diani, Mische 2015: 307). The concept of field here is both structural and cultural: actors occupy different positions that arise from complex interactions (not necessarily limited by the sector, sectors, or specific type of tie) but at the same time reflect these positions, make sense of their relational strategies and include them in their collective action orientation (Melucci 1996). The emphasis on the symbolic *orientations* of actors within a field differentiates this conception, e.g., from perspectives that stress the direct (thematic) *interactions* or similar *outcomes* of the field members (DiMaggio, Powell 1983). The emphasis on the social networks as direct outcomes of contingent and inter-subjective interactions and relations among collective actors (which are, in turn, embedded in and affected by broader social settings), as well as on the various logics of action (or rules of the game) which exist in the field makes this optics different from Bourdieuan perspective. Finally, analyzing field structures rather as an outcome of collective action strategies (which reflect and react to institutionalized sources of power) rather than the direct product of broader power relations and capturing the field largely as an arena of *collective action* rather than interactions and anticipations stemming from the tensions between collective

actors and institutions (incumbents) makes this approach different from Fligstein's and McAdam´s concept of field.

This study follows a similar perspective. It focuses on the empirically identifiable, visible patterns of public collective *action* – co-occurrences at protest events (see previous section) – which demonstrate various more or less hidden interactions (or their absence) among a variety of collective actors and their social context, with an aim to capture a logic of collective action coordination in the arena of economic protest as a demonstration of Polanyian *counter-movement*. In other words, the study does not seek to explore manifest dynamics and power relations between incumbent and challengers – i.e., *movement–counter–movement relations* (cf. Diani, Mische 2015: 307). However, it acknowledges the role of the state and other political and economic institutions by conceptualizing these as a wider *social setting* in which the evolution of relations among collective actors is embedded rather than focusing on *direct* interactions between them and power-holders outside the realm of public space (such as industrial relations focus on the relations between trade unions and national institutions). Consequently, the relations of power and dominance – which are always present in collective action fields – are studied in terms of the capacity to promote protest collective action and to occupy certain positions within the system of inter-organizational relations rather than the capacity to accomplish certain goals or to promote certain agenda vis-a-vis institutionalized political elite (cf. Navrátil, Císař 2023). Next, and more in line with the Bourdieuan narrative, the collective action field in this study is restricted to the collective actors who are willing to publicly engage in certain types of stakes – specifically in the public protest with social or economic claims within spatially defined (national) polity. This definition broadens the research focus beyond the traditional perspective of industrial relations or political economy but, at the same time, limits their scope as it does not include social movements organizations with an institutionalized repertoire of action, non-protesting interest groups, lobbying agencies, or various service-provision oriented civil society actors (typically NGOs) who are thus considered as "different animals." Finally, contrary to the approaches of Bourdieu or Fligstein and McAdam, this study uses network analytic tools to analyze the relations among various collective actors, as well as their structure and dynamics. However, to conceptualize further the Polanyian idea of pendular societal responses to the rapid establishment of a free market economy, a more dynamic perspective on the collective action fields needs to be sketched.

4.4 Field transformation

As mentioned, focusing on protest events during the study of the collective action field provides many analytical opportunities. Apart from what has been mentioned before, it also enables us to understand the complex structure of inter-organizational cooperation, the strength or intensity of this cooperation, the organizational infrastructure of protest cycles that arise in the field, and most importantly – the change in all of these in time.

Organizational theories formulated several general outlines of how the change of systems of inter-organizational relations might be explained. These range from rational action theories to broader population ecology explanations. The representatives of the former are transaction cost theory, strategic choice theory, and organizational learning theory (Cropper, Palmer 2010; Scott, Davis 2006). Transaction cost theory of change in inter-organizational relations focuses its explanation on the principle of maximizing efficiencies, which drives its consideration of making alliances with other actors. While the logic of the transaction cost perspective has been applied primarily to the sphere of business and trade (Scott, Davis 2006: 212), the dilemma for integration/cooperation with other actors generally resides in coordinating all complex tasks, such as achieving some policy goals.

An example could be the vertical integration of formerly legally independent branches of Czech trade union organizations into central organizations to minimize the costs of maintaining all former organization processes, which led to the centralization of trade unionist strategies (cf. Myant 2010). Strategic choice explanation considers the environmental influences but centers its explanation on the management of the organization: leader(s) are those who decide over (not) making strategic alliances to prevent harmful impacts of external forces (Cropper, Palmer 2010: 640). One of the examples might be the change of the leadership of the major Czech confederation in 2014, which consequently led to the launch of a brand-new form of repertoire – a public media campaign (Myant, Drahokoupil 2017), which might attract new allies and thus change the patterns of cooperation in the field. Finally, the organizational learning explanation focuses on inter-organizational networks as "the most immediate methods through which an organization can gain knowledge in areas outside their sphere of expertise" (Cropper, Palmer 2010: 638). Depending on the type of relations, either one or both cooperating organizations can increase their knowledge. In the field of economic contention, the important type of knowledge would be the mobilization of members and sympathizers, organizing protest events, and pooling resources to these ends, which would further promote their organizing capacities and attract more participants and partners. In this case, one would expect to observe the steady

rise of professionalized, powerful organizations with higher learning capabilities, surrounded by the more recent organizations with fewer skills and resources. To a large extent, all perspectives mentioned above apply an organization-centered perspective while downplaying the role of social/political context, and second, they imply a cumulation rather than fluctuation of overall networking patterns. Applying this perspective on the emerging field of economic protest should bring either stagnation or increase of various network characteristics (number of coalitions or position of actors within the network) in time. Cooperation/merging of collective actors with the intention to decrease transaction costs of organizing, aiming to achieve a strategic position in the field and become a key broker of protest alliances, or increasing the know-how and capacity to organize protests should lead to incremental or even linear networking patterns in the field. However, some important aspects of the logic of collective protest were left out of the picture as (1) narrow versions of rationality are often used (Opp 1999) and (2) the role of the organizational environment was neglected.

A more recent set of organizational theories to the study the change of inter-organizational relations over time provides a more convincing and suitable framework for understanding the emergence and evolution of a field of economic protest as they suggest that inter-organizational relations are affected primarily not by the principle of (economic) efficiency or rationality and clearly link the network structures of the field to the emerging and transforming political and economic environment. Resource dependence theory pays attention to the strategies of an organization but focuses less on its internal dynamics, values, and ideologies and more on its context and external constraints. Organizations are pictured as entities that are always embedded in a network of inter-dependencies and always face some resource scarcity in an uncertain environment. At the same time, they may use opportunities to manage this uncertainty and – at least temporarily – follow their interests and re-negotiate their relations over time. Finally, the notion of power was formulated as stemming from the inter-dependencies and locations in the field of collective action (Pfeffer, Salancik 2003: xi-xiii).

Similarly, population ecology focuses on organized action as a way of adaptation of a group or organization to its environment, while it studies this adaptation on the level of population, not single organizations. Its explanation of making inter-organizational relations is based on the logic of the combination of resources among organizations with similar forms and coping with environmental pressures to avoid elimination (Scott, Davis 2006: 236). Institutional theory further elaborates on the interaction between organizations and their environment and focuses on the institutional pressures on collective action. More specifically, it broadens the focus on the external influences on the organizations to study the regulative, normative, and cultural

effects on organizations and their fields (Scott 2014: 56). The idea of collective action field transformation largely stems from the concept of field structuration: top-down and bottom-up processes on the interaction between actors in the field and institutions affecting them through the processes of diffusion, imposition, invention or negotiation (Scott 2014: 237). The special case of the field structuration might also be the spatial diffusion of collective action and alliance. Biggs (2005) has shown how social interdependence and inspiration among various social sites led to the waves of protests (strikes) in late 19th century Chicago and Paris, which had the distribution of event sizes characteristic for power-law: it was clustered in waves and similar to forest fire not because of irrational contagion but because of propagation. Similarly, Hedström (1994) illustrated how an individual´s decision to join a social movement is affected by the activities of an individual´s social circles in particular localities. Using data on the spatial diffusion of Swedish trade unions between 1890 and 1940, the research illuminated how the density of social ties in the population influences the growth and spread of social movements.

The intersection of institutional perspective in organizational studies and social movement theory produced a more dynamic and conflict-related perspective on the transformation of the field of collective action. One of the major examples is the model of protest cycles (McAdam et al. 2004; Tarrow 2011). This perspective broadens the analytical lens for studying contentious politics from single movement organizations towards following multiple trajectories of variety of collective actors: typically, it focuses on a wave of heightened conflict in a society where intensity of interaction among groups increases, collective protest becomes diffused from more to less mobilized, forms of contention are being quickly innovated, new collective action frames are being introduced and interaction between challengers and incumbents becomes more frequent (McAdam et al. 2004: 65-66; Tarrow 2011: 199). Studying the multiplicity of collective actors entering the area of contention enables the identification of their relational strategies and also the assessment of what phase of a protest cycle is linked to more protest coalitions, cross-sectoral cooperation, or even the rise of new social movements. Interaction among groups and organizations is both the source and the outcome of the protest cycles. By acting and creating coalitions, the likelihood of further action or changes in the political/social context is increasing, which may further facilitate cooperative structures (Tarrow 2011: 201). During the *initial* stages of the cycle, the diffusion mechanism is typically in place when initially isolated collective action is spread to formerly unrelated groups, entering into conflict with power holder or competing groups and organizations: it is here when we may expect the emergence of weak ties (connecting distant actors), increasing first contacts and initial cooperative projects among previously disconnected activist sites (Diani, Mische 2015:

319). During the next – *consolidation* – stage, when cooperation becomes much more widespread and normalized, one should observe the rise of more centralized actors who are able to coordinate protests, campaigns, and projects (Diani, Mische 2015: 319). These might be the brokers from the initial stage, but not necessarily: initial brokers might be replaced by organizations better equipped and experienced in coordinating cross-sectoral and large-scale activities (Tarrow 2011: 202). After the consolidation, the protest wave may follow several different paths, depending largely on the previous responses of the state (power holders). Two of the most typical ones are *institutionalization* and *radicalization* (Tarrow 2011: 207). The former denotes the distancing of collective actors from radical ideologies and the adoption of more conventional forms of action; the latter indicates the opposite: a shift of collective actors towards more radical agendas and a rising preference for a more disruptive repertoire of contention (Tarrow 2011: 207; McAdam et al. 2004: 69). In both cases, one could expect building a strong type of ties: institutionalization represents building new organizational forms, which need to be accommodated by existing activist milieus and this requires at least some emotional re-establishment, while radicalization typically means emergence of dense organizational clusters bundled with strong solidarity ties. Both trajectories should, at the same time, inhibit increasing fragmentation through the decrease of weak ties in the field as there is only scarce integration of organizations and their clusters into the broader organizational environment (Diani, Mische 2015: 319).

Political network and social movement studies offer a more nuanced perspective on the analysis of collective action field dynamics, often relying on protest event analysis (e.g., Wada 2014). Protest events constitute the fundamental aspect of collective action strategies, as these serve as a translation of organizational goals, collective identities, and agendas into action (Knoke et al. 2021: 135). At the same time, they provide opportunities for sharing resources, broadening identities, coordinating external support, or unifying action frames. Co-occurrence of several groups or organizations at a protest event may have different meanings – from the participation of different organizations with different instrumental motives (in case of economic protest, some groups may participate in advocating interests of their members or constituents, some use this as an opportunity to confront the government, while some groups make use of the event to gain public visibility) to the coordination of several organizations based on mutual solidarity and/or ideology, same shared motives and goals. These two variants represent two ideal types and different ends of the continuum, but at the same time, they might represent two points on the trajectory of a group of organizations or a collective action field. Through continued co-participation of groups or organizations at protest events, formerly instrumental (weak)

coordination may lead to consolidation and the emergence of deeper, binding (strong) relations (Knoke et al. 2021: 135). However, crossing the boundaries of group identity to broaden the sense of "us" and extending the strong ties outside the group is not necessarily a unidirectional, irreversible process: collective identity building and maintenance is a permanent, interactive and negotiated project which may both expand and contract its borders (cf. Melucci 1996: 76). The conceptualization of weak and strong ties has been initially applied to relations among individuals: Granovetter (1973) famously differentiated among absent, weak and strong (inter-personal) ties, while defining the last as combining the amount of time, emotions, intimacy and reciprocity (Granovetter 1973: 1361). The important attributes of strong ties have been identified as supporting local cohesion and, therefore, social fragmentation, while weak ties provide individuals with opportunities and embeddedness outside their core groups. Applying this differentiation to ties among collective actors, Baldassari and Diani (2007) analyzed the relationships among civil society organizations in two UK cities and concluded that organizations in the same cluster (i.e., part of the network bound by denser ties) are more likely to connect through social bonds than by transactions. As might be expected, these strong ties are more frequent among organizations focusing on the same agenda. The dominance of strong ties, however, may also limit the capacity of organizations to build broad networks of cooperation (or movements) and lead to the separation of exclusive, non-communicating clusters (Baldassari, Diani 2007: 774). Later on, Diani (2015: 17-18) pointed out that processes of identity building result in the boundary definition of a particular set of actors and are key dimensions – together with the processes of resource exchange – of how social movements establish and maintain themselves. He differentiated among four modes of coordination of collective action: low number of weak (resource exchanges) and limited strong (identity) ties denote organizational mode of coordination (isolated, non-cooperating actors without any broader collective identity); many weak ties and limited strong ties demote coalitional mode of coordination (existing resource exchanges across the field, but without any symbolic unity or solidarity); low number of weak ties combined with intense strong ties denote subcultural/communitarian mode of coordination (community of organizations with limited strategic interactions); and combination of many weak ties with many strong ties in the field denote social movement mode of coordination (high capacity of sharing resources combined with solidarity ties) (Diani 2015: 15-25).

This differentiation may also serve as an indicator of the strength/weakness of a certain collective action field in a given period. Modes of coordination may change over time and undergo a process of de/fragmentation both in the dimension of resource allocation and

boundary definition. This, in turn, affects the capacity of the field of economic protest to sustain and promote collective protest when following common goals (Diani, Bison 2004). Moreover, the structure of social bonds and resources exchange may dramatically differ and vary across different political contexts: weak ties (transactions) and strong ties (bonds) combine into broader structural patterns to provide both micro- and macro-integration of civil associations within civil society structures and the political opportunities and the nature of political conflict shape the outcome of these processes (Baldassarri, Diani 2007: 771-775; Diani et al. 2010).

To summarize, existing approaches to the dynamics of the collective action fields offer several models of field transformation. First, there is a model of more or less linear evolution of the field with rising inequality of organizations in terms of their professionalization, power, and centrality of professionalized, powerful organizations with higher learning capabilities, surrounded by the "weaker" organizations with fewer skills and resources. The second model acknowledges the non-linear cycle evolution of the collective action field structures. Here, we should see progress consisting of several stages through which the field gets established and consolidates, and then an institutionalized or radicalized part of the field emerges (or both). This model seems to be less context-dependent as it is typically affected by the environment in the later phases of its development. The third model of collective action field dynamics is more contingent and depends on the changing context relevant to the field. As already illustrated in section 4.2, two basic environmental mechanisms affect the emergence of weak and strong ties.

4.5 Research outline

The goal of the study is to surpass existing studies of the contentious politics of economic transformation, especially in the area of industrial relations or economic interest groups. Instead, it aims to analyze a broader, relational picture of economic contention across three decades of rapid economic transformation from state socialism to liberal capitalism (with its recent variant, a technocratic populism). To empirically analyze a Polanyian counter-movement against economic liberalization in post-socialist settings, this study combines conceptual and analytical perspectives sketched in the previous chapters.

First, the study builds on the Polanyian notion of broad societal counter-movement against the forces of liberal capitalism, which assumes that rapid imposition of economic liberalism and dis-embedding of the market forces from the broader societal context generates a response (resistance) towards these forces which aims at re-embedding the economic relations. Contrary to other perspectives dealing with the economic conflicts in society – especially the one provided by Marx – it offers a less exclusive perspective and more relaxed assumptions in terms of the actors, conditions, and overall dynamics of economic conflict. While Marx´s theory focuses on the linear and stage-like nature of the economic conflict (Armbruster-Sandoval 2005; Brooks 2007; Friedman 2014; Sen, Waterman 2009), Polanyi stresses the pendular character of this resistance reflecting the processes of commodification and de-commodification (Silver 2003: 16:20; Gemici, Nair 2016). This is why this study makes minimal restrictions on the type of collective action it analyzes – enduring (organized), public (visible, manifest), and contentious (conflicting, political, mobilizing). At the same time, it makes the conceptual distinction between formally and informally organized collective actors and does not restrict the inclusion of actors into the analysis on grounds other than their public engagement in the field of economic contention. Second, it emphasizes the analysis of mutual relations among various sectors of collective actors, which are defined not in strictly ideological but rather in thematic and functional terms to assess the diversity and multivocality of economic protest. Third, it implements the longitudinal design to assess the overall trajectories of the collective action field. This is why it builds on protest event data, which represent the public contention over economic issues and also the variety of collective actors engaged in economic protest across different periods.

Second, the concept of embeddedness illustrates how activities in certain areas of social action are integrated within actual, enduring systems of social relations (Granovetter 1985: 487), dis-embeddedness on the other hand captures how certain processes and collective actors foster

disintegration, which in turn weaken/threaten the pre-existing social ties, leading to greater insecurity and unpredictability of life (Olofsson 1999: 42). On the micro level, the concept of embeddedness has become an important explanatory scheme in economic sociology, illustrating the role of social relations in economic action (Granovetter 1992: 32) or in political sociology, illustrating the role of social networks in political participation (Lim 2008). On the meso level, the role of collective interactions for promoting and sustaining political activism – or contentious collective action, or collective protest – has also been analyzed (Diani, Bison 2004). Focusing on the contentious collective action, this study follows the assumption that the capacity of society to promote, scale up, and sustain any protest mobilization in a certain area of social life critically depends on the extent to which the collective actors engaged in this area establish, coordinate and join inter-sectoral alliances (or, mobilizing or solidarity structures) and contribute to the emergence of broader inter-organizational structures in which to other collective and individual actors may become embedded (through mechanisms such as boundary shift, diffusion, brokerage, or socialization) (Cornwell, Harrison 2004; Diani 2018; Hedström et al. 2000; Passy 2003; McAdam 1986; Sullivan 2009; Sullivan 2010; Tattersall 2018; Tilly, Tarrow 2007; Wada 2014; Han 2016). Thus, the problem of "weakness" or "patience" of many post-socialist societies towards the radical economic and political transformation after the fall of socialist regimes (Greskovits 1998; Howard 2003; Beissinger, Sasse 2014) may be reformulated as the problem of integration of meso-level civic infrastructure – campaigns, alliances or platforms providing enduring opportunities and incentives for mobilization of both collective and individual actors.

This is why this study applies the perspective of relational sociology and tools of social network analysis, which privileges the study of social relations instead of attributes, quantities, or frequencies. It applies the concept of a field of economic contention defined as a meso-level arena of collective action where organizations, social groupings, networks, and/or individuals converge around protest events (cf. Knoke et al. 2021: 135). The perspective of fields of collective action enables us to analyze both structural and dynamical aspects of the economic contention. Thus, it studies economic contention through inter-organizational protest cooperation in the field of economic contention rather than through intra-organizational characteristics (membership, leadership, ownership). Apart from their capacity to cross-sectoral boundaries and cooperate across various organizing types (formal vs. informal), the study also distinguishes between weak and strong ties. The combination of these ties represents an important precondition for enduring broader mobilization, as strong ties help to build the core of mobilization networks based on shared solidarity and trust. At the same time, weak

connections enable the building of far-reaching connections while crossing sectoral boundaries and mobilizing resources. Analysis of strong and weak ties thus enables the assess the level of collective action field integration.

Third, the study makes another use of the concepts of embeddedness: analyzing embedding, dis-embedding, and re-embedding of economic institutions within a broader social environment through commodification, de-commodification, and re-commodification processes aims to capture the changing relations between economic and social actions and institutions. These suggest the changing dynamics of social protective counter-movement in relation to the existing level of commodification and, thus, the dis-embeddedness of economic institutions (Crouch 1993; Howell 2005; Ibsen, Tapia 2017: 173). In other words, this study aims to inspect the role of the changing socio-economic and political context in the structure and dynamics of economic protests.

This is why this study differentiates between the dual character of the changing context of the field: political (the nature of main political conflict, access to political process) and economic (economic threats and the shape of welfare policy ideas) and analyzes its impact on the various aspects of collective action field integration. Most importantly, it differentiates between rising economic threats and closing political space (intensifying commodification) and declining economic threats and opening political space (decreasing commodification) and identifies several constellations of political-economic context.

The study follows these general and specific research questions:

1. What is the structure of collective actors engaged in the field of economic contention?

1.1 What is the quantity and distribution of protest occurrence structure of actors in relation to the forms of their organizing and sectors?

1.2 How does it change across different constellations of political-economic context?

2. What are the relational strategies of collective actors engaged in the field of economic contention?

2.1 What is the distribution of ties among actors engaged in the field? How does it differ across types of organizing and sectors?

2.2 What is the distribution of weak and strong ties?

2.3 What is the distribution of intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation?

2.4 How do these aspects change across different constellations of political-economic context?

3. What are the patterns of protest cooperation in the field of economic contention?

3.1 What is the overall structure of the protest cooperation network?

3.2 What are the patterns of strong and weak ties in the network?

3.3 What are the patterns of cross-sectoral and intra-sectoral cooperation?

3.4 How do these aspects change across different constellations of political-economic context?

The empirical analysis aims to answer these questions with different yet complementary perspectives, which provide a complex exploration of the field of economic contention – actors and their relations.

The first step builds on the analysis of actors and applies the ego-network approach, focusing on the overall composition of actors, their relational strategies, and their evolution. Here, the study seeks to answer the question about the overall actor structure in the field of economic protest, actor strategies related to community building and transactions, and relations between the two. Specifically, it aims to analyze the overall actor composition in the field to identify key (most active and most networking) players and their types, examine the relation between the protest and coalitional activity, and specify actors´ coordination strategies. To what extent do actors rely on the weak and strong ties? To what extent do they cross their sectoral boundaries? Furthermore, the analysis will inspect how actor structure and their strategies are related to the transformation of the political-economic context. Here, the actor structure, their coordination strategies, and their willingness to cross boundaries will be compared across various periods.

The protest cooperation will be analyzed from a whole-network perspective in the second step. Here, the analysis will focus on the overall centralization and cohesion of the protest cooperation, its clustering, and the share of cross-sectoral alliances. It will inspect the overall structure of coordination of collective action in the field to identify the patterns of weak and strong relations. The goal is to identify to what extent the field represents the cohesive counter-movement, a plurality of counter-movements, or rather a series of isolated groups and small alliances. Furthermore, the analysis will address the role of the political-economic context. It will focus on the transformation of the centralization and cohesion of the field, its clustering, and the share of cross-sectoral alliances. Also, it will seek to demonstrate how the change of the context affects the formation of strong and weak ties.

Following the previous review of existing research on the role of the political context in the cooperation among collective actors, the following basic expectations are formulated:

First, the dominance of economic conflict with increasing economic threats and closed institutional access will stimulate protest cooperation in general, as well as cross-sectoral alliances in particular.

Second, the dominance of the economic conflict combined with closed political opportunities and high economic threats shall be related to increased internal cohesion of sectors in the field.

Third, the dominance of conflict over democracy with open political opportunities and low economic threats shall be related to increased internal cohesion of the sectors in the field.

5. Data, Method, and the Case

5.1 Data

This research is based on an analysis of protest event data (cf. Hutter 2014; ibid 2019). The protest event is defined here as an actual gathering of at least three people convened in a public space to make claims that bear on the interests of an institution/collective actor (Tilly 1995). Only real episodes of collective action are included; threats of resorting to collective action, such as strike alerts, were excluded.

The dataset consists of all protest events that took place in the Czech Republic between November 1989 (the start of the transformation) and December 2021, during which any social or economic issue was raised. These types of issues represent two separate codes: social issues are defined as “social issues related to health, education, housing (such as school fees, doctor's fees)”, while economic issues are defined as “economic issues related monetary/fiscal policy, taxes, wages”.

To identify protest events, the electronic archive of Czech News Agency (Česká tisková kancelář – ČTK) was searched for selected keywords in all electronically available news stories. A total of 2157 protest events were identified manually.

Every protest event contained in the story was selected and manually[12] coded for several variables. The following variables were coded: date, place, collective actors attending the event, issues, framing, attendance (when the exact number of participants was not available (several dozen, several hundred, etc.), the lowest estimate was coded (20, 200, etc.), target, repertoire and duration.

All collective actors attending the event were detected, and duplicities were deleted from the dataset. A total of 1423 collective actors were identified. These were further differentiated in terms of type and sector. The types of actors were, first, according to the form of organizing, and second, according to the sector they belong. The form of organizing was either formal (organization with a name and organizational structure) or informal (grouping of people without a name and organizational structure – e.g., employees from a specific factory, teachers from a specific school, etc.). The code of each informally organized actor (e.g., teachers from a specific school) included specification of the locality and time of event engagement (to avoid general categories such as “teachers from elementary school,” which could otherwise make

[12] The process of manual selection and coding of protest events was a team work, which consisted of training sessions, controlled selection/coding activities, and repeated tests of inter-coder reliability and validity.

unjustifiable cooperation matches). The coding of sectors was based on an open coding scheme: actors occurring in the protest events were clustered according to their thematic and functional similarity to prepare clear yet sufficiently detailed categories of actors. The following sectors were differentiated:

- academia
- business
- vulnerable groups
- employees
- entrepreneurs
- farmers
- general public
- local inhabitants
- management (typically hospitals and other public institutions)
- media
- NGO - anti-vax
- NGO - culture
- NGO - democracy
- NGO - development
- NGO - economy
- NGO - education
- NGO - environmental
- NGO - ethnic minorities
- NGO - feminist
- NGO - health
- NGO - housing
- NGO - human rights
- NGO - social services
- NGO - transparency
- NGO - youth
- political parties
- political youth organization
- politicians
- professional associations
- public institutions
- radical left
- religious organizations
- students
- teachers (elementary and high schools)
- trade unions
- unorganized activists

5.2 Method[13]

Recent evolution of relational sociology (Tilly, Crossley, Diani, White, Mische, Burt, Bearman, and others) and rising emphasis on the relational aspects of society in general and collective action in particular (social embeddedness, collective identity building and maintenance, resource exchanges, social diffusion, and innovations) contributed to the wider application of social network analysis (SNA) tools to the social movement studies. Despite this development, some schisms remain here as social field theory evolved as one of the alternative schools of relational sociology, emphasizing multiple forms of relational structure (non-reducible to social ties) and criticizing SNA for "structuralist determinism, instrumentalism, and constructionism" (Emirbayer, Goodwin 1994; Singh 2019). However, SNA tools have become more applied by social movement scholars, and collective action and its organization have gradually become more and more popular in the field of social network theory (Prell 2012: 222). Collective action research started to employ a social network perspective in the 1990s at the latest when several seminal studies were published (Gould 1991; Hedström 1994; Emirbayer 1997; Emirbayer, Mische 1998; Diani, McAdam 2003; Crossley 2010).

There are three basic underlying assumptions of SNA (Knoke, Yang 2008: 4-6). First, structural relations among various actors or subjects and contexts in which these exist are more important for explaining their behavior than some of their key attributes. While quantitative social science relies on measuring and analyzing the attributes of the subjects, which are units of analysis, SNA looks at the relations between units of analysis and treats these as attributes of subjects. Importantly, these relations are always treated in their complexity – as patterns of relations – and not just as relations between pairs of actors (Marin, Wellman 2011: 14). SNA assumes that environments, attributes, or circumstances do not affect actors independently but via network structures (Marin, Wellman 2011: 12). Second, social networks affect consciousnesses, beliefs, and actions through their social connections – the social environment of individuals largely determines their preferences, values, priorities, etc. Third, these structures – relations – should be considered dynamic and not static. In other words, ties and connections are rather interactions and mechanisms of change than stable patterns. More importantly, a different definition of a tie results in different social networks (even if for the same subjects – actors). Thus, a network of cooperation may be a completely different network than a network of trust – even with the same set of actors.

[13] Some parts of this section build on my previous work (Navrátil 2021).

Network boundaries are one of the key aspects of SNA. As SNA assumes that there are no uniformly cohesive and discretely bounded groups, it aims to study the strength and nature of relations and differences through which individuals are subject to opportunities, constraints, and influence resulting from group membership. Importantly, studying a network means treating its actors as more or less embedded and not simply as members and non-members. In this sense, membership in groups is treated as possibly multiple, overlapping, and non-binary, and groups are treated as something more or less cohesive with more or less permeable boundaries and with more or fewer bridges toward other social groupings. In other words, groups in SNA are usually identified empirically via research or particular sampling strategy, and not theoretically beforehand (Marin, Wellman 2011: 14). The network boundary strategy applied in this study is event-based (Knoke, Yang 2008: 20): definition of the field of economic contention: every organization which participated on a protest event with main social or economic issue within period under study in the Czech Republic (see previous section for details) is included among the nodes.

A social network is a structure consisting of a set of actors (or nodes) and a set of ties among these actors (Knoke, Yang 2008). Nodes may represent individuals, organizations, institutions, media, events, etc. Sometimes, networks may consist of different sets of actors/nodes – these are two-mode networks (such as SMOs and protest events, for example). This is also the case of this study, which builds on the analysis of protest events (see the previous section) and defines ties between two organizations or groups as their co-occurrence at a protest event (e.g., Wada 2014). First, protest cooperation is identified as a tie/s between two or more collective actors (organizations, groups), which is indicated by their co-presence of these organizations at the same protest event (i.e., sharing time, place, and attendants). Through co-presence at protest events – creating an explicit or implicit protest coalition – organizations share similar risks and make a public statement about their relationship, which reflects their collaborative ties in a specific field of activism (Wada 2014; Diani 2015). Such a tie between collective actors is treated as undirected as organizations did not take part in the event without the consent of other organizing or participating actor(s). The value of tie equals the number of joint co-occurrences of two groups at the event. This study transforms a two-mode (co-occurrence) network (event X actors) into the one-mode network(s) (actors X actors), which is analyzed. Every node may have different qualities or attributes. This study works with several node types – collective actors and their sectors.

Ties between nodes may have different meanings: collaboration, conflict, acknowledgment, co-occurrence at protest events, hyperlinks, resource exchange, etc. The ties may also be sustained

or occasional; they may be symmetrical (reciprocated) or asymmetrical, directed, or undirected, and they may also differ in strength. This study analyzes ties in several ways. First, it differentiates between the presence and absence of a tie between a pair of nodes. Second, in some analyses, it measures the strength of ties based on the number of co-occurrences of a pair of actors (nodes) at any protest event.

Furthermore, the study differentiates between weak and strong ties among actors. While one-off co-occurrence of two or more organizations at the same event in a given period denotes a basic, trial form of cooperation, it is more demanding to define a strong tie (cf. Krackhardt 2003). Suppose the frequency of ties over a given period increases over three co-occurrences. In that case, it is assumed that the organizations did not experience any negative experiences during previous cooperation, and developed a positive relationship beyond simple resource allocation, with a strong, effective tie emerging. This threshold is based on my previous research on Czech alter-globalization and anti-war activism (Navrátil 2016), which combined organizational survey and protest event data analysis. It showed that organizations with protest event co-occurrence higher than three over three years often identify themselves as members of the same movement or share a broader collective identity (communist, anarchist, peace, global justice).

An empirical analysis of network data is a complex task with many concepts and measures. The basic analysis computes various measures for particular nodes – number of actors(nodes), number of ties, average number of ties per node (degree), and components (two nodes are members of the same component if there is a path connecting them).

Furthermore, the study relies on the measures on the network level: size (number of nodes and ties), density (existing connections as a share of all possible connections), density (the total number of ties divided by the total number of possible ties), fragmentation (the proportion of pairs of nodes that cannot reach each other) and centralization (the degree of inequality or variance in the network as a percentage of that of a perfect star network of the same size) (Hanneman, Riddle 2005).

At the same time, actors may also be analyzed through the perspective of their groupings – as sub-structures (parts of the network where nodes are closer to one another than they are to other groupings). These are sometimes conceptualized as "equivalence classes," which enable analysis of roles and positions in the network. Here, the study applies a core-periphery analysis, which fits a core/periphery model to the data network and identifies which actors belong in the core and which belong in the periphery.

The study applies some statistical techniques. First, it applies correlation analysis between two networks: it computes Pearson's correlation coefficient and simple Jaccard´s matching measure between corresponding cells of the two data matrices, which randomly permutes rows and columns of one matrix and repeatedly recomputes the correlation to compute the proportion of times that a random measure is larger than or equal to the observed measure calculated in the first step) (Hanneman, Riddle 2005). Second, it applies a randomization test of autocorrelation for a symmetric adjacency matrix partitioned into groups using relational contingency table analysis. This is applied to evaluate the ratio of observed and expected (under the model of independence) frequencies of relations between selected types of nodes/actors.
UCINET and IBM SPSS software were used for the data analysis.

5.3 The case[14]

In 1989, CEE countries experienced a rapid transition from authoritarian state socialism to democratic capitalism, which was followed by economic "shock therapy." The economic reforms implemented in post-socialist Europe were quicker, more far-reaching, and more radical than originally planned or imagined by key reformists (Sippola 2013; Appel, Orenstein 2018); the political but also social discontinuity of this change has been highlighted (Kabele 2005). The establishment and rise of the market economy led, on the one hand, to economic growth and gains in wealth, income, and life satisfaction, and on the other, to social ills, economic emigration, social dislocation, and poverty for many (Uhlová 2018; Ghodsee, Orenstein 2021). While all CEE countries underwent the same economic transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market one at a similar time, the Czechoslovak position was largely unique. Sometimes, Czech capitalism was differentiated both from the Anglo-Saxon model of capitalism on the one hand and Rhine capitalism on the other: Czech capitalism was represented by the fragmented ownership structure, low level of legal regulation of the economy, and relatively low share of foreign capital in the economy (Myant 2013).

What was exceptional was the starting position, mechanism, and radicality of the Czechoslovak path to a liberal market economy (Mejstřík 1997; Rameš 2021: 11). Compared to other CEE countries, Czechoslovakia in 1989 was the furthest from this ideal of market economy with a predominance of the private sector and a minimum of state intervention. According to data, the private sector's share of GDP shifted from 5% in 1989 to 65% in 1994 and 80% in 1999 (Žídek 2017). The process of privatization consisted of (1) restitution (re-privatization) which was launched at the end of 1990, lasted one decade and accounted approximately for 15–20% of state-owned property (typically in physical forms); (2) small privatization which was launched in the beginning of 1991, lasted three years, was conducted via public auctions and accounted for app. 5% of state-owned property, and (3) large privatization which was launched in 1991, lasted four years, was conducted via experimental voucher method and accounted for app. 75–80% of state-owned property (Kočenda, Valachy 2001; Turnovec 2009; Žídek 2017: 212). The political management of privatization was quite cautious in terms of foreign capital (especially the German one). While some of the big enterprises were sold to foreign owners in the early phase of privatization, in the mid-1990s, there were trends to privatize the property "to the

[14] Some parts of this section build on my current work (Navrátil forthcoming).

Czech hands," and at the end of the 1990s, the large banks were privatized to foreign or international capital (Myant 2013).

Apart from privatization, liberalization processes were launched: in 1991, trade liberalization and liberalization of prices led to shock and significant jumps in price levels and inflation. After the liberalization shock and economic decline between 1991 and 1993, the GDP started to grow, and in 1996, the government announced the end of the transition (Turnovec 2009: 260). However, in 1997, the post-privatization recession began, and GDP fell in 1998. This also contributed to criticism of the transformation process, encouraged domestic groups with links to transnational capital to seize the initiative, increased pressure from the EU, and led to the split of the governing coalition and even the major right-wing party.

At the very beginning of the transition period, post-socialist labor activism did not challenge the legitimacy of the new economic order or the general direction of the economic reforms; it only aimed to correct specific policies or express dissatisfaction with their outcomes (Ekiert, Kubik 1998). Vanhuysse (2006) demonstrated the role of public policies during the first wave of transformation in pacifying and preventing economic collective action in CEE countries. The Czech case is sometimes even defined as corporatism (Iankova 2002). Close ties between labor and the state were defined as producing neoliberal outcomes, making labor accept the weakening and decline of the welfare state (Ost 2000). Particularly, its weakness was demonstrated in terms of levels of union membership, styles of management, the strength of collective bargaining, number and impact of strikes, nature of political alliances, union impact on public policies or material well-being of workers (Crowley, Ost 2001: 4); increasing rivalry with other actors, struggling for legitimacy, exclusivity and attempting to monopolize constituencies while not being able to shape transformation politics, and frequently feeling an affinity to ruling political forces (Greskovits 1998: 86); and trade union density, coverage of collective bargaining, degree of centralization of wage bargaining, number of days lost to strikes and lockouts (Knell, Srholec 2005: 50-55).

After the operation of the interim cabinet (1998), the political left, for the first time after 1989, succeeded in gaining support for its minority cabinet. It was during the minority social-democratic cabinet when the foreign direct investments (as a share of GDP) more than doubled and started to inflow in 1999 during the social-democratic cabinet (Myant 2013: 309). This marked the end of the first political-economic model of the market economy – the one aiming to build a national capitalist class embedded in privatized enterprises under state control and gaining popular support (Drahokoupil 2008: 101). The period of Europeanization, or trans-nationalization of the Czech economy, was based on the model of a competition state which –

in contrast to the welfare state – promotes increased marketization through liberalization of trade flows, further privatization of public services and re-commodifying the labor (Genschel, Seelkopf 2015). Even if the formal inclusion into the global economic market was prepared and negotiated before 1998 (trade and cooperation agreement with the EU in a pre-transformation period, association agreement with the EU its re-negotiation during the transformation periods, membership in the WTO and OECD, application for full EU membership), real integration into international economic flows was accomplished after 1998 during center-left governments. One of the key factors was the failure of the attempt to find the Czech Way in the banking sector, which paved the way for the failure of the Czech Way in the economy (Myant 2013: 213). The era of Europeanization or globalization of the Czech economy consisted of adjusting the domestic legal and political framework more towards the unrestricted liberal model, this time without significant restrictions favoring domestic capital or entrepreneurs (Drahokoupil 2008: 123, 176-180). The massive arrival of long-term mass-production FDI led, among others, to the bigger role of multinationals in shaping the economic and social policies: these were concerned with policy environment and investment framework and with the exploitation of public financial incentives and low wages (Drahokoupil 2008: 141-142).

The relations between social democratic cabinets and major trade unions were quite close: apart from the fact that they kept their presence in the political process, their influence rose also due to rising transnationalization of the economy (trade unions were quite successful in pressure to increase wages in multinational companies, especially in automotive industry) (Myant, Drahokoupil 2017: 5). Even if major trade union confederations deliberately denied any identification with any political ideology or party, their closest political allies were Social Democrats: 4 out of 6 of the former or current trade union represented social democrats in elections. At the same time, the rise of economic globalization and reforms after the 1990s, further liberalization of the economy, rising inequalities, and a series of economic and political crises provided incentives for economic contention. Post-socialist trade unions also joined some transnational waves of mobilizations, such as the Global Justice Movement at the turn of the millennium (Gagyi 2013).

The political-economic situation started to change in 2006 after the formation of the new centre-right government. Even if the leading party of the government was the one who led the transformation in the 1990s, this time, the national dimension of the economy was suppressed, and clear neoliberal strategies (monetarism, strict fiscal discipline, privatization, deregulation) were promoted (Císař, Navrátil 2017). Under the threat of fiscal crisis, it initiated further cuts and liberalization in healthcare, pensions, and family policies that had already been initiated

under the previous social democrat government (Saxonberg, Sirovátka 2014: 464). This time, however, the major policy concern was not the sustainability of the public services and demand-side economics but the state debt reduction (Draxler 2014). Public finance reform came into effect in 2008 and consisted of replacing the progressive income taxation, canceling automatic increases in the value of the minimum subsistence level and social benefits, lowering corporate tax, increasing consumption tax, or introducing fees in healthcare. This trend continued also during and after the Great Recession of 2007/2008. In fact, even more pro-market reforms were proposed to face the impact of the crisis. Austerity and pro-market policies remained in place during the interim cabinet between 2009 and 2010 and also after another conservative-populist government led by the same right-wing party took office (2010–2013) (Draxler 2014: 133). The cabinet again sought to promote austerity policies and a series of pro-market reforms: massive restitution of church property, partial privatization of the pension system, and introduction of university study fees.

In general, the labor unions after 2008 enjoyed regular access to the government via tripartite meetings. However, their perception of how their claims were reflected differed significantly (Císař, Navrátil 2017). During Topolánek´s government (2007–2009), labor unions perceived a lack of influence over public policies, the mounting threat of austerity and privatization policies in expectation (sic!) of the Great Recession and witnessed downplaying the role of tripartite meetings. During the next regular government of Petr Nečas (2010–2013), the opportunities became more closed, and threats mounted again: austerity measures were again proposed mostly in favor of higher-income social groups and self-employed persons. At the same time, conflict broke out between the government and major labor associations as the former succeeded with a judicial preliminary decision to ban the strike. Prime Minister warned that if the trade unionists strike, the government would claim damages from them, which increased mutual mistrust between the labor unions and the government.

After a series of corruption scandals, interim cabinet (2013–2014), and the elections in 2013, the center-left cabinet led by social democrats with the participation of technocratic (centrist) populists (ANO movement) and Christian democrats was established, which centered at reducing tax evasion and unemployment, increasing minimum wage and wages in the public sector, valorized pensions, and canceled previous pension reform. Even if the government declared fiscal responsibility (and lowered the budget deficit), it professed the demand-side economics: increased pensions, wages in the public sector, sick leave and other social benefits, and lowered income taxes for employees. Also, it did not continue with further marketization and liberalization of the pension, healthcare, or education system.

In 2018, the same parties formed the government; this time, the technocratic (centrist) populist ANO movement was the senior member of the coalition with its leader Babiš as prime minister, and social democrats participated. This government continued pushing back some previous social cuts and promoted demand-side economic policies. During the COVID pandemic, the cabinet provided massive financial support for self-employed persons, entrepreneurs, and companies to prevent economic turmoil and negative social (and political) impacts. In 2021, center-right coalitions won elections and announced plans to tighten fiscal discipline. Even if the government did not significantly change the major economic strategies and social policies, the nature of political conflict changed. Initial negotiations with the Communist party, accusations of Babiš of collaborating with the communist secret police, and his criminal prosecution were used as mobilizing frames by the opposition parties, which contributed to the diffusion of the protest among civil society organizations and the rise of long-term protest campaigns. This contributed to the defeat of Babiš by the center-right coalition in the parliamentary elections in 2021.

Both center-left governments – the one led by Sobotka (2013–2017) and the one led by Babiš (2017–2021) – provided labor unions with opportunities to influence the outcomes of public policies, focused on the support of middle-class employees and aimed at a better balance between employees and self-employed/entrepreneurs. Babiš's strategy in the tripartite negotiations was very utilitarian: if labor unions and employers could reach a deal, the government would approve it.

A combination of political opportunities, prevailing conflict type, broader economic tendencies, and welfare policy orientations (for details, see Sirovátka, Ripka 2020) led to different constellations of environment for economic protest. While Bearman and Everett (1993) differentiated between 5 periods that reflected collective mobilizations related directly to the focus of their study, Wada (2014) differentiated between various periods in the study of the rise of civil society in Mexico in relation to the processes of political and economic liberalization (pre-neoliberal period, neoliberal transition period and neoliberal consolidation period). Similarly to the latter, this study builds on the differentiation of the periods reflecting the transformations of the political-economic environment for economic protest: revolution (11/1989–12/1990), transformation (1/1991–12/1997), Europeanization (1/1998–08/2006), austerity (09/2006–06/2016), consolidation (07/2013–12/2017), and populism (01/2018–12/2021) (cf. Císař, Navrátil 2017; Kriesi et al. 2020; Sirovátka, Ripka 2020; Lánský, Novák 2022; Slačálek, Šitera 2022) (see Table 3).

Table 3: Periodization of political-economic context for Czech organized labor strategies

Period		Political context		Economic context	
		Main Conflict	Political opportunities	Economic strategies	Welfare policy ideas
Revolution	11/1989–12/1990	democracy	opening	central planning	pragmatism, universalism
Transformation	01/1991–12/1997	economy	closing	fiscal expansion, liberalization	cost containment
Europeanization	01/1998–08/2006	economy	opening	fiscal expansion, coordination	protection, activation
Austerity	09/2006–06/2013	economy	closing	fiscal restriction, liberalization	cost containment, activation
Consolidation	07/2013–12/2017	economy	opening	fiscal expansion, coordination	redistribution, investment
Populism	01/2018–12/2021	democracy	opening	fiscal expansion, coordination	redistribution, investment

The first period (revolution) will be used as a comparative base for the following periods to illustrate the magnitude and character of the transformation of economic protest. There are three similar constellations of political and economic context after the initial phase of democratization: economy being the main issue of political conflict combined with closed political opportunities and high economic threats (Transformation, Austerity), economy being the major conflict with open political opportunities and low economic threats (Europeanisation, Consolidation), and democracy being the major political conflict with open political opportunities and low economic threats (Populism).

6. Actors in the field of economic contention

This section focuses on the actor-level properties in the field of economic contention. First, to provide an overall picture of the actors, their structure and engagement in the field are described: most importantly, the focus is on the quantity and distribution of protest participation, the structure of actors concerning the forms of their organizing and sectors, and also their relational strategies in the field. In the next step, these aspects are transposed into the longitudinal perspective, and the relationship between the change in political-economic context and actors´ properties is analyzed.

6.1 Actors´ structure and activity

Studying economic contention within the Polanyian framework notion of *counter-movement* requires, first, to differentiate between formally and informally coordinated collective action. While existing studies of economic contention often base their analysis on the already existing and formally organized social structures, the broader notion of resistance against the processes of marketization also entails the existence of informal groupings, networks, or gatherings. As Tilly pointed out, social movements are interactive campaigns that may involve organizations as well as unnamed informal networks (2004: 48-50). Similarly, Diani and Della Porta note that social movements have long been identified as loosely structured collective conflict, with the engagement of short-lived, spatially scattered groups (2006: 137). At the same time, organizations represent key social arrangements as they provide their members and supporters with continuity in their efforts to achieve their goals, manifest certain collective identities or ideologies, collect and concentrate resources, or provide socialization for new members.

In total, 1423 different subjects were identified as participating in any of the socio-economic protest events between November 1989 and December 2021. Six hundred thirty-eight of them (45%) may be described as formal organizations or groups, accounting for 1861 (61%) single protest occurrences. Most of them represent legally registered groups, but not necessarily all of them – some represent formal organizations not recognized by the law. At the same time, all of these have names and may be identified as having some identity and continuity in time. The frequency of their engagement in protest events is dramatically unequal: only 31 organizations had more than ten occurrences at any socio-economic protest event, while 380 organizations took part in one single protest event (see Table 4).

Table 4: Participation of formally organized actors in economic protest

No. of actors	*No. of occurrences*
1	87
1	56
1	54
1	50
1	34
1	33
1	32
2	28
1	25
1	20

2	18
3	17
3	15
1	13
1	12
7	11
3	10
1	9
7	8
14	7
15	6
17	5
23	4
41	3
108	2
381	1

Not only the relatively low share of formal organizations in the economic protest but also their structure reveals its manifold and ambiguous nature (see Table 5). Even if the most engaged collective actors are trade unions, these represent only 30% of all formally organized sectors. Interestingly, they are closely followed by political parties and professional associations, which are typically associated with institutionalized forms of collective action. Quite unexpected is the presence of NGOs in contentious activities: there are NGOs focusing both on material but also on post-material issues – human rights, democracy, culture, youth, feminism, or sport.

Table 5: Occurrence of formally organized actors in economic protest

Organization type	*Protest frequency*	*Valid Percent*
trade unions	546	29.5
political parties	343	18.5
professional associations	238	12.8
NGO - environmental	74	4
vulnerable groups	71	3.8
NGO - social services	61	3.3
radical left	59	3.2
NGO - human rights	54	2.9
business	49	2.6
NGO - economy	48	2.6
NGO - education	40	2.2
NGO - democracy	36	1.9
NGO - housing	31	1.7

academia	28	1.5
NGO - development	20	1.1
NGO - anti-vax	19	1
NGO - health	19	1
NGO - culture	16	0.9
NGO - youth	17	0.9
NGO - transparency	14	0.8
political youth organization	15	0.8
religious organizations	15	0.8
NGO - ethnic minorities	13	0.7
media	10	0.5
public institutions	9	0.5
NGO - feminist	8	0.4
Total	1853	100

A closer look at the most engaged actors in the field (with at least ten occurrences at the event) reveals that one-third of them belong to the trade unionist milieu. There are two of the most important trade union confederations (CMKOS, ASO), and many trade union federations participate in their events or formally join the protests of their confederations (see Table 6). The most active ones are related to public services (healthcare, education), followed by workers in industry (OS KOVO). This points to the several features of Czech economic conflict. First, there is overall organizational fragmentation of Czech trade unions: without analyzing their inter-organizational relations (see further sections), it is apparent that the trade unionist milieu keeps their separate collective identities at public events. The major confederation (CMKOS) dominates the activity, but there are four other trade union federations among the six most active actors. Second, as all of these federations are members of any of the three major trade union confederations, which are members of the Tripartite, this shows that the corporatist arrangement was not always perceived as working and in some periods its effectiveness was rather illusory (Ost 2000).

On the other hand, there is surprisingly (for some political scientists, not for Polanyi) a strong role of political parties: they account for almost one-third of the most active formal organizations. All of them are parties that were – at least for one electoral term – represented in Parliament. The most active of them are Social Democrats, which is not surprising: as mentioned before, since the mid-1990s, there has been a strong yet undeclared link between Social Democrats and trade unions. They are followed by the Communist Party, but quite surprisingly, liberal and conservative parties are listed right after the Communists: this points to the importance of economic conflict not just for protest-oriented and left-leaning subjects but

also for other sides of the political spectrum. In other words, some political battles over economic issues were fought on the street. This also confirms recent studies on the generally lower differentiation of political parties in post-socialist societies: compared to Western Europe, the political parties are less willing to specialize and respect the boundaries between institutional and non-institutional politics (Hutter, Vliegenthart 2018; Borbath, Hutter 2021).

Contrary to the expectations (see section 2.2.1), there is only a minor presence of social movement organizations among the most active actors. However, given the fragmentation and short-live presence of the Czech global justice movement (Navrátil 2016), this is not surprising. Only four social movement organizations[15] are present among the most active actors. At the same time, 2 of them were previously active in global justice activism; one of them emerged specifically during the austerity policies in 2010, and one of them was established during the COVID-19 pandemic to protest against government restrictions in public areas.

Table 6: Formally organized actors with the highest participation in economic protest

Name	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Type*
CMKOS	87	4.7	trade union confederation
LOK-SCL	56	3.0	trade union federation (doctors)
ČMOS PS	54	2.9	trade union federation (teachers)
CSSD	50	2.7	political party (social democratic)
OS KOVO	34	1.8	trade union federation (steelworkers)
OSZSP CR	33	1.8	trade union federation (healthcare)
KSCM	32	1.7	political party (communist)
CPS	28	1.5	political party (liberal)
ODS	28	1.5	political party (conservative)
Strana zelenych	25	1.3	political party (environmental)
KOVO - Skoda a.s.	20	1.1	trade union organization (automotive)
AF	18	1.0	social movement organization (anarchist)
Obcanske forum	18	1.0	political movement (catch-all)
Hnuti Duha	17	0.9	social movement organization (environmental)
NRZP CR	17	0.9	advocacy group (disabled)
ProAlt	17	0.9	social movement organization (against austerity)
Chcipl PES	15	0.8	social movement organization (against lockdown)
KDU-CSL	15	0.8	political party (Christian Democrats)
SPR-RSC	15	0.8	political party (radical right)
NOS PCR	13	0.7	trade union federation (police)
OS PHGN	12	0.6	trade union federation (miners)

[15] Here the study uses the term of social movements organization as a civil society organization embedded in a wider community of other groups and organizations with distinct collective identity, entering into public conflict with authorities.

Agrarni komora CR	11	0.6	interest group (agrarians)
ASO	11	0.6	trade union confederation
CLK	11	0.6	professional association (doctors)
OS hasicu	11	0.6	trade union federation (firefighters)
SPL CR	11	0.6	professional association (physicians)
SZJ	11	0.6	political party (pensioners)
SCKN	11	0.6	professional association (publishers)
CSK	10	0.5	professional association (dentists)
OS SOO	10	0.5	trade union federation (state employees)
Svaz pacientu CR	10	0.5	advocacy group (patients)

Apart from formal organizations, there is another half of participating subjects – 785 unorganized or unidentified groupings or networks (55% of all actors), typically without formal organizing structure and enduring collective identity, accounting for 1190 single protest occurrences (39% of all occurrences). The hierarchy is clearly dominated by the employees (even when the teachers are coded as a separate category), students, unorganized (or unidentified) activists, and local inhabitants (see Table 7). These account for two-thirds of all protest engagement of informal groupings. However, we see that various social groups got engaged in public economic conflict – not just those affected by the commodification and marketization but also those who typically promote these processes, such as managers, owners, or entrepreneurs.

The role of employees and workers is clearly dominant, accounting for one-fourth of all protest engagement of informal groups. The presence of unorganized employees and workers clearly confirms the trend observed by many (Azzellini, Kraft 2018: 1; Della Porta 2023) that processes of transformation, disintegration, and dualization of labor markets have led to the differentiation of collective action related to the working conditions, safety standards, or pay rise. In the post-socialist context, these trends have been further supported by the rapid decrease of trade union density and their organizational fragmentation caused by its declining political and cultural influence during the transition towards a market economy (Myant, Drahokoupil 2017).

Table 7: Occurrence of informally organized actors participating in the economic protest

sector	*Frequency*	*Percent*
employees	295	24.6
students	183	15.3
unorganized activists	165	13.8
local inhabitants	160	13.4
general public	124	10.4
academia	52	4.3

vulnerable groups	51	4.3
politicians	47	3.9
teachers	45	3.8
entrepreneurs	43	3.6
management	18	1.5
farmers	7	0.6
business	3	0.3
NGO - environmental	2	0.2
political parties	2	0.2
religious organizations	1	0.1
Total	1198	100

To summarize, public engagement in the field of economic contention is represented by a very large number of formally and informally organized groups. In terms of the sheer number of formally and informally organized collective actors, the latter type is more frequent. This is quite surprising, as from standard accounts of political activism or industrial relations studies, we would expect to see a dominant presence of formal organizations that provide activists and participants with stable and robust infrastructure regarding cultural and material mobilization resources. At the same time, this might be the reason why the overall protest activity of formally organized actors is higher (61%) than that of informally organized ones. However, given the differences mentioned above between the loose social groupings and stable organizations, one would expect that formal actors will be much more dominant in the total economic protest activity. Finally, the protest activity of both formally and informally organized actors is distributed in a strictly hierarchical manner: the three most active formally (trade unions, political parties, and professional associations) and informally (employees, students, and unorganized activists) organized sectors account for more than half of all protest participation within the period under study.

6.2 Evolution of actors´ structure and activity

Quite surprisingly, the share of formally and informally organized actors across the whole period of economic protest was quite similar. However, given the changing political-economic context, it is also important to explore its evolution in time: how does the share of formal and informally organized actors evolve in time? Is there, apart from the role of short-term political-economic transformation, any long-term tendency for the institutionalization of informal groupings or their cooptation by formally organized groups, and therefore for the long-term decline of their share of the collective protest? Or is there a constant rise of a variety of informally organized actors across time?

Data does not suggest any clear long-term trends – the counter-movement is not becoming generally institutionalized; a high share of informally coordinated actors keeps entering the field of protest, but no single trajectories occur (see Table 8). The lowest share of informally coordinated actors was during the period of transformation, but it increased after that and, in fact, reached a new maximum during the last period of Populism.

Table 8: Evolution of share of occurrences of formal and informal actors in economic protest

period	*Formal organizations*	*Formal organizations (%)*	*Informally organized*	*Informally organized (%)*	*Total*
11/1989–12/1990	67	49.3	69	50.7	136
01/1991–12/1997	277	77.4	81	22.6	358
01/1998–08/2006	482	58	349	42	831
09/2006–06/2013	604	64.4	334	35.6	938
07/2013–12/2017	173	64.1	97	35.9	270
01/2018–12/2021	250	48.3	268	51.7	518

The evolution of the structure of informally organized activities remained rather stable across all periods. Typically, employees were among the three most active informally organized groups across all periods, most often accompanied by local inhabitants (Revolution, Europeanization, Consolidation, Populism), students (Transformation, Austerity, Consolidation), or unorganized activists (Transformation, Austerity, Populism). The variety of types of informally organized groups was the highest during the period of Austerity, while their

concentration among a few categories of groups was highest during the period of Revolution, Consolidation, and Populism. During four out of six periods (Revolution, Transformation, Europeanization, and Consolidation), the most active social groups were employees and were overtaken by students during the period of Austerity and local inhabitants during the era of Populism. This points to the fragmented, non-inclusive trade union organizing during these periods. While during the Revolution period, trade unions remained still symbolically connected to the power structure of the former regime, and employees were mobilized outside their milieu and across many sectors because of the process of rapid democratization, they remained largely outside the trade union organizing also during the next several periods (even if the share of their protest activities was decreasing in relative terms). Furthermore, analysis of the distribution of their activity across all periods shows that while the periods of Revolution and Transformation both accounted for 10% of their overall protest activity, almost one-third of their activity took place during the period of Europeanization (30%), which mildly declined during the period of Austerity (23%), went back to 10% during the Consolidation and rose again during the Populism (18%). This suggests that we do not see either relative or absolute decline (integration) of engagement of unorganized employees/workers across periods under the study but rather its oscillation across different political-economic contexts.

On average, the actors with the highest protest engagement in the field across all periods were the trade unions (18%), political parties (11%), employees (10%), professional associations (8%), students (6%), local inhabitants and unorganized activists (both 5%). In the first step, the study focuses on the trajectories of the activities of protest actors in time. The least "typical" was the period of the Revolution (see Table 9). Here, the vulnerable groups and environmental NGOs made use of both high levels of societal mobilization and the environmental dimension of the Czech transition to democracy and ranked among the most engaged actors. At the same time, institutional actors who gradually joined anti-regime mobilization, such as trade unions and political parties (especially the newly founded Civic Forum), managed to participate in a high share of protest events. Typically, many NGO sectors (feminism, education, health, economy, development, or transparency) or entrepreneurs were non-existent at the time, so these displayed no protest activity. After the Revolution, the structure of the most engaged actors stabilized, and during the periods of Transformation, Austerity, and Consolidation, their composition remained pretty much similar. During the period of Europeanization and Populism, the general public replaced students and professional associations in their position of the five most active types of actors. During the Populism period, the ranking of the most engaged actors

changed significantly: local inhabitants became the simple most active sector, while students and professional associations decreased their activities.

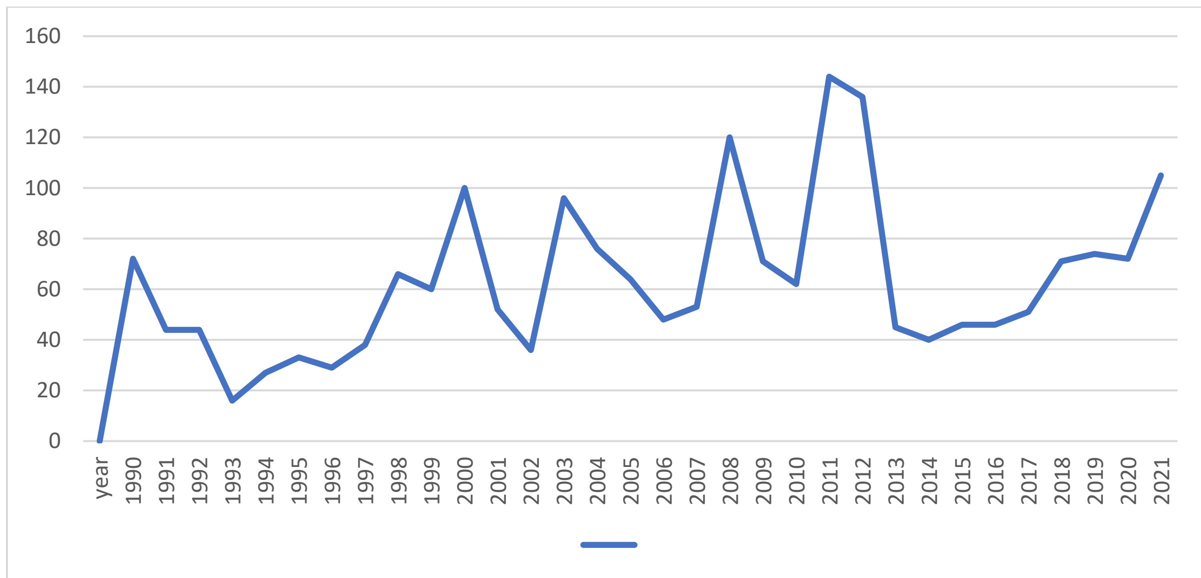
Table 9: Distribution of protest activity within periods of political-economic context

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*	*Total*
trade unions	7%	25%	20%	22%	13%	8%	18%
political parties	19%	27%	6%	10%	9%	10%	11%
employees	22%	8%	11%	7%	10%	10%	10%
professional associations	6%	7%	6%	8%	19%	5%	8%
students	4%	5%	5%	8%	6%	5%	6%
unorganized activists		2%	5%	7%	4%	9%	5%
local inhabitants	7%	1%	5%	3%	5%	12%	5%
general public	2%	1%	7%	3%	3%	5%	4%
vulnerable groups	12%	2%	5%	5%	2%	2%	4%
academia	1%	1%	5%	3%	3%	1%	3%
NGO - environmental	8%	3%	4%	1%	1%	3%	3%
NGO - social services	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%	3%	2%
radical left		4%	4%	1%	0%	1%	2%
NGO - human rights	2%	2%	1%	2%	4%	1%	2%
business		1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	2%
NGO - economy		0%	2%	3%	1%	1%	2%
politicians	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%
teachers	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	2%
entrepreneurs		1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	1%
NGO - education		0%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%
NGO - democracy		1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
NGO - housing	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%
NGO - development		1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
management	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
NGO - anti-vax						4%	1%
NGO - health			1%		1%	2%	1%
NGO - youth	1%		1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
NGO - culture		1%	0%	1%	1%		1%
NGO - transparency			0%	0%	1%	2%	1%
political youth organization		0%	1%	0%	0%		1%
religious organizations		0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%
NGO - ethnic minorities	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%

media	2%	1%				0%	0%
NGO - feminist		1%	0%	0%	0%		0%
public institutions	1%		0%	1%		0%	0%
farmers	1%	1%	1%				0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

There are no simple linear trends that would capture the trajectories of the most engaged actors in the field, as could also be deduced from the Polanyian framework of pendular counter-mobilization against the unleashed forces of economic liberalism, from more specific theories of institutionalization of social movements and political parties (Kriesi 1996) or the theories of labor market dualization and the rise of precariat class of unorganized workers (Standing 2015). This is suggested by the overall number of economic protest events (see Fig. 1) and the protest frequency of specific sectors within pre-determined periods of socio-economic context evolution (Table 9). Generally, analysis of the evolution of engagement of various actor types confirms the need to decompose the whole period into several constellations of political-economic context.

Figure 1: Frequency of the Czech economic protests (1989–2021)



First, one could suggest that the position of trade unions as the key actor in the field of economic protest will be strengthened as trade unions lose their link with the political institutions and get rid of their historical burden. However, while there was a steep rise in the trade union protest activities after the Revolution period, it declined again – both in absolute and relative terms, with the highest protest activity displayed during the era of Transformation (relative to other

actors in the field) and the Austerity period (in absolute numbers). This is clearly related to the worsened political context and the rise of economic threats. Speaking about the multi-level organizational structure of trade unions, the most active ones in all the periods were the trade union federations – as compared to confederations or local branches. This suggests that trade unionist activism is far from instant organic reactions to the perceived worsening of the socio-economic situation on the level of production facilities (factories, institutions) but takes place rather at a higher level of coordination. At the same time, the protest coordination is not cohesive enough for more frequent engagement of confederative structures (this is necessarily the case of building protest alliances – see the next chapters).

Second, we could hypothesize that the role of political parties in the protest will be declining in relation to the institutionalization of parliamentary democracy (e.g., the transition from the period of democratic revolution towards more stable and less politicized economic conflict and possible – relative – differentiation). However, despite some decline during the Europeanisation period, both relative protest engagement and the absolute number of activities of political parties increased again during the Austerity period and (following the massive protest engagement during the periods of Revolution and Transformation) remained on the same level until the end of the period while driven largely by the left-wing parties opposing liberal reforms.

Third, it could be assumed that in relative terms, employees will gradually decrease their protest engagement as they will be incorporated into the trade unionist structures or become formally organized by other advocacy groups. However, in absolute terms, employees multiplied the number of their protest occurrences during the period of Europeanization and Austerity, decreased it during the Consolidation period, and increased it again during Populism. In relative terms, their protest activity declined after the Revolution, but they kept their share of protest activities until the end of the whole period. This might imply that trade unions are capable of integrating employees only in some periods – most notably during the Transformation and Austerity when employees´ protest activity decreases and trade unions become more contentious. At the same time, we might be witnessing the cycle of inclusion of the various employee groups into the trade union organizing with the simultaneous mobilizing of new, still unorganized employees during periods of political closure and economic threats. It seems that both mechanisms are in action here: the shares of relative activities of both actors are strongly negatively correlated, and the absolute numbers of their activities are strongly positively correlated[16].

[16] The Pearson correlation between the shares (%) of activities of trade unions and employees has value of -0.67, and the Pearson correlation between the absolute number of their protest activities has value of 0.79.

Fourth, professional associations could be expected to establish themselves as representatives of certain interests in the new polity, to launch cooperation and communication patterns with the political elites, and thus to become more institutionalized actors with less protest engagement. Alternatively, with severing neoliberal reforms and multiple issue-specific associations (teachers, doctors, firefighters, and others), their protest engagement could be steadily rising since the Transformation period. However, in absolute numbers, the protest engagement of professional associations rose until the Austerity period and steadily declined since then. This development could signal the achievement of – after a longer time than expected – some balanced positions and increased cohabitation[17] with the ruling political elites. In terms of their share of protest engagement, they maintain their relative importance until the era of Consolidation, when they become relatively much more active, and then their share declines again. Therefore, professional associations were increasing their protest activities even during the period of Europeanisation – not just Transformation and Austerity – which could signal their (unsuccessful) seeking of access to different political process arrangements, similar to trade unions.

Finally, the mobilization of students – similarly to that of employees – could be predicted as rising since they became one of the driving forces of the process of democratization, and their role in democratizing society with increasing economic pressures should make them more critical and engaged because of their continuing embeddedness in social stratification structures (Furlong, Cartmel 1997). In accordance with that, both their absolute and relative participation peaked during the Austerity period and declined after that, with a mild rise during the Populism era. This is related dominantly to the rise of economic threats (public education reforms) and political context (change of the main political conflict in the last period, with large engagement of the students).

Even if there is a quite stable constellation of the five most active types of actors in all the periods, there is also a pattern of relative decrease of concentration of protest among the several groups and the relative increase of the activity of new actors such as anti-vax NGOs, transparency NGOs, NGOs active in the area of education or democracy, but also teachers. However, if we look at the distribution of protest activity across various periods from the perspective of specific sectors, some significant disproportionality occurs. The periods with an unusually high share of some sector´s activities are Europeanization, Austerity, and Populism. During the Europeanization period, political youth organizations, radical left, and farmers

[17] The relations between the strategies of advocacy groups in general and the establishment of populist government in Czechia were closely explored by Navrátil and Císař (2023).

organized or co-organized more than 50% of their total number of protest events. This was related both to global justice activism (youth organizations and radical left) and specific public policies (agriculture). In the next period of Austerity, public institutions and NGOs focusing on economy, social policies, and culture performed more than 50% of their total protest attendances, typically in relation to cutbacks in public finances. Finally, in the period of Populism, all activities of anti-vax NGOs took place, but also most of the events were coordinated by transparency NGOs. The reasons are related to the C19 pandemic and the widespread criticism of the prime minister´s clash of interests.

To summarize, formally organized actors were more active than informally organized ones during all the periods of the political-economic context, with the exception of the first and the last periods – the periods with the prevailing conflict over democracy, not the economy. As for the informal actors, the employees, local inhabitants, and students were the most engaged in contentious activities for almost all the periods. Analysis of trajectories of protest attendance of the most engaged sectors suggests that these are not linear, but at the same time, only rarely interact with the changing political-economic context (such as in the case of employees or the general public who decreased their protest engagement in times of increased economic threats and political closure to join the protests of organized actors). In the next step, the analysis will focus on the character and dynamics of actors´ relational strategies, which reveals a more complex picture of economic contention – to understand the power and capacity of collective actors to coordinate collective action (and therefore also to increase its outcomes) requires to understand their relational strategies and structures of cooperation arising from these strategies.

6.3 Actors´ relational strategies

The overview of actors engaged in economic contention revealed a similar share of formally and informally organized groups, and it identified the most active organizations and groupings: trade unions, political parties, professional associations, and employees. However, as collective action is primarily a relational phenomenon, the study proceeds with the identification of their relational strategies on the level of ego networks. There are several ways to detect the relational strategies of collective actors, the simplest one being the number of instances of cooperation. From this perspective, one-third (34%) of formally organized actors did not enter any coalitions with another collective actor when organizing an event, as compared to half (52%) of informally organized groupings that did not cooperate during the organization of an event. This difference makes sense as loosely and informally organized groups (e.g., parents or local citizens) often do not possess the resources or communicating and organizing skills to coordinate more collective actors. The differences between the types of actors are also clear (and statistically significant) in terms of the distribution of ties among actors who were engaged in some coalition. Informally organized groupings had a lower average number of ties and a maximum of 22 ties, as compared to 107 ties for formally organized actors (see Table 10).

Table 10: Degree distribution among formally and informally organized actors

	N	*Mean*	*Maximum*	*Std. Deviation*
formally organized	635	4.49	107	9.59
informally organized	788	1.36	22	2.17
Total	1423	2.75	107	6.79

An overview of the coalitional activity of various sectors reveals more details. On average, the political parties and trade unions are the most active in cooperation with other collective actors (see Table 11). On the other side of the list, there are local inhabitants, NGOs focusing on housing issues, development or transparency, or the general public with chronic problems with access to resources and powerful allies. Quite surprisingly, some of the actors who could be identified as so-called transactional activists (typically new social movement organizations who focus on making coalitions with other organizations or political elites) – such as transparency or development NGOs (e.g., Císař 2008: 10) show a rather low networking activity in the field. On the other hand, there is a significant coalitional activity conducted by other types of transactional NGOs, such as environmental, human rights, or feminist ones, but also by

“materialist” actors (NGOs providing social services or engaged in healthcare, trade unions) suggests that networking strategies of collective actors might also be the function of the field of activism: the more “native” and also active are actors in the field, the better they are positioned do enter various alliances[18].

Table 11: Degree distribution among sectors

sector	*N*	*Min.*	*Max.*	*Mean*	*Std. Dev.*
political parties	66	0	106	9.08	16.38
trade unions	108	0	107	6.99	15.24
radical left	16	0	34	5.81	9.23
NGO - anti-vax	5	0	12	5.40	4.28
professional associations	90	0	26	5.21	6.89
political youth organization	5	1	17	5.00	6.75
media	9	1	7	3.56	1.81
politicians	18	0	8	3.50	2.64
academia	47	0	9	3.49	2.67
religious organizations	11	0	12	3.45	3.50
NGO - environmental	35	0	19	3.14	4.04
NGO - economy	19	0	31	3.05	7.11
vulnerable groups	53	0	39	3.02	8.27
NGO - culture	12	0	10	3.00	3.41
NGO - education	16	0	10	2.56	3.33
NGO - human rights	28	0	10	2.18	2.39
NGO - feminist	6	0	7	2.17	2.56
NGO - democracy	21	0	16	2.14	3.62
employees	217	0	22	2.09	2.82
NGO - social services	37	0	12	1.89	2.46
business	30	0	10	1.80	2.68
NGO - ethnic minorities	11	0	6	1.64	2.06
teachers	34	0	7	1.47	1.69
NGO - health	16	0	5	1.44	1.86
public institutions	8	0	2	1.25	0.89
entrepreneurs	38	0	5	1.18	1.31
management	17	0	5	1.18	1.29
farmers	6	0	6	1.17	2.40
students	109	0	9	1.16	1.71
unorganized activists	90	0	10	1.04	2.09
NGO - youth	12	0	4	1.00	1.65
NGO - development	18	0	7	0.83	1.72
NGO - transparency	6	0	2	0.83	0.75

[18] Correlation between actor´s protest activity and number of their cooperative ties is 0.835 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Even if the two variables obviously are not independent, their relation is very strong.

general public	98	0	8	0.73	1.34
NGO - housing	15	0	2	0.53	0.74
local inhabitants	96	0	9	0.51	1.48
Total	1423	0	107	2.75	6.79

To provide a more detailed account of the relational strategies of collective actors in the field, it is necessary to differentiate between the two logics of tie formation in which they engaged. First, strong, repeated patterns of cooperation are identified: these may stimulate the emotions and feelings of solidarity (social bonds) that drive mutual trust and enhance the coordination of collective action of involved actors. Second, actors may also engage in weak, non-repeated interactions that serve for practical exchanges (or sharing) of information, resources, or skills (transactions) (Baldassari, Diani 2007). While weak ties do not serve to build a cohesive organizational milieu, they serve to spread the information, collective action frames, resources, skills, and expertise necessary for the broader field integration. Finally, the analysis focuses on the extent to which collective actors cross the boundaries of their thematic sector and promote cross-sectional cooperation, which is another essential feature of broader, enduring mobilizations in the field.

Analysis of strong ties (more than three co-occurrences at protest events across the whole period – see the methods and data section) reveals that out of 3208 ties to unique actors, only 62 strong ties (2%) were identified (see Table 12). These were dominantly established by formally organized actors (88%). This is not surprising given the fact that loosely coordinated groups may often lack mechanisms for collective identity formation and, therefore, do not aim to build strong repeated ties with other collective actors. Instead, they seek to achieve specific, immediate goals and make rather short-term, instrumental alliances to meet this goal (e.g., the employees mobilizing against the privatization of the hospitals organized the event with the opposition party not because of political identity but to stop the imminent threat). In terms of sectors, the strong ties were identified as trade unions (29), professional associations (18), vulnerable groups (6), political parties (5), employees (2), and NGO – economy (2). Again, there is a strong tendency of the most active and networking actors to build recurrent patterns of cooperation[19].

Table 12: Strong and weak ties of formally and informally organized groups

[19] Correlation between actor´s protest activity and number of their strong ties is 0.634 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	N	*all ties*	*Actors with no ties*	*No. of strong ties*	*Actors with no strong ties*	*Avg. no. of weak ties*	*Avg. share of weak ties*
formally organized	635	2175	216	60	603	2.88	81.77
informally organized	788	993	409	2	786	1.22	93.04

Analysis of weak ties (1 co-occurrence) at protest events across the whole period) shows that out of 3208 ties to unique actors, 2789 of them (87%) were made only once, which categorizes them as typically non-binding and optional. This reveals that a large share of overall protest cooperation is built on rare, non-repeated contacts, which has far-reaching consequences for the whole field of economic contention: alliances are formed as one-time depending on the specific situation, do not require in-depth negotiations over long-term involvement, minimize the role of overlapping membership among different groups and in return does not generate trust or encompassing collective identity. That said, the non-binding weak ties shall represent a more substantial share of networking strategies of informally organized groupings, which typically deal with the short-term goal (this is also suggested by the generally higher share of actors with no ties at all among informally organized actors). However, this is not indicated by the data – while 47% of informally organized actors engaged in weak ties, this holds for 62% of formally organized groups. Furthermore, informally organized groups have a mean number of weak ties of 1.2, while formally organized, on average, engaged in 2.9 transactions[20].

Comparing different sectors, the highest average absolute number of weak ties belongs to political parties (see Table 13). This documents largely the utilitarian strategies of these actors in the realm of economic protest, which involve joining various groups and organizations but not building sustainable, enduring coalitions. The same applies to NGOs focusing on anti-vax activism but also to the radical left actors: these supported various causes (such as strikes in factories, anti-war protests, or global justice events) if these fit their ideological perspective. On the other hand, the types of actors with the lowest average absolute number of weak ties are local inhabitants, vulnerable groups, and the general public.

Quite surprisingly, the relation between the absolute number of weak ties and protest activity is somewhat stronger[21] than in the case of repetitive – strong – cooperative ties. Thus, while both types of ties were identified as important for the integration of collective action and, therefore, also for coordinating public protests, data suggests that the absolute number of weak

[20] The mean difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

[21] Correlation between actor´s protest activity and absolute number of weak ties is 0.691 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

ties is slightly more closely related to the promotion of contentious activities. However, let us look at the relative share of weak ties with all relations of a specific sector. It is negatively related[22] to the protest activity: the groups with the lowest average share of weak ties within all their relations are the most prominent activists in the field – professional associations and trade unions. This result develops further the previous findings and is specifically illustrative in the case of professional associations and trade unions. Apparently, the large number of weak ties is closely related to the promotion of protest activity but still needs to be combined with stronger bonds, which constitute their closest activist environment. On the other hand, actors who focus on several fields of contention (transparency, feminist or ethnic minorities NGOs) or actors advocating some specific, particular interests in the field of economic contention (farmers, management) often search for their allies outside their categories and rely on instant, instrumental alliances.

Table 13: Distribution of weak ties among sectors

	Number of weak ties			*Share of weak ties*		
sector	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*N*	*Mean (%)*	*Std. Deviation*
political parties	66	6.8	11.1	48	85.4	20.7
NGO - anti-vax	5	5.0	3.5	4	95.8	8.3
radical left	16	4.4	6.6	12	87.1	22.5
political youth organization	5	3.8	4.1	5	92.9	15.8
media	9	3.6	1.8	9	100.0	0.0
trade unions	108	3.4	6.7	79	70.9	37.0
religious organizations	11	3.1	3.5	9	88.9	22.0
politicians	18	3.1	2.0	16	93.4	14.5
academia	47	2.8	2.1	41	90.0	27.5
professional associations	90	2.7	3.3	60	69.4	38.1
NGO - culture	12	2.7	3.5	8	87.5	35.4
NGO - feminist	6	2.2	2.6	5	100.0	0.0
NGO - human rights	28	2.0	2.4	18	93.5	19.1
NGO - education	16	1.9	2.8	10	80.6	27.6
NGO - environmental	35	1.9	2.5	24	76.6	36.6
employees	217	1.9	2.6	129	90.6	25.4
vulnerable groups	53	1.9	4.1	22	91.9	21.2
NGO - economy	19	1.8	2.9	9	88.0	24.7
NGO - democracy	21	1.8	2.8	11	85.6	30.8

[22] Correlation between actor´s protest activity and share of its weak ties is - 0.309 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

NGO - ethnic minorities	11	1.6	2.1	6	100.0	0.0
NGO - social services	37	1.5	1.9	23	87.7	30.2
NGO - health	16	1.3	1.7	8	93.8	17.7
public institutions	8	1.3	0.9	6	100.0	0.0
teachers	34	1.2	1.4	22	89.4	28.0
management	17	1.2	1.3	11	100.0	0.0
farmers	6	1.2	2.4	2	100.0	0.0
entrepreneurs	38	1.1	1.0	25	96.8	11.1
business	30	1.1	1.3	16	81.7	33.8
unorganized activists	90	1.0	2.1	29	100.0	0.0
students	109	0.9	1.4	54	88.6	29.2
NGO - transparency	6	0.8	0.8	4	100.0	0.0
general public	98	0.7	1.3	37	97.3	16.4
NGO - youth	12	0.7	1.4	4	75.0	50.0
NGO - development	18	0.6	0.9	6	88.1	29.2
NGO - housing	15	0.5	0.7	6	100.0	0.0
local inhabitants	96	0.4	1.1	20	91.7	24.1
Total	1423	2.0	4.0	798	87.1	27.9

While it is important to distinguish between strong and weak ties, it is also necessary to examine to what extent these ties cross specific organizational milieus so that broader cross-sectoral coalitions may arise and be broadened and maintained. The crossing of the sector boundaries is thus a key factor for building large, sustainable coalitions and coordinating large-scale mobilizations.

In total, 51% of all collective actors in the field did not experience any cross-sectoral cooperation – but at the same time, 44% of all actors do not have any ties at all. On average, 72% of all ties of collective actors who participated in any protest alliance in the field are cross-sectoral ones, even if the variance of this value is quite high. This points to the generally high degree of heterogeneity of protest ties in the field and also to the great variety of its actors.

Comparison between formally and informally organized actors shows – similarly as in the case of weak ties – that cross-sectoral alliances are, on average, promoted more frequently by the formal organizations, even if the difference is not as large as in the case of weak ties (see Table 14). As previous analysis revealed, informally organized collective actors have a higher average share of weak ties than formal groupings, which relates to their local context-dependent engagement, less explicit and structured political goals, collective identity, or leadership structure. Consistently with Granovetter's thesis on the broader and more far-reaching integrative mechanism of transactions, the informally organized groups also display a

systematically[23] higher share of ties reaching beyond their sector. Even if weak ties do not automatically imply cross-sectoral connections (as they may, e.g., connect geographically or ideologically separated actors from the same sector, such as local trade union organizations), in the case of informally organized actors, these two aspects of protest cooperation are clearly related[24].

Table 14: Number and share of cross-sectoral ties of formally and informally organized groups

	Formally organized			*Informally organized*			*Total*		
	Mean	N	Std. Dev.	Mean	N	Std. Dev.	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
Number of cross-sectoral ties	2.5	635	5.9	1.1	788	1.8	1.7	1423	4.2
Share of cross-sectoral ties	62.9	419	39.2	81.4	379	31.7	71.7	798	37.0

The analysis of the distribution of cross-sectoral ties across various sectors reveals a similar structure as in the case of weak ties (see Table 15). The actors with the highest number of cross-sectoral ties are nearly identical – these are radical left, political youth organizations, political parties, and anti-vax NGOs: all these actors are active in the field, but it is not their main domain of activity (this is typically institutional politics). The lowest absolute number of cross-sectoral ties belongs to NGOs that focus on housing, transparency, public institutions, and local inhabitants. Again, these are nearly identical actors as in the case of weak ties. This is another illustration that the relationship between these two types of cooperation is very close, which again supports the thesis on the importance of weak ties for crossing group boundaries (Baldassari, Diani 2007). At the same time, the cross-sectoral ties seem to be a much stronger predictor of protest activity than the strong and weak ones: the capability of collective actors to cross-sectoral boundaries has a relatively stronger impact on its protest occurrence than the other types of tie formation[25].

Table 15: Distribution of cross-sectoral ties among sectors

[23] The mean difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
[24] QAP correlation between the whole weak-tie network (collapsed into blocks-sectors) and cross-sectoral network (collapsed into blocks-sectors) is 0.967 and is significant at the 0.01 level. The standard correlation between absolute number of actor´s weak ties and its cross-sectoral ties is 0.877 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
[25] Linear regression model estimating the effect of three types of ties on the protest frequency while controlling for in/formality of organization shows higher standardized Beta coefficient for cross-sectoral ties (0.444) than for weak ties (0.172) or strong ties (0.322). Adjusted R square is 0.666 and is significant at the 0.01 level.

	Number of cross-sectoral ties			*Share of cross-sectoral ties*		
sector	*Mean*	*N*	*Std. Dev.*	*Mean*	*N*	*Std. Dev.*
political youth organization	5.0	5	6.7	100.0	5	0.0
NGO - culture	3.0	12	3.4	100.0	8	0.0
NGO - education	2.6	16	3.3	100.0	10	0.0
NGO - feminist	2.2	6	2.6	100.0	5	0.0
NGO - democracy	2.1	21	3.6	100.0	11	0.0
NGO - ethnic minorities	1.6	11	2.1	100.0	6	0.0
teachers	1.5	34	1.7	100.0	22	0.0
management	1.2	17	1.3	100.0	11	0.0
farmers	1.2	6	2.4	100.0	2	0.0
NGO - youth	1.0	12	1.7	100.0	4	0.0
NGO - housing	0.5	15	0.7	100.0	6	0.0
local inhabitants	0.5	96	1.4	97.8	20	7.7
NGO - economy	2.9	19	7.1	95.0	9	10.0
politicians	3.2	18	2.3	95.0	16	13.8
NGO - health	1.3	16	1.7	93.8	8	11.6
general public	0.7	98	1.2	92.9	37	17.3
religious organizations	3.3	11	3.6	91.7	9	17.7
NGO - human rights	2.0	28	2.4	89.8	18	23.7
unorganized activists	1.0	90	2.0	88.8	29	28.0
students	1.1	109	1.7	84.4	54	35.7
business	1.2	30	1.6	83.8	16	29.4
NGO - development	0.7	18	1.7	83.3	6	25.8
radical left	5.1	16	8.7	74.9	12	30.4
entrepreneurs	0.7	38	0.7	72.3	25	38.3
employees	1.4	217	2.2	71.6	129	33.3
NGO - anti-vax	4.2	5	4.5	70.0	4	20.0
NGO - social services	1.5	37	2.3	69.4	23	35.4
vulnerable groups	2.2	53	6.2	65.2	22	40.1
academia	1.6	47	1.8	54.0	41	39.8
political parties	4.9	66	10.8	52.5	48	32.8
NGO - transparency	0.5	6	0.8	50.0	4	57.7
public institutions	0.5	8	0.8	50.0	6	54.8
professional associations	1.7	90	3.1	49.7	60	41.7
trade unions	3.0	108	7.8	45.1	79	36.8
NGO - environmental	1.4	35	2.5	43.2	24	37.1
media	1.1	9	2.4	22.2	9	44.1
Total	1.7	1423	4.2	71.7	798	37.0

Considering the share of cross-sectoral ties, its distribution is more dispersed than in the case of weak ties, as it ranges between 22% and 100%. The sectors with the lowest "inbreeding" rate

of cooperation are those that belong to the most active actors and brokers in the field – trade unions and professional associations, but also those actors that are less active in protest activities, have their main stakes outside the field of economic contention and thus do not need to cross their sectoral boundaries frequently – such as environmental NGOs or media. On the other end of the spectrum – i.e., actors cooperating exclusively with partners from other sectors – are typically post-materialist NGOs with generally high transactional potential but also informally organized groups such as farmers, teachers, or management. This represents a combination of actors with generally lower presence in the field (and thus in need to cooperate with actors from different sectors) and/or representing interests of primary groups that require cooperation with more established and active sectors in the field (such as trade unions or professional associations). Therefore, the motives of collective actors for engaging in cross-sectoral ties are not straightforward and may depend on various strategic considerations.

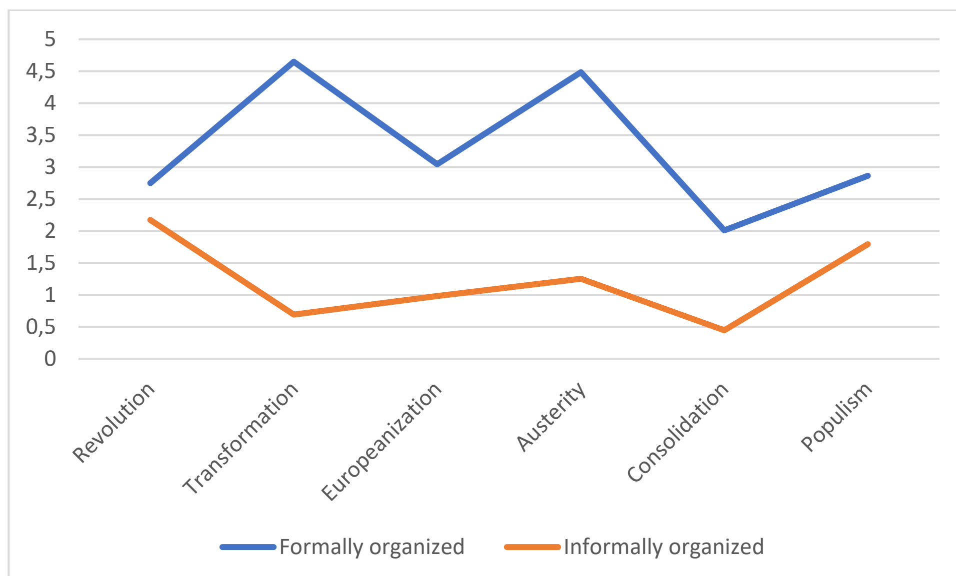
To summarize, the analysis has identified differences in relational strategies of the formally and informally organized actors and various sectors engaged in the field of economic protest. First, on average, formally organized groups are engaged in more coalitions than informal groupings, promote more strong ties, and, on average, promote more weak and cross-sectoral ties. On the other hand, the relative importance (share) of weak and cross-sectoral ties is higher for informally organized actors as these often critically depend on them when following their mission. In terms of simple coalitional activity, the data shows that the most active brokers in the field are political parties, trade unions, and radical left. These sectors also dominate in the promotion of weak ties and cross-sectoral ties. Second, relations between strong, weak, and cross-sectoral ties and protest activity were examined: there is a close relation between the number of cross-sectoral ties and the protest activity – this relation is stronger than the relation between weak or strong ties and protest. In other words, while weak and cross-sectoral ties are closely interrelated, as expected by the theory, the latter are more closely related to the capacity of actors to engage in activities in the field.

6.4. Evolution of actors´ relational strategies

After the overall analysis of actors´ relational strategies using an aggregate picture of protest alliances, we inspect the evolution of these strategies across selected periods and rely on the ego-network perspective again. In the first step, the analysis focuses on the difference between formally and informally organized actors. In the second step, the strong and weak ties are examined. Finally, the exploration of the crossing of sectoral boundaries is conducted.

The previous section showed that the average difference in the number of contacts in protest coalitions is different for formally and informally organized actors – the former has a higher number of these contacts. The longitudinal analysis suggests, however, that there are some similarities and differences among the two groups of actors (see Figure 2). First, a completely different trajectory occurred between the period of Revolution and Transformation: while the number of instances of protest cooperation rose substantially, it decreased for the informally organized. Second, the opposite shifts might be observed between the period of Transformation and Europeanisation. These shifts document that the role of political-economic context differed for these two types of actors, at least in the period of Transformation and Europeanisation. While formally organized actors reflected the closing of political opportunities and quick deregulatory and liberalizing policies by increasing their ties at protest coalitions, the opposite effect could be observed for informally organized actors. This discrepancy was caused by the re-constitution of the informally organized actors in a democratizing polity. While during the Revolution, the academics, students, teachers, or employees from multiple companies and institutions created large coalitions in a mobilized society, they were replaced by the local inhabitants and employees from specific firms, which experienced hardships of economic transition – this time in societal and political isolation. In the next period – Europeanisation – these were replaced by academics, politicians, students, and the public who learned to make protest coalitions in order to succeed with their claims. The period of Europeanisation may be identified as a point of synchronization between formally and informally organized actors. After this, their strategies reflected the changing political and economic context in an identical manner: increasing protest coalitions during the Austerity, its decline during the period of Consolidation, and making ties again during the era of populism.

Figure 2: Degree distribution among formally and informally organized actors



After inspection of broader categories of actor, we turn to more specific organizational sectors and the evolution of their propensity to protest cooperation and its relation to the political-economic context. Generally, there are significant differences among various organizational sectors in terms of the change in protest cooperation across identified constellations of political-economic context. These can be summarized into five broad categories (plus one residual) according to how their strategies change in relation to the context transformation (see Table 16).

The first and the largest category represents the "standard" or expected type of reaction towards the closing political opportunities towards socio-economic demands and mounting economic threat (i.e., during the periods of Transformation and Austerity): rise in the number of their contacts when making protest coalitions to increase their mobilizing and political power. This is clearly visible in the case of NGOs focusing on culture, education, human rights, and ethnic minorities, as well as in the case of political parties, farmers, local inhabitants, and vulnerable groups.

The second largest category of actors is similar and consists of those who did not react to the period of Transformation as a political closure and economic threat (or were not represented there) but perceived the period of Europeanisation and Austerity as well as Populism as a threat and motivation for increasing their networking activities. This category is represented most importantly by trade unions, unorganized activists, political youth organizations (typically left-wing), business groups, and NGOs focusing on the economy and democracy. These actors represent either formally organized actors who are more sensitive to less visible and more grass-root aspects of neoliberal restructuring or informally organized groups directly experiencing

the effects of liberalization of the economy even during center-left governments and after the main phase of economic transition is over.

The third category consists of actors who had high networking activities already during the Revolution phase, so their networking declined during the period of Transformation. Similarly to the first and the second groups, these sectors also perceived the Austerity period as a threat and increased their coalitional activities here. This is a case of informally organized groups such as teachers, employees, the general public, management, and politicians.

The fourth group consists of feminist and housing NGOs and entrepreneurs: their networking activity declined during the Transformation but increased then, which signals either their differential reading of the political context development during the Austerity period or their low embeddedness in the field.

The fifth group is specific and consists of students and academia: their intensive activity during the period of Revolution led to the withdrawal during the Transformation, but then their networking increased during the Europeanization period and declined during the Austerity and Consolidation. This pattern is unique and refers to the instability of the coalitions of the informally and formally organized actors (some of the issues in related to the mobilization of students and academia were also thematized by professional associations and trade unions).

The residual group consists of actors who had completely different strategies than the previous actor groups, which means that their reading of the political-economic context of the field was different. Most importantly, these are professional associations or social services NGOs: their defining feature is a decrease in cooperative ties during periods of Austerity and Populism, which is a highly unusual pattern in the field. This means that these are the actors who were not affected by the austerity policies or political closure – as was the case of many professional associations with constant access to the political process or local development groups without regular contact with nationwide policies. There are also actors with minor stakes in the field, and thus, their networking strategies completely differ – these are typically environmental organizations and youth organizations. Despite their various trajectories, they share one important feature with the previous group – the decrease of networking activities in the field during the period of Populism. This fact suggests that these actors did not recognize the change of a main political conflict as a major threat in relation to their collective identity and goals.

Table 16: Degree distribution among sectors

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*
academia	5.0	2.0	2.9	2.3	1.2	2.0
business		0.8	0.7	2.6	0.7	1.0
vulnerable groups	0.1	2.1	0.6	3.8	0.3	2.9
employees	2.9	0.7	1.7	2.4	0.4	1.7
entrepreneurs		0.5	0.4	0.6	0.8	1.7
farmers	0.0	3.0	0.3			
general public	2.7	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.0	1.1
local inhabitants	0.5	0.6	0.1	0.4	0.0	1.2
management	1.0	0.0	0.4	1.8	1.0	1.7
media	1.7	4.0				7.0
NGO - anti-vax						5.0
NGO - culture		6.3	0.0	2.6	0.0	
NGO - democracy		1.0	1.5	2.7	0.7	1.8
NGO - development		1.0	0.0	0.6	1.0	0.3
NGO - economy		0.0	1.9	1.7	1.0	4.0
NGO - education		1.0	0.0	2.3	0.3	3.0
NGO - environmental	1.2	2.8	2.1	0.9	0.5	0.9
NGO - ethnic minorities	0.0	3.0	0.0	3.0	1.0	1.7
NGO - feminist		5.0	0.0	0.7	1.0	
NGO - health			1.7		0.0	1.5
NGO - housing	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	1.7
NGO - human rights	1.7	3.3	0.7	1.8	0.8	2.0
NGO - social services	0.0	1.0	1.7	1.2	0.7	3.3
NGO - transparency			0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
NGO - youth	0.0		0.3	1.3	1.5	0.0
political parties	5.8	7.1	4.3	5.4	1.2	2.7
political youth organization		0.0	2.3	6.0	2.0	
politicians	4.0	0.0	1.7	2.2	0.0	1.9
professional associations	1.4	2.7	2.8	1.0	3.1	1.8
public institutions	1.0		1.0	1.2		2.0
radical left		4.7	2.6	4.2	2.0	2.0
religious organizations		2.0	1.0	2.8	2.0	7.0
students	2.3	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.4	1.5
teachers	7.0	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.4
trade unions	1.6	1.8	3.1	3.9	0.7	2.2
unorganized activists		0.5	0.7	0.9	0.4	1.4

While the analytical importance of an overall number of instances of protest cooperation is clear, it is also necessary to differentiate between two relational mechanisms that are hidden there – the strong and weak ties. As these entail two different logics of protest networking, the analytical task is to explore their patterns of evolution within a changing political-economic context.

According to this analytical distinction between formally and informally organized actors in the field, there are clear differences not only in the absolute number of strong and weak ties but also in how these were made in various periods. The distribution of strong connections made by formally organized groups is clear as there are not so many of them (see Table 17). Their number increased during the periods of Transformation and Austerity, during the restrictive political context and higher economic threats, but stagnated during the era of Populism, when the logic of conflict changed. The peaks during the period of Transformation and Austerity were given by the rising number of actors who promoted strong ties – it was not a function of an increased engagement of a single "super broker." Informally organized groups engaged only in minimum strong connections, which increased during the period of Europeanisation and Populism. This development refers to the lesser sensitivity of some groups (employees, students, teachers) to nationwide political-economic conditions during the period of Transformation and Austerity.

The total number of weak ties in the field has slightly different dynamics than in the case of strong connections. It rose steadily from the Revolution until the period of Austerity, declined during the Consolidation, and then rose again in the Populist era. However, the dynamics of this evolution differed between formally and informally organized actors. While in the case of formal organizations, the trajectory was identical as in the case of strong ties (increasing number of weak ties during the periods of closed opportunities and heightened economic threats), the informal groupings minimized their protest alliances during the period of Transformation. They started to increase them only within periods of Europeanization, then Austerity and Populism.

Interestingly, weak ties unlike the strong ones) connecting formally and informally organized actors peaked during the Austerity when the broad coalitions were promoted. At the same time, the share of weak ties within all ties is still higher in the case of informally organized actors, even if it is slightly declining towards the end of the period. For formal organizations, the share of weak ties peaks during the Transformation period and then in the Populism era. This complements our finding on the strong ties: while during the political closure and economic threats, the absolute number of weak ties is rising in the case of formally organized actors, these are simultaneously combined with the making of social bonds. In the case of informally

organized actors, after the Austerity period, these seem to combine their weak ties more and more with repeated connections, which, however, still do not qualify for our definition of strong ties.

Table 17: Number of strong and weak ties of formally and informally organized groups

		Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*
Number of actors	*formally organized*	40	128	209	207	104	130
	informally organized	58	65	267	244	83	164
Number of ties	*among formally organized*	74	484	438	524	150	198
	among informally organized	102	10	148	154	16	134
	cross-type	46	68	198	292	38	264
	all ties	222	562	784	970	204	596
No ties (isolates)	*formally organized*	14	35	84	71	50	36
	informally organized	24	45	163	126	60	48
Strong ties	*among formally organized*	0	6	0	26	2	0
	among informally organized	0	0	0	0	0	0
	cross-type	0	0	2	0	0	2
	all ties	0	6	2	26	2	2
Actors with strong ties	*formally organized*	0	3	1	15	2	1
	informally organized	0	0	1	0	0	1
Weak ties	*among formally organized*	62	426	372	388	122	174
	among informally organized	102	10	146	150	14	120
	cross-type	44	66	182	288	38	246
	all ties	208	502	700	826	174	540
Share of weak ties (%)	*formally organized*	84	88	85	74	81	88
	informally organized	100	100	99	97	88	90
	cross-type	96	97	92	99	100	93

Analysis of the distribution of weak ties among various sectors points to a very similar variety of trajectories – as the share of weak ties within all ties is very high. The only differences relate to three sectors: academia, environmental NGOs, and professional associations. In the case of academia, while the average number of ties rose during the period of Austerity, the average number of weak ties decreased. In the case of professional associations, the decrease in the average number of ties during Europeanization was replaced by the growth of weak ties during this period – which suggests an intensive making of new transactions in this period. In the case

of environmental NGOs, these differences were much more extensive: while the average number of ties decreased during Europeanization, Austerity, and Consolidation, the average number of weak ties in the sector decreased during all periods except for the consolidation. This suggests a large divergence from the strategies of other sectors, which may be caused by the simultaneous activity of environmental NGOs in other fields of contention and their neglecting (or suppressing) the specific political-economic context (Císař, Navrátil 2022).
The last important analytical step is the exploration of cross-sectoral ties. The overall dynamics of the share of cross-sectoral ties within all ties of actors in the field confirms the expected role of political-economic context: there are (increasing) peaks during the period of Transformation, Austerity, and Populism, which suggests that closing of political opportunities, and mounting of economic threat (or changing the main conflict type from economy to democracy) leads to more frequent crossing of the sectoral boundaries when coordinating protest coalitions (see Table 18). Again, there is an important difference between formally and informally organized actors. The first and most important one is that during all the periods, the formally organized actors have a higher average number of cross-sectoral ties. However, their share of cross-sectoral ties within all their ties is lower than in the case of informal groupings. This is a function of a generally higher number of protest coalitions of formal organizations in contrast to informal actors. Another difference – similar to the case of the overall number of protest cooperation (see Figure 1) – is a decrease in the average number of cross-sectoral connections in the case of informally organized actors in the Transformation period. However, this level might be a new "normal" for informal groupings that engaged in multiple diverse protest coalitions in the Revolution period (given the initial high overall mobilization of the society and lack of existing mobilizing agencies right after the process of regime change was initiated). This logic also applies to the share of cross-sectoral ties. While formally organized actors and their share of cross-sectoral ties reflect the changing political-economic context from the early days of Transformation, informal groupings experienced a significant rise in the share of cross-sectoral ties only since the period of Austerity.

Table 18: Cross-sectoral ties distribution among formally and informally organized actors

	Avg. number of cross-sectoral ties				*Share of cross-sectoral ties (%)*			
	formally organized		*informally organized*		*formally organized*		*informally organized*	
	Mean	N	Mean	N	*Mean*	*N*	*Mean*	*N*
Revolution	1.4	40	1.3	58	57.0	26	65.7	34
Transformation	2.3	128	0.6	65	52.0	93	89.6	20

Europeanization	1.2	209	0.7	267	49.6	125	75.2	104
Austerity	2.8	207	1.1	244	66.3	136	86.3	118
Consolidation	0.9	104	0.3	83	59.2	54	82.6	23
Populism	2.2	130	1.5	164	75.5	94	88.3	116

Comparison of cross-sectoral coalitions among various sectors reveals substantial diversity (see Table 19). The most typical combination of reactions (i.e., shifts between the two periods) of the actors with available data was a largely absent reaction to the period of Transformation, a decrease in the share of cross-sectoral ties during the period of Europeanization, and its increase during the period of Austerity. However, apart from this basic mechanism, there were various specific strategies.

Generally, we may identify five basic trajectories according to how actors shaped their cross-sectoral ties, which differ across various constellations of political-economic context. The typical – or expected – strategy is associated with trade unions and employees, the core actors in the field. These decrease their cross-sectoral ties during the period of Transformation (after the initial expansion during the Revolution period) and Europeanisation, increase it during Austerity, decrease again during Consolidation, and decrease again during Populism (during which the core actors in the field of economic contention, do not perceive context as threatening).

The second trajectory is similar, with only one exception: actors increased their networking diversity also during the period of Europeanization. This trajectory is associated with other important actors – professional associations and political parties. However, given the multi-sectoral activities of both actors, it is apparent that these perceived the period of Europeanization as an opportunity to broaden their coalitions (for example, conservative parties engaged in broad protest coalitions in some against social-democratic cabinet).

The third trajectory is the least expected yet the most frequent one: these sectors decreased the variety of their protest partners during the Europeanization period but increased it before the period of Populism when they mostly encountered a significant decline. This scenario is associated with NGOs focusing on social services and environmental issues but also with the radical left, vulnerable groups, and entrepreneurs. Again, the explanation lies in the diversity of these actors: while NGOs working in social services, academia, vulnerable groups, and radical left were more sensitive to the neoliberal restructuration through operating on the sub-national (and also sub-political level) or on the transnational level (engagement in the global justice activism), entrepreneurs, developmental and environmental NGOs have their main stakes largely outside the field.

The fourth trajectory is represented by the sectors that experienced a decline in cross-sectoral cooperation during an unusual period – Austerity. This is quite an unusual pattern followed by students, businesses, religious organizations, and public institutions. While the last three sectors may be defined as largely passive actors with an even more considerable distance toward the field than the previous group, the case of the students is different. Their drop is relatively small and is an outcome of the maximal share of cross-sectoral ties during the Transformation (as expected), and only a slight decline of this share during the period of Europeanization (similarly to the previous sectors – relatively high sensitivity of students towards local neoliberal restructuring pushed them to continue with cross-sectoral cooperation even during more favorable conditions on the national level).

The fifth trajectory is residual with mixed data; however, it also contains an interesting trajectory of unorganized activists, which kept their cross-sectoral alliances at maximum over all the periods they were active in but experienced a decline during the period of Populism. This is a rather unexpected result (as this type of actor typically joins other protest sectors), which might be closely related to the COVID-19 pandemic when several media celebrities (musicians, epidemiologists, scientists) started to join public protests over lockdowns and cooperated with each other on some occasions.

Table 19: Share of cross-sectoral ties of formally and informally organized groups

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*
academia	100	50	40	62	67	100
business	100	100	67	54	100	100
vulnerable groups	48	67	42	64	100	95
employees	100	94	65	77	40	89
entrepreneurs		100	33	100	100	71
farmers		100	100			
general public	100		83	100		94
local inhabitants	100	100	100	100		94
management	33		100	100	100	100
media	23	0				100
NGO - anti-vax						70
NGO - culture		100		100		
NGO - democracy		100	100	100	100	100
NGO - development		50		100	100	100

NGO - economy			93	100	100	100
NGO - education		100		100	100	100
NGO - environmental	100	60	45	50	100	42
NGO - ethnic minorities		100		100	100	100
NGO - feminist		100		100	100	
NGO - health			88			100
NGO - housing		100		100	100	100
NGO - human rights	47	54	100	100	100	100
NGO - social services		100	67	70	100	58
NGO - transparency					100	33
NGO - youth			100	100	100	100
political parties	100	32	70	72	24	70
political youth organization			100	100	100	
politicians	50		100	100		88
professional associations	100	33	41	57	30	73
public institutions	60		100	0		100
radical left		100	58	88	100	50
religious organizations		100	100	80	100	100
students	100	100	88	82	100	100
teachers	100	100	100	100	100	100
trade unions	62	55	25	46	24	63
unorganized activists		100	100	100	100	75

Apart from analyzing the overall propensity of various sectors to cooperate with other sectors, it is helpful to check to what extent these sectors tend to diversify[26] their cross-sectoral cooperation and how this changes across different political-economic contexts. Generally, informally organized groups exhibited notably lower diversity of their cross-sectoral partners than formally organized actors, with the only exception being the period of the Revolution. Similarly, as in the case of the average share of cross-sectoral ties, since the period of Transformation, both types of actors experienced shifts in the same direction – the decrease of the heterogeneity of their alter ties during the Europeanization period, its increase in times of Austerity, decrease during the Consolidation and growth during the Populism. The discrepancy between the two trajectories of the period of Revolution and Transformation may be due to their different initial positions (highly diverse coalitions of informally organized actors at the beginning of the democratic transition).

[26] The diversity is measured using Agresti's Index of Qualitative Variation which quantifies the network diversity in terms of the variety of attributes each network contact brings. It indicates the amount of diversity over a number of categories, networks without diversity have a heterogeneity value equal to 0, networks with maximal diversity have a value equal to 1.

A detailed look into the specific sectors reveals a more complex structure. According to expectation, most actors expand the scope of their cross-sectoral partners during periods of decreasing opportunities and increasing threats – Transformation and Austerity (to some extent also Populism). This pattern applies to many, often informally (teachers, vulnerable groups) and formally (trade unions, political parties, professional associations, and NGOs focusing on democracy and social services) actors. NGOs focusing on human rights, employees, radical left, and political youth organizations increased the diversity of their cooperation during the period of Consolidation. They continued to do so during the increased economic threats and closed political space during the Austerity period. Some sectors lacking previous records of cross-sectoral cooperation (NGOs focusing on economy and youth, the general public, politicians, entrepreneurs, and management) increased the diversity of their protest alliances during the Austerity period, as expected, even if their trajectories after this period are different. There are also rather unusual (or unexpected) patterns of dynamics of diversity of cross-sectoral partners in the case of some less engaged actors in the field: collective actors from academia, environmental NGOs, and unorganized activists were the only actors who contracted the diversity of their cooperation during the austerity period.

To summarize, this section highlighted several aspects of the relations between the actors and the political-economic context of the field. Comparison of formally and informally organized actors in terms of the total number of their protest alliances, strong and weak ties, or cross-sectoral connections shows that the actors in the field reflect the context to a varying degree, obviously according to their involvement in the field and their participation and stakes elsewhere. While the core and most active sectors – trade unions, employees – follow theoretical expectations in relation to the role of the context, other most active actors with stakes in different fields – professional associations and political parties – slightly diverge, and strategies of less active and more bifurcated actors are less predictable. Furthermore, it has been illustrated that some sectors with high stakes and involvement in the field tend to react to some political-economic constellations in a slightly different manner than the core sectors. These are typically radical left or vulnerable groups (pensioners, patients, or disabled) who either operate on the grassroots level or have engaged in transnational networks. This enabled them to exhibit higher sensitivity to the continuing neoliberal restructuring despite a more favorable political context and lower economic threats. One example might be the transnational global justice protests during the meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Prague in September 2000 – hosted by the social-democratic government – which many Czech radical

left groups joined. In other words, the limits to the role of the field-specific context are not just bifurcation but also sensitivity to local or latent processes.

7. Relations in the field of economic contention

This section provides an analysis of relations inside the field of economic contention. It starts with the overall structure of protest cooperation over the whole period of the study to capture general features, logic, and actors. In the next step, the analysis focused separately on six networks within defined political-economic constellations. The goal is to compare characteristics of network patterns that are key for understanding the coherence and capacity of collective action coordination: overall cooperation patterns, structure of weak and strong ties, and propensity of actors to make cross-sectoral alliances.

7.1 Overall structure

The whole network of cooperation represents an aggregated and generalized picture of all protest coalitions that took place within the period under study (November 1989 – December 2021) and thus may highlight some aspects of cooperation in the field (enduring overall patterns) and obscure[27] others. The whole network consists of 1423 collective actors, and 625 collective actors are not engaged in any protest coalitions (44%) – these are isolates. There are more informally organized actors within the isolates (65%), which is not surprising given the typically localized protest activities of informally organized groups: their engagement often stems from the non-existence or inactivity of formally organized advocacy organizations, including trade unions. If we compare the share of specific sectors in terms of protest engagement and the number of isolated actors, the actors who have a relatively high share of isolates and a low share of engagement are NGOs focusing on development, youth, the general public, vulnerable groups, or local inhabitants. On the other hand, a relatively low number of isolates, given the protest activity in the field, is typical for politicians, radical left, political parties, and trade unions (only 5% of isolated actors are trade unions).

The structure consists of 741 components (see Table 20), and this is one of the reasons why its degree of centralization is very low (0.06). However, the distribution of ties within the dominant component (including 462 actors) is unequal and centralized as it includes the actors with the largest number of protest cooperation: the major trade union confederation (CMKOS) and three federations (metal workers, doctors, healthcare workers, and teachers), Czech Social-Democratic Party, the Green Party and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (see Figure 3).

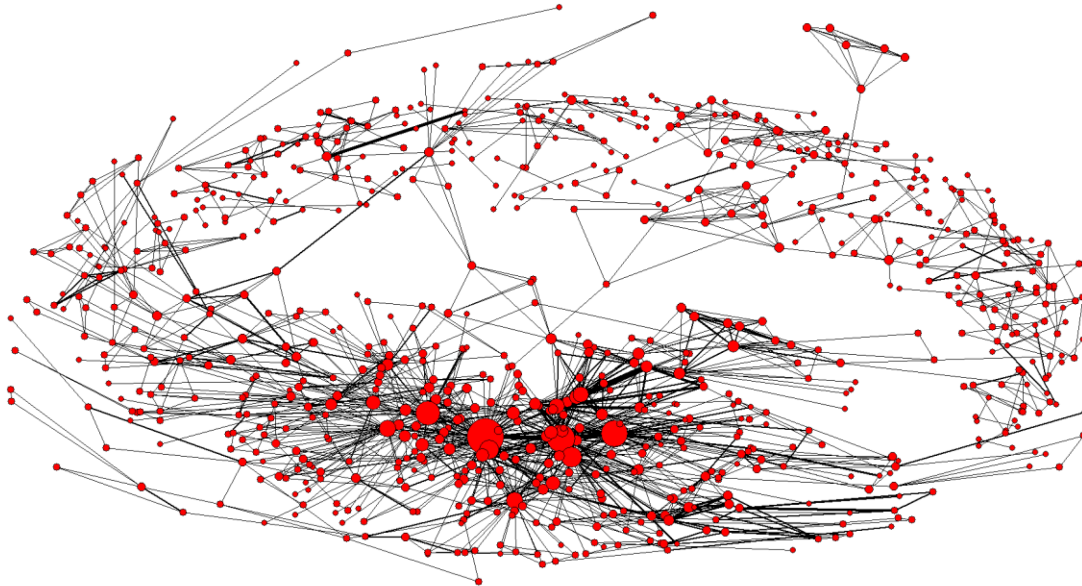
Table 20: Structure of components in protest cooperation network (1989–2021)

component size	*frequency*
462	1
21	1
10	1
9	1
8	1
6	2
5	7
4	7

[27] This type of visualization and analysis obscure differences among various political-economic periods

3	23
2	72
1	625

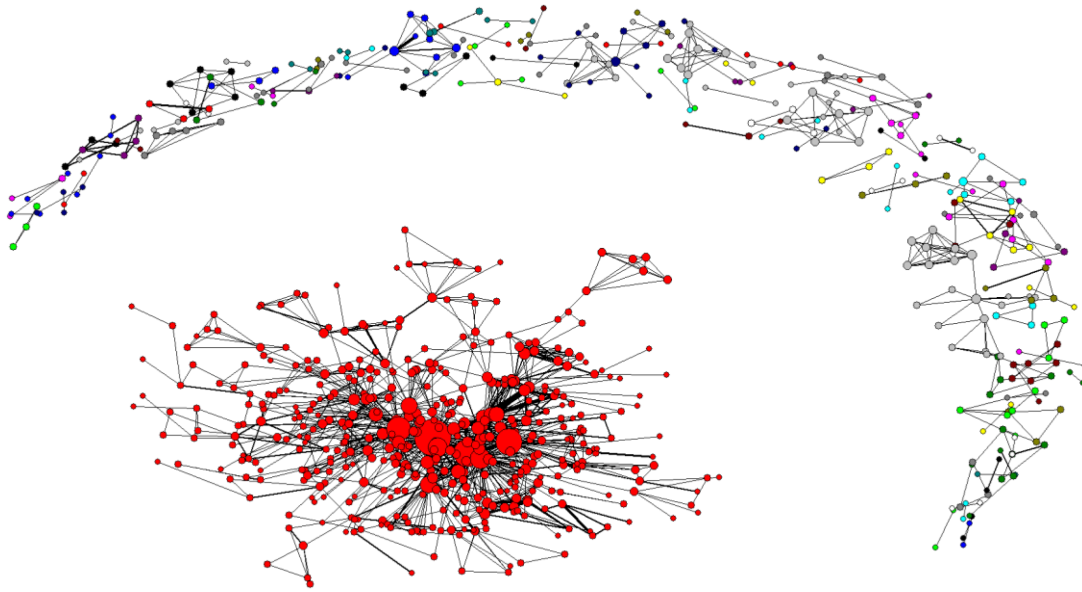
Figure 3: Economic protest cooperation network (1989–2021)



Note: Node denotes collective actor. The strength of ties denotes the frequency of protest coalitions. The size of the node reflects the degree of the actors. Isolates are deleted from the graph.

The second largest component consists of social services NGOs, religious organizations, and various groups of employees, and the third largest component is intra-sectoral and consists of entrepreneurs from various gyms and fitness enterprises that cooperated during protests against pandemic regulations. Generally, we may differentiate between overall coordination activities in the core of the field and its periphery (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Components in economic protest cooperation network (1989–2021)

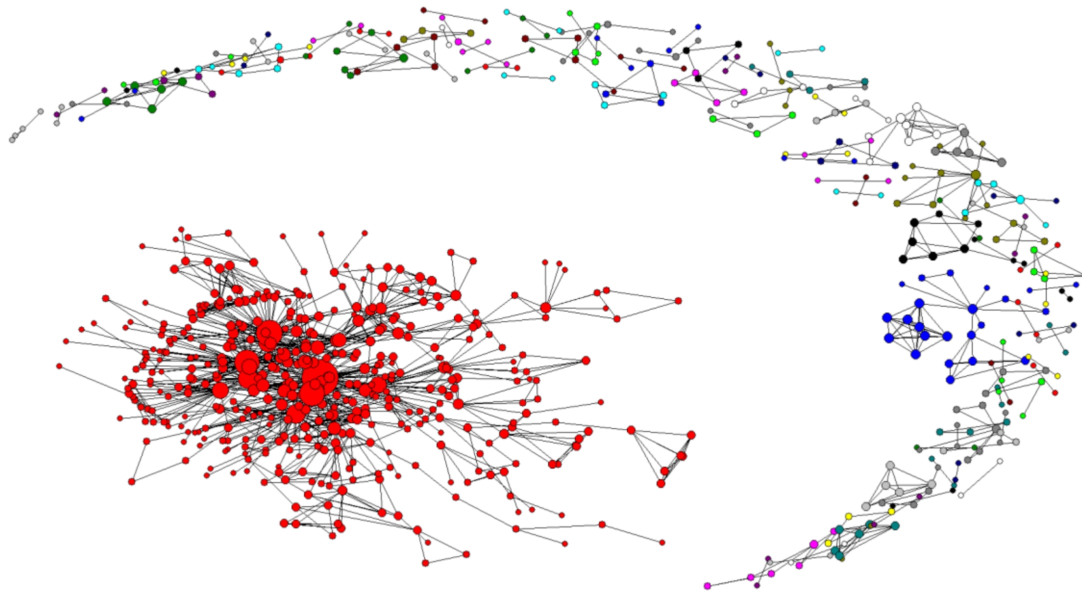


Note: Different node colors denote various weak components. The size of the node reflects the degree of the actors. Isolates are deleted from the graph.

The differentiation between weak and strong ties provides another analytical layer. To what extent are these dispersed across the network, and what actors do they connect? An overall analysis of the whole network illustrates how much protest cooperation in the field builds on single, non-repeated connections (see Figure 5). The network of "weak" ties is very similar to the complete network of cooperation[28] , and the basic structure of the components remains the same: their number increased from 741 only to 778, the size of the largest component dropped from 462 to 429 actors, the number of isolates increased from 625 to 662, and the number of unique ties dropped from 3208 to 2786 ties. This pattern suggests that – from an overall perspective across the whole period – the protest coordination in the field heavily relies on weak ties in both the main cluster of actors and the periphery.

Figure 5: Components of weak protest cooperation ties (1989–2021)

[28] The QAP Pearson correlation between the dichotomized whole cooperation network and the weak-tie cooperation network has value of 0.932 and is significant at the 0.01 level.



Note: Different node colors denote various components. The size of the node reflects the degree of the actors. Isolates are deleted from the graph.

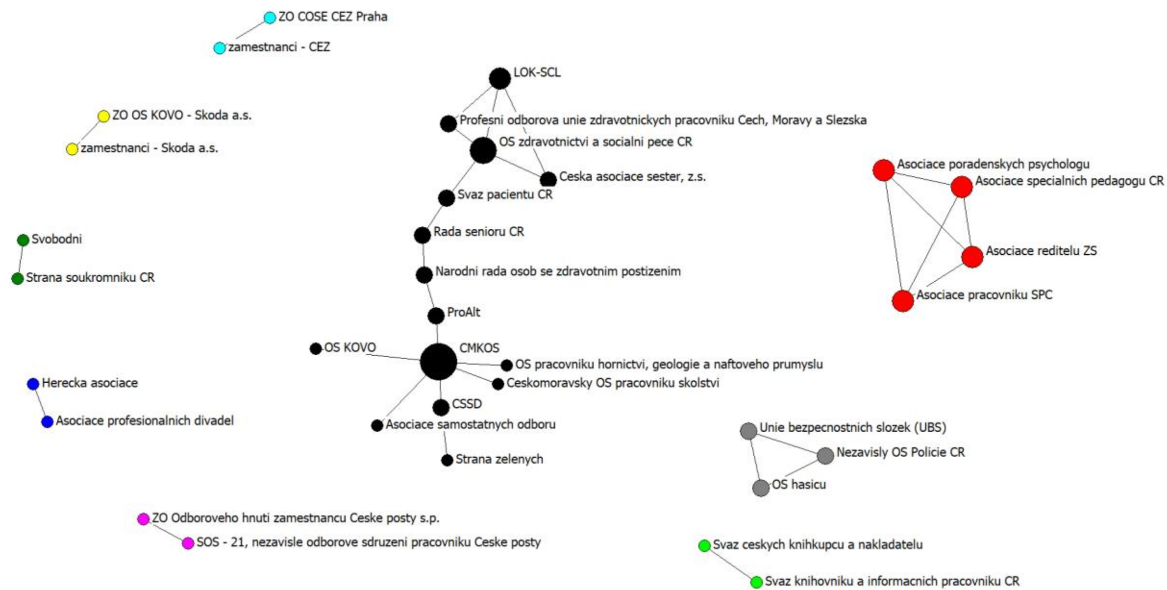
Despite the overall presence of the weak ties, also their distribution is unequal: some actors are passively connected to these just to remain on the periphery of the protest cooperation network (this is the key function of the weak ties – integration of actors over larger distances and contexts), some actors employ weak ties more often and systematically to engage new protest partners, test new alliances and coordinate collective action in new areas of the field. The weakness of ties does not necessarily reduce the frequency of their usage by single actors; on the contrary, centralization (and influence) of collective actors resides in their capacity to simultaneously promote many weak ties (one-off protest coalitions) to coordinate resource exchanges while some of these weak ties may become stronger over time (when mutual trust and solidarity arise from the experience of successful – or, simply, shared – cooperation). At the same time, the advantages of weak ties do not have to be consumed only by promoting many of them to other actors but also by being connected to actors who have many weak connections. In other words, to identify actors with the best capacity to coordinate and utilize weak ties – or the actors with the highest capacity to innovate cooperation patterns, seek and share resources, and coordinate collectively with new actors – the core-periphery model is applied. The model assumes a highly organized core (with many ties within this group) with few other ties among members of the periphery or between members of the core and members of the periphery

(Hanneman, Riddle 2005). The resulting partition[29] identifies 113 core actors (8% of all actors) and 1310 actors belonging to the periphery. Not surprisingly, the most numerous core actors here are political parties, professional associations, employees, and trade unions (accounting for 63% of collective actors in the core group). In relative terms, the highest share of organizations in various sectors belonging to the core actors belongs to farmers, political parties, and NGOs focusing on culture. These are the sectors that are, in relative terms, most engaged in the promotion of weak cooperative ties – actors in these sectors tend to create multiple quasi-random instrumental coalitions to promote their instant policy interests. On the other hand, the following sectors do not have any of their members in the core group of actors: business, entrepreneurs, management, vulnerable groups, public institutions, and NGOs focusing on development, ethnic minorities, transparency, and youth. In general, organizations in these sectors are largely passive in making new ties, become members only of a limited number of coalitions, and do not seek new protest partners.

Compared to weak ties, the strong ones are quite scarce in the overall protest network (see Figure 6). These are separated into ten components: six components consist of two actors, one consists of three actors, one includes four actors, and the largest one consists of fifteen collective actors. Two types of alliances represent the smaller components: first, these are formed by complementary actors (employees and trade unions from the automotive industry, employees and trade unions from the power engineering industry, students with teachers and public) or equivalent actors (two libertarian parties, two public mail trade union organizations, two professional associations from education, four professional associations from education, three trade unions of security services). The largest component is a mixture of equivalence and complementarity: a star-shaped subgraph linked with another nearly star-shaped subgraph through serial connections. The center of the first subgraph is the trade unionist federation in health and social care, which is connected to two professional associations, the trade union federation of doctors and the association of patients. The center of the second subgraph is the CMKOS confederation, which is linked to three federations, another confederation, Social Democrats, and NGOs focusing on the economy and mobilizing against austerity policies. The two subgraphs are linked through the associations of elderly people and the association of disabled people.

Figure 6: Components of strong protest cooperation ties (1989–2021)

[29] Core/Periphery model fit (correlation) is 0.1691.

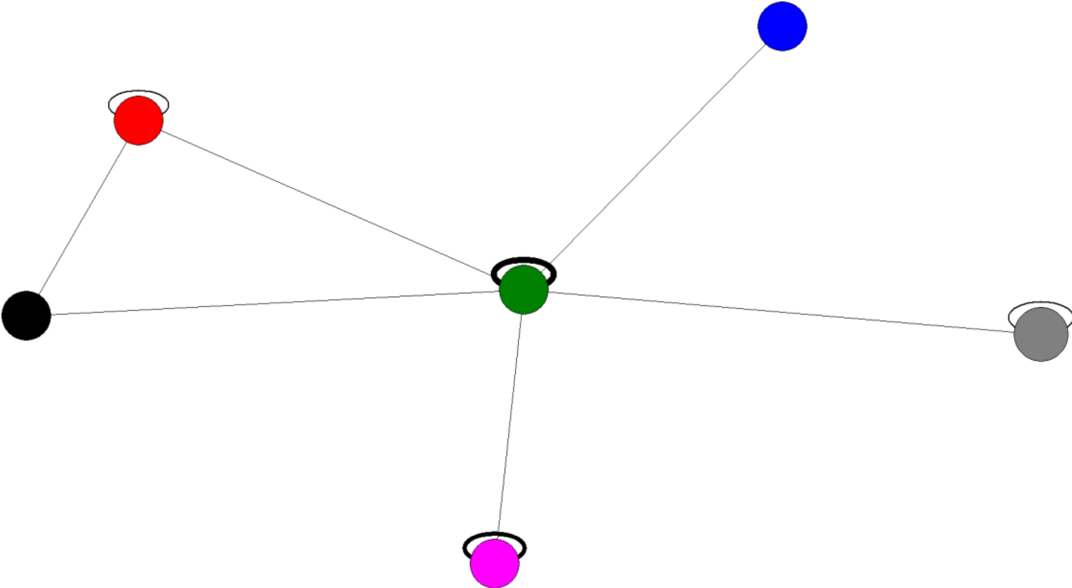


Note: Different node colors denote various components. The size of the node reflects the degree of the actors. Isolates are deleted from the graph.

There are two patterns worth highlighting. Generally, the structure of the actors linked by strong ties suggests the presence of strong thematic embeddedness: healthcare, education, (libertarian) political parties, culture, or public services. This is not surprising as this is where strong ties are expected to emerge because of sharing similar issues and thematic milieu. The only occurrence of strong ties linking more than two sectors arose around the main trade union confederation – CMKOS. This actor succeeded in producing stable patterns of cooperation with federations from various sectors (miners, steelworks, education) and with political parties, other confederations, and civil society actors. Second, contrary to the expectations, strong ties are not created or maintained just between formally organized actors but also between formally and informally organized groups. What we see in the case of this relation (but also in some cases of connections between formal organizations) is a logic of complementarity (or instrumentality) rather than of identity or equivalence (typically two organizations similar in focus and goals, culture/ideology, members). The complementarity here refers not only to the relation between formally and informally organized actors (organizing infrastructure on the one hand and mobilizing groups on the other) but also to position in the field (employees and trade unions, trade unions and professional associations, teachers and students) or sectoral (social services and healthcare). While it has been illustrated that complementarity of roles and functions is a

precursor for alliance building (Diani 2015: 57), it is less common to detect it as a basis for strong connections (typically based on identity and homophily). This finding opens a broader question of the instrumental origins of strong ties and their endurance. Finally, in terms of sectoral division, the segmentation of the strong tie networks becomes even more apparent as it represents a nearly perfect star-shaped graph with trade unions as a central sector and vulnerable groups as the other sector capable of making protest coalitions with more than one sector (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Strong ties among sectors (1989–2021)

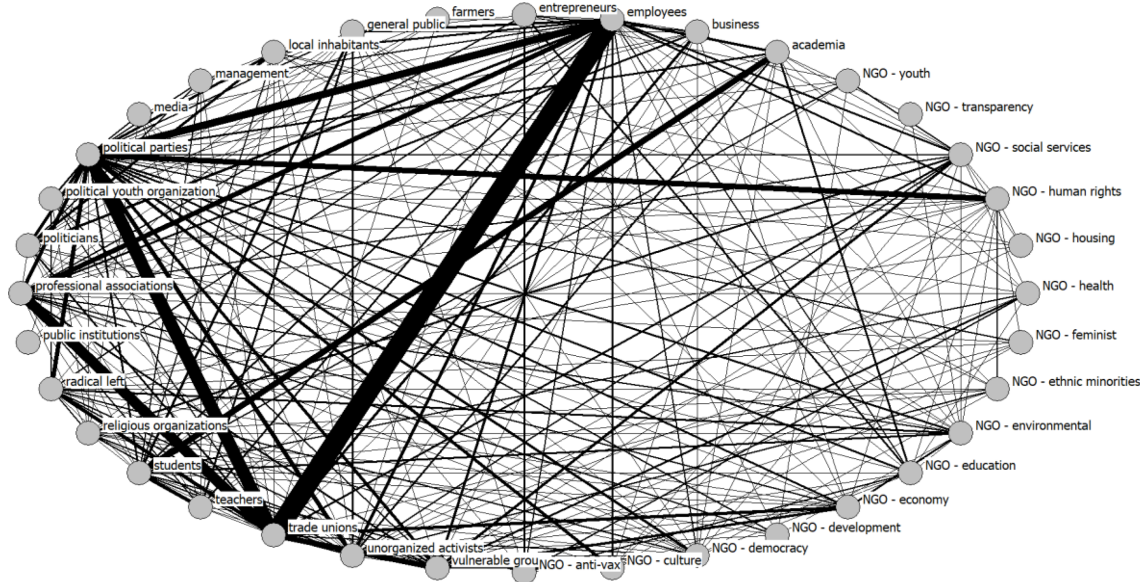


Note: Node denotes a sector. A green node represents trade unions, a red node denotes vulnerable groups, a blue node denotes employees, a black node denotes NGOs focusing on the economy, a grey node denotes political parties, and a violet node denotes professional associations. The strength of loops denotes the frequency of intra-sectoral ties.

After illustrating the distribution of individual actors and their main components in the previous section, the analysis focuses on the relations among specific sectors in the overall network. The previous analysis has identified the most active and most cooperating sectors; however, the patterns of their *mutual* relationships have not been specified. The relational analysis shows the two main triangles of cooperation (see Figure 8). The first one consists of trade unions, employees, and political parties and refers clearly to the cooperation among trade union organizations, unorganized employees, and left-wing political parties (typically Social Democrats). The second triangle is composed of trade unions, employees, and professional

associations (typically represented by associations of doctors and teachers). There are several other overall strong patterns of cooperation, such as between human rights NGOs and political parties, between students and academia, or between NGOs providing social services and trade unions. The overall high density of cross-sectoral cooperation is given, among others, by the ideological or cultural proximity of actors – such as in the case of left-wing political parties and trade unions. However, some patterns of cooperation are based on a more instrumental basis – such as in the case of employees and political parties: here, the usual motivation of the parties is to mobilize (electoral) support through activism in the public sphere. In contrast, employees often distance themselves from ideological affiliation when cooperating with political actors and aim to achieve their specific goals.

Figure 8: Cross-sectoral cooperation – frequencies (1989–1991)

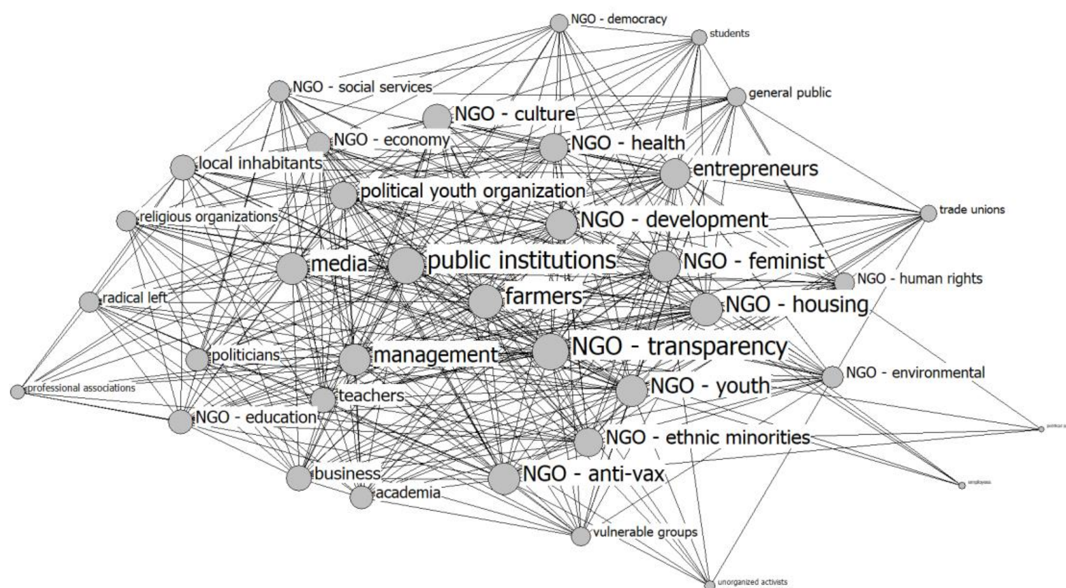


Note: Different nodes represent various sectors. The strength of ties denotes the frequency of ties. The size of the node reflects the degree of the actors.

Another important task for analyzing cross-sectoral cooperation is to identify pairs of actors who only rarely or never cooperate with other sectors (see Figure 9). Despite the high number of isolated actors in the field, there is no isolated sector in the overall network of protest cooperation over the whole period (1989–2021). Consistently with previous findings, we identify the following sectors to be the least cooperative in terms of cross-sectoral alliances and non-cooperating with more than 75% of other sectors represented in the field: NGOs focusing

on transparency, public institutions, farmers, NGOs focusing on housing, development, feminism, and youth. There are two models for low diversity of cross-sectoral cooperation. First, some sectors (collective actors within these sectors, respectively) have very limited goals in the field and low protest activity in general, which also limits the need to coordinate their activities with actors from different sectors. Second, there is a strong[30] relation between the absolute number of intra-sectoral ties and the absolute number of cross-sectoral connections on the sectoral level. Therefore, the propensity for intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation is likely to be driven by very similar motives.

Figure 9: Cross-sectoral non-cooperation – binary (1989–2021)



Note: Different nodes represent various sectors. The ties denote non-existing cooperation among two sectors – nodes. The size of a node represents the sum of absent cooperative ties with other sectors.

While Figure 8 illustrates that there are some more frequent patterns of cooperation than the others, the network (of sectors) consists of only one component (there are no isolates), and most of the sectors are connected (cooperate) with each other, it also obscures some other features of cross-sectoral cooperation. Capturing frequencies of all cooperation ties helps to indicate the *intensity* of protest cooperation. However, it does not capture its diversity well as it is influenced by the varying frequency of cooperation between two actors from two different sectors and does not evaluate the extent of cooperation between all actors from these two sectors. Therefore,

[30] The value of Pearson correlation between the two is 0.856.

after illustrating the most (un-)frequent cooperation patterns, the study opts, first, to capture the density of dichotomized cooperation ties among various sectors to reveal the extent to which the cooperation potential was utilized here. Second, it also aims to capture the intra-sectoral density of dichotomized cooperation ties to compare the differences between their intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The overall density of the cross-sectoral cooperation network is far from perfect – 0.402 (for the binary version of the network) – but is generally very high and points to the high diversity of cross-sectoral protest cooperation. The highest density of cooperation with their sectoral partners is observed in the case of media, anti-vax NGOs, and public institutions (see Table 21). On the other hand, the lowest density of intra-sectoral cooperation is represented by local inhabitants, farmers, management, teachers, political youth organizations, and NGOs focusing on culture, democracy, education, ethnic minorities, feminism, housing, and youth. Inspecting these two lists, it seems that there are several factors behind this partition. First, actors with high internal diversity of cooperation are dominantly those who have a minor relative presence in the field as these have higher stakes in other parallel arenas (anti-vax actors, media). Therefore, thematic isolation (and the relatively small sizes of these sectors) may contribute to stronger intra-sectoral cooperation when selecting protest partners. This is also related to the correlation between absolute numbers of protest occurrences and intra-sectoral connections: actors who barely participate in the field of economic contention have a very low propensity to promote intra-sectoral ties[31]. However, there are also exceptions. For example, a protest of media outlets early in the Transformation period (1991) was an example of rare but cohesive intra-sectoral cooperation. Second, sectors populated typically with informally organized groups (students, employees, vulnerable groups) are in a worse position for intra-sectoral alliances as their members are less visible, more geographically dispersed, and less reliable to each other: their activities are usually less enduring and predictable, they do not have organizing history, formulated goals or many resources.

Table 21: Diversity of intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation (1989–2021)

	intra-sectoral ties (binary)	*intra-sectoral density*	*cross-sectoral ties (binary)*	*cross-sectoral density*	*intra-sectoral to cross-sectoral ties ratio*
media	22	0.306	10	0.786	2.200

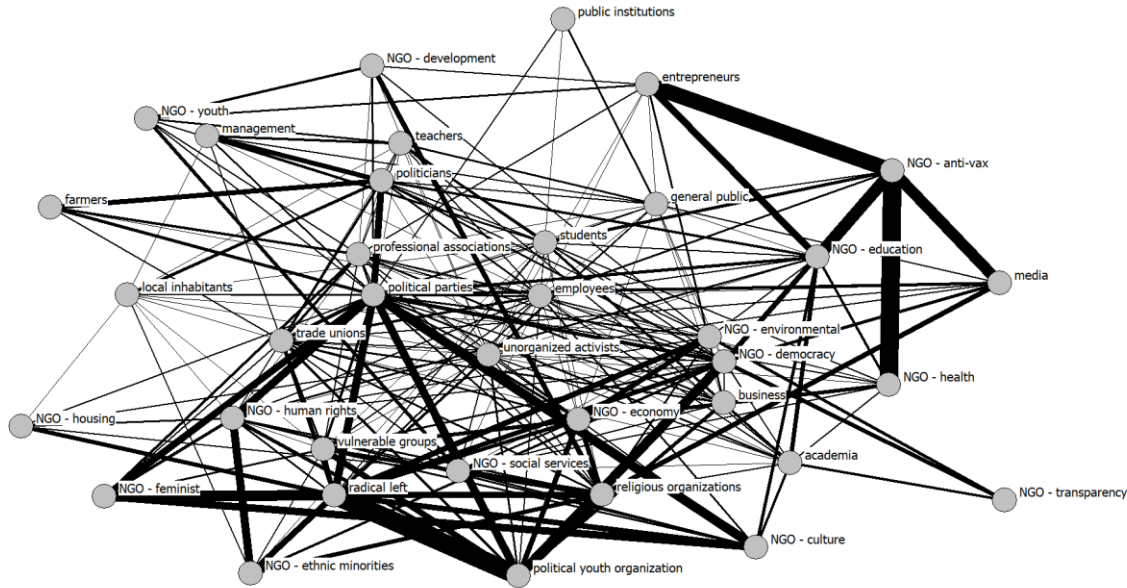
[31] The Peason correlation between sector´s protest occurrences and the number of its intra-sectoral ties is 0.713 and is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

professional associations	196	0.024	124	0.510	1.581
public institutions	6	0.107	4	1.000	1.500
academia	76	0.035	66	0.629	1.152
NGO - environmental	46	0.039	42	0.542	1.095
trade unions	244	0.021	247	0.548	0.988
political parties	216	0.050	295	0.415	0.732
NGO - transparency	2	0.067	3	0.667	0.667
entrepreneurs	16	0.011	27	0.556	0.593
employees	146	0.003	282	0.446	0.518
business	12	0.014	31	0.756	0.387
NGO - social services	16	0.012	46	0.592	0.348
vulnerable groups	28	0.010	93	0.632	0.301
NGO - anti-vax	6	0.300	20	0.643	0.300
NGO - development	2	0.007	10	0.667	0.200
radical left	10	0.042	71	0.610	0.141
NGO - human rights	6	0.008	53	0.575	0.113
NGO - health	2	0.008	20	0.756	0.100
students	10	0.001	101	0.524	0.099
unorganized activists	8	0.001	86	0.484	0.093
general public	6	0.001	65	0.503	0.092
religious organizations	2	0.018	34	0.647	0.059
NGO - economy	2	0.006	41	0.802	0.049
local inhabitants	2	0.000	43	0.641	0.047
politicians	2	0.007	56	0.686	0.036
farmers	0	0.000	7	1.000	0.000
management	0	0.000	20	0.929	0.000
NGO - culture	0	0.000	34	0.733	0.000
NGO - democracy	0	0.000	41	0.532	0.000
NGO - education	0	0.000	36	0.615	0.000
NGO - ethnic minorities	0	0.000	18	0.800	0.000
NGO - feminist	0	0.000	13	0.810	0.000
NGO - housing	0	0.000	8	0.800	0.000
NGO - youth	0	0.000	10	0.571	0.000
political youth organization	0	0.000	22	0.891	0.000
teachers	0	0.000	45	0.731	0.000

On the other hand, we are also interested in different aspects of the diversity of ties among specific sectors: first, what sectors promote the most frequent cross-sectoral alliances in relation to their size? Second, which sectors have the highest preference for intra-sectoral over cross-sectoral cooperation? Third, do preferences for intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation represent contradicting principles for some sectors?

To answer the first question means to explore to what extent mutual relations between sectors are dense and inclusive for sector members. Inspecting the relative densities among the sectors in the field, we identify six highly cohesive cooperation patterns inside the field (see Figure 10). The first one consists of a cluster around anti-vax NGOs, which connect with the media, NGOs focusing on education and health, and entrepreneurs. Since this is a star-shaped graph, the strength of ties here is related mainly to the small size and activity of the anti-vax sector towards other sectors. Next cohesive patterns of cooperation are based mainly on ideological/political proximity: it is the connection between the feminist NGOs and the radical left, and between the radical left and the political youth organizations, between political youth organizations and religious organizations, between political youth and NGOs focusing on democracy, and fairly dense connections is also between political parties and NGOs in culture.

Figure 10: Density of cross-sectoral cooperation – sector level (1989–2021)



Note: Different nodes represent various sectors. The strength of ties denotes the density of inter-sectoral ties. Density is calculated based on a dichotomized network.

Second, there is another aspect of the relation between the diversity of intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation, which is worth exploring – the ratio between intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral ties. Here, we may identify sectors with the highest and lowest ratios between intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral ties. This indicates the propensity of specific sectors to *relatively* prefer cooperation with their sector or with external actors. Actors who prefer intra-sectoral

cooperation over cross-sectoral cooperation are less numerous: media, professional associations, public institutions, academia, and environmental NGOs. Except for professional associations, these are less thematically engaged sectors in the field of economic contention. On the other hand, sectors with no intra-sectoral ties but a relatively high number of cross-sectoral ties are farmers, management, political youth organizations, feminists, ethnic minorities, housing and culture-oriented NGOs, and teachers. These are actors typically embedded in their local environment, which prevents them from cooperating with their sector (teachers, farmers, management of local hospitals or theatres) or actors with major stakes outside the field.

After identifying the most cohesive inter-sectoral alliances and the most diverse intra-sectoral vs. cross-sectoral cooperation, the focus is now on the relation between the intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral protest cooperation on the level of specific sectors. As the intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral diversity of cooperation represents different aspects of protest coordination, the study differentiates among four types of actors here: *universal brokers* (relatively high intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation), *sectoral brokers* (relatively high intra-sectoral and low cross-sectoral cooperation), *converters* (relatively low intra-sectoral and high cross-sectoral cooperation) and *isolationists* (relatively low intra sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation) (see Table 22).

Table 22: Four types of protest cooperation diversity on the sector level

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">Diversity of cross-sectoral ties</td></tr>
<tr><td>low</td><td>high</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Diversity of intra-sectoral ties</td><td>low</td><td>isolationists</td><td>converters</td></tr>
<tr><td>high</td><td>sectoral brokers</td><td>universal brokers</td></tr>
</table>

The sectors that are closest to the isolationist mode are NGOs focusing on democracy, employees, students, the general public, and unorganized activists: sectors thematically not very distant from the field and consisting largely of grass-root, often informally organized, and locally segregated social groupings which prevents them from making alliances within or

without their milieu. Furthermore, characteristics that prevent their collective action from more frequent alliances are weak organizational identity and low resources to organize protests.

The sectors that are closest to the converting mode are farmers, management, political youth organizations, and NGOs focusing on feminism, ethnic minorities, and housing: these actors are also not thematically very distant towards the socio-economic issues, but they get engaged in the field very selectively as they defend particular social interests of narrow social groups, so they tend (or, are forced to) to make coalitions outside their sector rather than within it.

The mode of sectoral broker might be associated with trade unions, professional associations, environmental NGOs, and political parties. These sectors represent collective actors who are thematically domesticated and engaged in the field, or their sector was – at least for some period – highly active here, so their primary efforts to achieve their goals is to coordinate with the same actor types, without urging necessity to extend their ties – at least in relative terms – much outside the sector as the others. This is enabled by their large ideological homogeneity (or frequent leftist identity in the case of political parties) on the one hand and by their resources (access to political institutions, media, organizing skills, expertise), which contribute to the intra-sectoral exchanges, on the other.

Finally, the universal brokers might be identified in the sectors of public institutions and media: these are small and distinct sectors most detached from the field with quite rare engagement, which makes them cooperate both with the same actor types and also with other sectors to achieve their goals (such as public hospitals or publishing houses cooperating with trade unions).

These four different modes of protest alliance formation on the sector level suggest that several factors are in play when driving the propensity of collective actors to cross intra-sectoral or cross-sectoral organizational boundaries – thematic focus, resources, inclusive collective identity, and geographical dispersion.

To summarize, the first step in the relational analysis focused on the overall structure of the protest cooperation network across the whole period to provide a basic (and to some extent also distorted) layout before the longitudinal analysis. The whole network is highly fragmented as it contains a high number of completely isolated actors but also many disconnected components. However, there is also one very large component, which consists of the key actors in the field. The network of cooperation consists dominantly of weak ties: this suggests that, in general, the prevailing coordination of collective action in the field is rather instrumental; actors are searching for new allies and quit the previous alliances. The strong ties are very limited in the network and are usually formed between complementary rather than equivalent actors. This

may further contribute to the instrumentalization of the strong ties. The analysis of cross-sectoral and intra-sectoral cooperation revealed several patterns. In absolute numbers, parties, trade unions, and professional associations prevail in terms of the intensity of cross-sectoral protest cooperation; however, their cooperation is largely concentrated on very few sectors, and their intra-sectoral connections dominate over the cross-sectoral ties. To capture the diversity of intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation – i.e., the capacity to promote coalitions with diverse actors and thus broaden the cooperative patterns within the field of economic contention – a density of dichotomized ties was explored. In general, we may differentiate among four types of sectors/collective actors depending on the extent to which they combine high and low diversity of intra- and cross-sectoral protest coalitions.

7.2 Whole network patterns

After the relational analysis of the whole period under study, we turn to the longitudinal perspective to assess the effect of political-economic context on the relational strategies of collective actors in the field of economic contention. The number of nodes in six networks of protest cooperation oscillates between 98 in the Revolution period and 476 during the Europeanization, and the average number of isolates is 126. The moment of transition and democratization saw a relatively high number of actors in relation to a number of events, and this ratio decreased in subsequent periods. The number of ties is the lowest during the initial period and highest during the Austerity (see Table 23).

First, we aim to analyze the overall relational patterns in six cooperation networks. The share of isolated nodes indicates what proportion of all actors participating in protest events in a given period did not join any alliance. According to expectations, the relative number of isolates rises during periods of opening political opportunities and declining economic threats: actors more often seek to defend their causes and do not combine their resources with their partners as often as they do when they feel threatened. It seems that the largest effect was the era of Populism, which changed the main conflict (but also with the significant decline of the activity of the core actors in the field). All the networks keep significant fragmentation in terms of the number of components – its number is lowest during the period of Revolution (dramatic and broad social change weakened sectoral and ideological identities) and highest during the Europeanization period (declining threats of economic transformation and political opening with constant everyday neoliberal restructuring led to growing fragmentation of economic contention). If we standardize the number of components to the number of actors (component ratio), the mechanism of political-economic context clearly manifests itself again: the relative number of isolated clusters of actors decreases during the periods of Transformation, Austerity, and Populism. The level of fragmentation is also related to the size of the largest components: large coalitions crossing sectoral and ideological boundaries are expected to emerge during the period of heightened threat, which is the Austerity period. However, the size of the large fragment also rose during the period of Europeanization (here, the oppositional largest right-wing party succeeded in coordinating with employees in cultural institutions and brokered new connections with the main trade unionist network). Another measure of the fragmentation of cooperation networks is the share of pairs that are not connected – directly or indirectly. Again, there is a clear pattern of increasing isolation of actors in the cooperation network during periods of open opportunities and low threats, and it decreases in opposite situations.

Apart from the multiplicity of cooperation patterns, we are also interested in the overall rise of coalitional activities. To start with, the overall quantity of cooperation – density of cooperation networks – declined rapidly after the initial period, which – together with the rising number of collective actors – indicates overall differentiation of the network. This trend stopped during the period of Austerity when existing actors started to increase the diversity of their protest coalitions and increase the density of the whole network. Another overall increase of the cooperation diversity took place during the period of Populism. One of the important node-level indicators of coalitional activity is the average number of cooperative ties per actor (average degree). On average, the most active were members of the field during the Transformation period, and the peaks in coalitional activity also occurred during the Austerity and Populism periods. Also, the average number of ties per single protest event demonstrates that peaks occur during periods of political closure and economic threats or in times of heightened political conflict.

Third, one of the important aspects of cooperation networks is their concentration and centralization, which are crucial for resource and information sharing while indicating the presence of central actors in the field. Here, we look at the overall inequality in the distribution of cooperative ties expressed as degree centralization (Hanneman, Riddle 2005). Its value is generally rather low (the highest value is 21% during the initial Revolution period as the role of central civic initiatives was quite strong) but also has higher levels during the periods with closing opportunities (Transformation, Austerity). This means that in times of threats and heightened conflict, the coalitional activity does not emerge spontaneously from all actors in the field but rather is imposed by the core players. This mechanism is further confirmed by the evolution of a relative number of highly cooperating actors (H-index), which also reflects the political-economic context (increases during the periods of Transformation, Austerity, and Populism). The highest peak occurred during the Austerity period, which suggests that the rise in average degree was caused by the activation of the key brokers rather than by the overall increase in the coalitional activity of all actors in the field during the Transformation period. This finding is consistent with the overall centralization of the network in times of economic threat and closing political opportunities.

Table 23: Network metrics of protest cooperation

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*	*average*
# of events	98	193	476	451	187	294	283.2
# of actors	98	192	444	405	184	235	259.7
# of actors per event	1.00	0.99	0.93	0.90	0.98	0.80	0.9
# of ties	222	562	784	970	204	596	556.3
# of ties per event	2.27	2.91	1.65	2.15	1.09	2.03	2.0
# of isolates	38	80	247	197	110	84	126.0
% isolates/nodes	39	42	56	49	60	36	46.7
# of components	50	96	285	238	135	129	155.5
Largest Component	27	63	110	128	13	38	63.2
Component Ratio	0.51	0.49	0.60	0.53	0.72	0.44	0.5
Fragmentation	0.92	0.89	0.94	0.92	0.99	0.97	0.9
Density	0.023	0.015	0.003	0.005	0.006	0.007	0.010
Avg Degree	2.27	2.91	1.65	2.15	1.09	2.03	2.0
Deg Centralization	0.21	0.12	0.06	0.08	0.06	0.04	0.1
Indeg H-Index	7	10	9	13	8	8	9.2

In the next step, we focus on the analysis of the components in the networks in order to identify central actors (see Table 24). In all periods, the main component of cooperation may be easily identified. We focus on its composition in terms of key sectors and specific groups.

The main component of the Revolution period is defined by the rapid and broad process of democratization combined with a lack of formally organized collective actors, which would represent new socio-economic claims. It has a hierarchical structure and consists of 12 informally organized actors (44% of the component) – these are mostly employees, students, teachers, and local inhabitants. The most central actor is the Civic Forum (*Obcanske forum*), a broad political movement/party emerging during the transition from a socialist regime and representing political and civic opposition in negotiations with the ruling Communist Party. In terms of sectors, the most represented are political parties, politicians, and environmental NGOs.

The main component in the Transformation period represents the first rapid economic liberalization and deregulation period combined with rising organized opposition to these processes and their impacts. It is larger and less hierarchical than the previous one and contains only ten informally organized actors (16% of the component) (mostly employees, students, and farmers). The most central actor is again a political party – this time (oppositional) Social

Democrats. The component has two cores, which are connected through CMKOS (major trade union confederation). The first core is organized around Social Democrats, and the dominant actors in this core are ideologically quite divergent political parties – socialist, communist, populist right, regional, agrarian, conservative, nationalist, or green. The other – smaller – core consists of a firmly interconnected cluster of trade unions and professional associations in health care and social care, including employees in the healthcare sector.

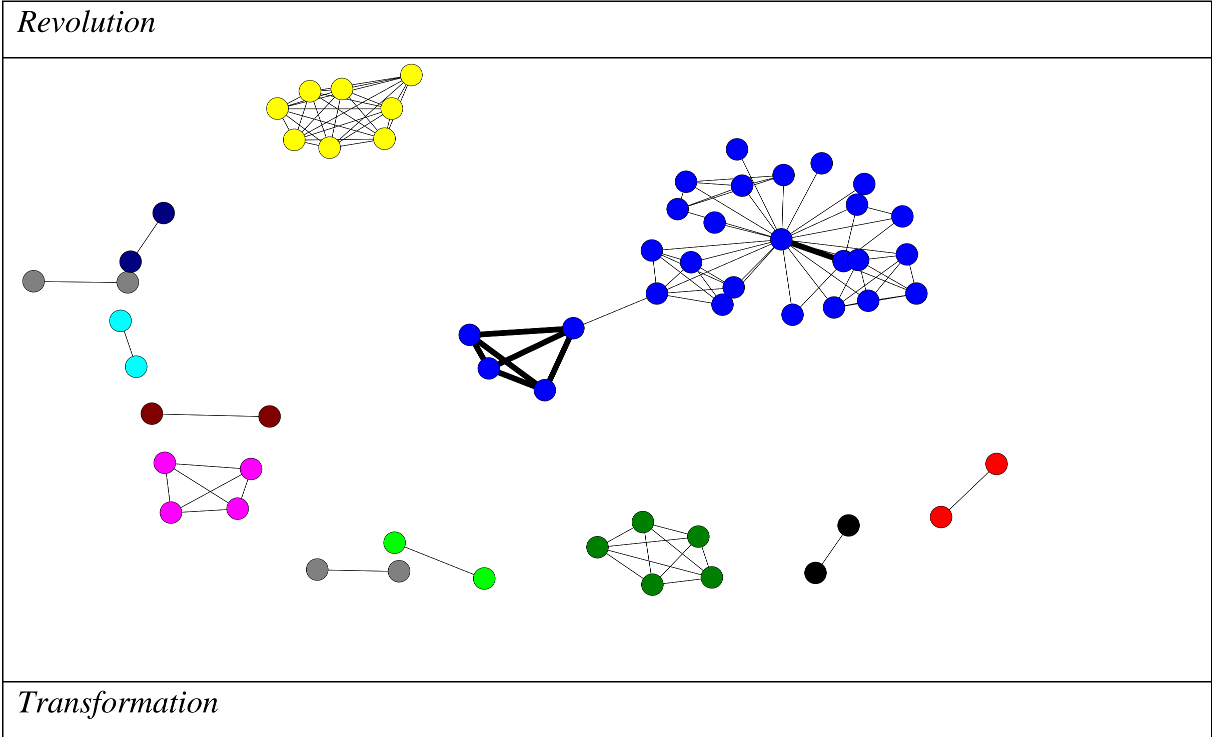
The main component of the Europeanization period reflects the interruption of nationwide economic liberalization policies during the centra-left governments while the processes of broader neoliberal transition on everyday and enterprise levels were already underway. It has a looser and more decentralized structure than the previous one, with formally organized actors occupying the most important positions and numerous peripheral informally organized actors (40% of the component). On the one hand, there is a considerable strong interlinking of trade unions with the most active broker in the period – steelworkers trade unions (OS KOVO) – connected to two major confederations and federations (railway, agrarian, mining). Political parties are less connected than in the previous period but still play important roles as brokers of important connections to more distant actors: Social Democrats are linked to academia and universities, and liberal-conservative Civic Democrats are linked to the cultural sphere. The third – rather independent – cluster of cooperating actors is organized around the Anarchist Federation and emerges in relation to global justice protests.

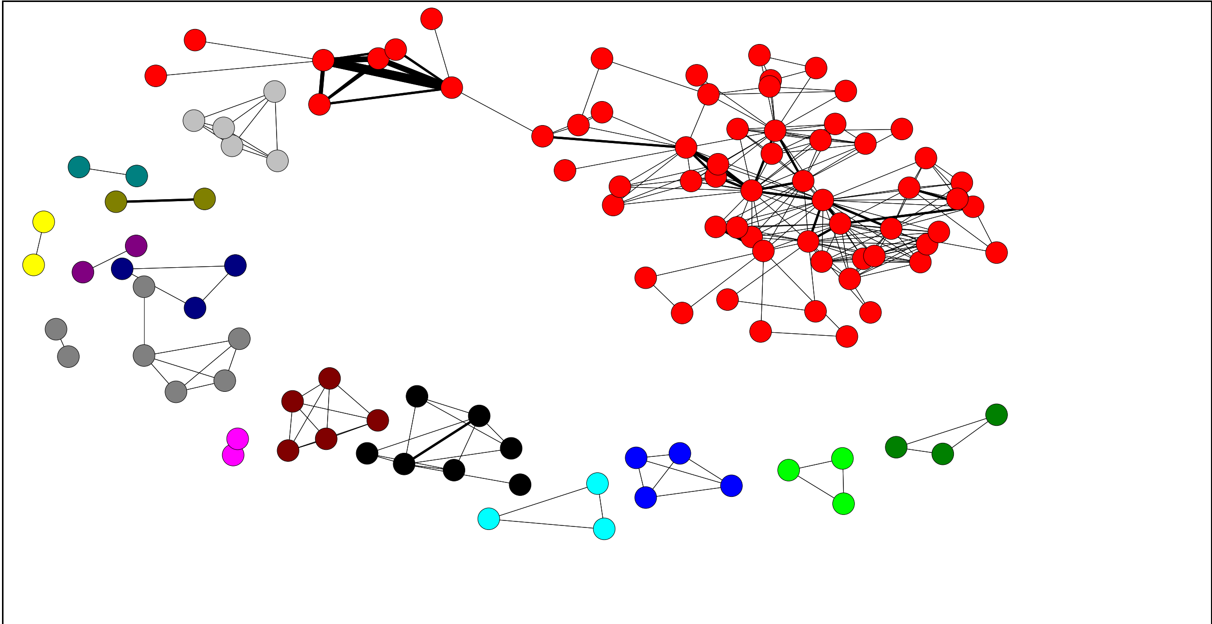
The main component during the Austerity period mirrors the extensive and enduring cutbacks in public expenditures and strict fiscal-balance-oriented policies, which had an enormous impact on the whole society. It is the largest out of all periods of the study and is quite centralized. The informally organized actors constitute 37% of its members, while formal organizations dominate as key brokers. It has four cores: the central one, integrated by recurrent cooperative ties and interconnecting the other cores, is dominated by the CMKOS and Social Democrats and consists largely of trade union federations, employees, and anti-austerity NGOs; one core consisting of students, teachers, and the general public; one consisting of green, cultural and academic networks; and one containing social service NGOs and employees.

The main component during the Consolidation period is shaped by the general return to social dialogue and reconciliation and a more consensual and less ideological settlement of public conflicts over economic and welfare policies. It is dramatically smaller than any other before and contains only one informally organized actor (8%), which is on its periphery. At the same time, the component is not hierarchical and is very densely connected, populated mainly by the professional associations in education and only two trade union federations.

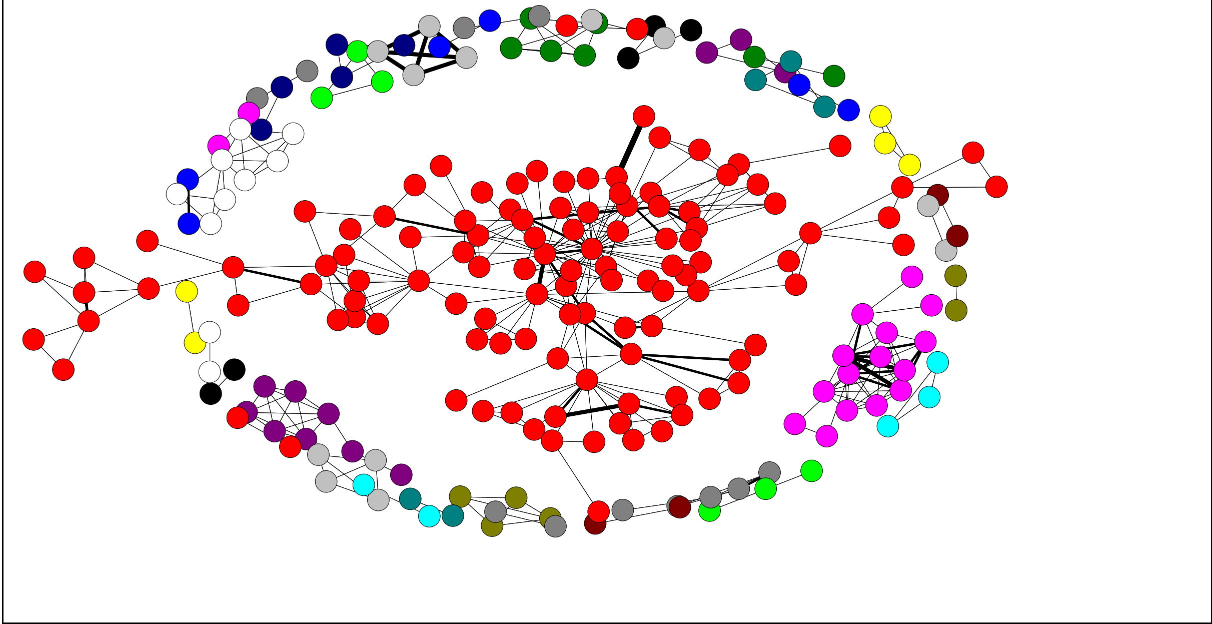
The main component during the Populism period reveals its emergence during the unique constellation of relative social and economic balance between the society and the market but a shift of the main societal conflict towards the democracy/populism issue, which stimulated the mobilization of many new informally organized social groupings. It is larger than the previous one, and the most central actors are informally organized groups – local inhabitants, employees, students, teachers, and the general public. The share of informally organized actors is 45%, which is the highest share of all periods. The network is largely decentralized and contains a line of several clusters: local inhabitants with political parties and politicians; students with teachers, trade union federations and professional associations in education; employees, professional associations and trade unions in healthcare; and anti-vax NGOs with entrepreneurs, libertarian parties and activists.

Table 24: Protest cooperation networks in six periods

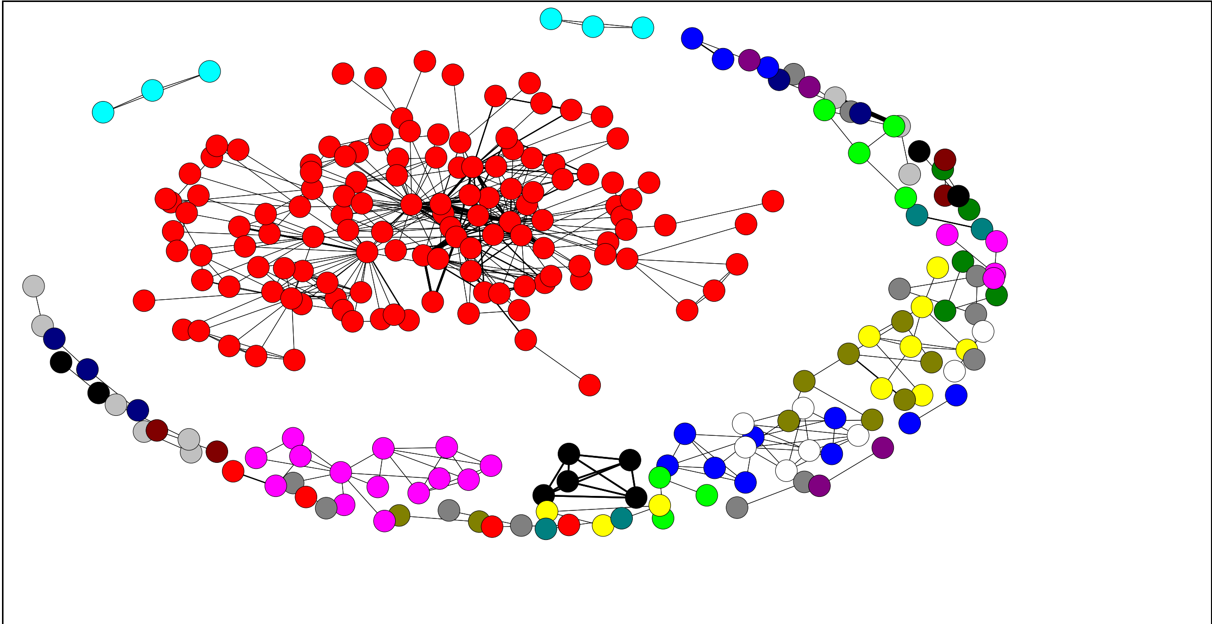
Revolution

Transformation



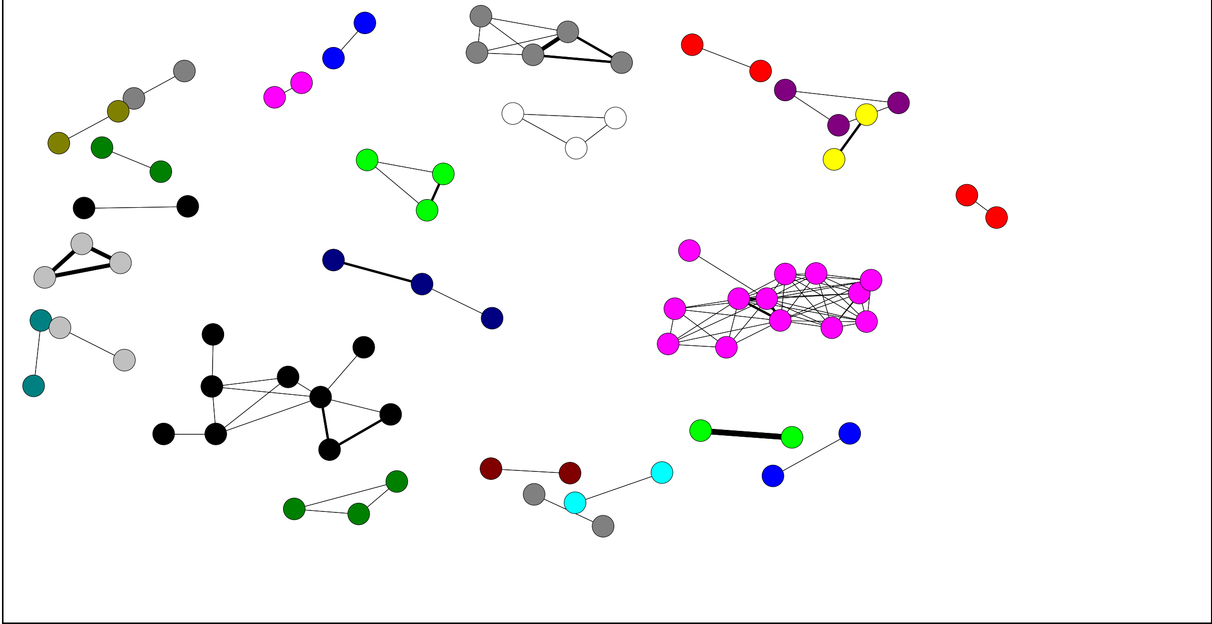
Europeanization



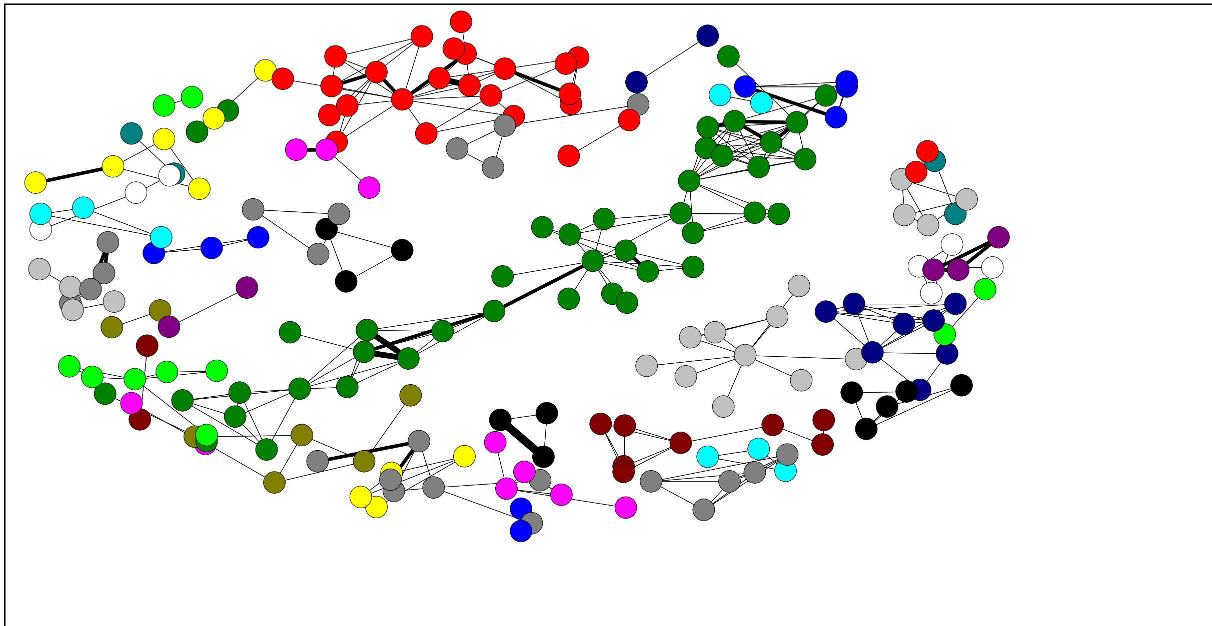
Austerity



Consolidation



Populism



Note: Different nodes represent various actors. The strength of ties denotes the frequency of inter-organizational alliances. The color of a node denotes a component to which the node belongs. Isolates are deleted from the graphs. Layout: graph-theoretic proximities based on geodesic distances.

To summarize, most of the characteristics of protest cooperation networks illustrate an expected role of the political-economic context, while no linear (either progressive or declining) evolution of these characteristics reflecting the increasing economic liberalization has been identified. The overall fragmentation of the network increases during periods of opening political opportunities and declining economic threats, which decrease actors´ incentives to join broader coalitions and adjust their goals and collective identities. During periods of increased pressure, collective actors manage to build very diverse coalitions and increase their coalitional activity, as well as create larger and more centralized cooperation patterns. The transformation of overall cooperative patterns indicates two mechanisms in progress. First, there is an expansion and contraction of the main component of the protest network, as well as its decentralization and centralization. In terms of size, the main cluster of cooperation keeps growing during periods of both decreased and increased political opportunities and threats (from Revolution to Europeanization) – it is here where we can see the increasing coalition building, which would be consistent with enduring societal response to unending economic liberalization. However, the period of Consolidation represents a dramatic rupture in this trajectory and the destruction of any larger and coherent protest cooperation. The rise of this cooperation during Populism reveals an uncoherent network of weakly connected thematic initiatives, typically organized by informally organized local groups, and the disappearance of previously existing core coalitions. In terms of the centralization, we see apparent shifts in the

changing role of the key brokers in the network who promote a significant portion of protest alliances: these are activated in times of political closure and heightened threats, which leads to the centralization of the cooperation network – and especially of its main component where these brokers are typically located.

7.3 Strong and weak ties

While strong ties indicate emotional commitment and mutual trust, which are necessary preconditions for cohesive collective action coordination and local integration, it is not just intimate relations within politically, culturally, or ethnically isolated clusters of groups that provide conditions for successful mobilizations. On the contrary, only the combination of firmly internally linked communities with resource sharing, dissemination of ideas, frames, and experiences to the distant localities of the field is the condition for enduring broader mobilizations and greater political impact – and the emergence of social movements (Diani 2015). Another important aspect of broader mobilization is the continuity and maintenance of the bridging and bonding ties. Hence, for movement – or counter-movement – to emerge, it is important that combining the strong and weak ties takes place over a certain period and that certain stability of the actors' existence and occurrence is maintained, as strong ties often arise from the weak ones through increasing emotional engagement, trust and sense of similarity and solidarity, a certain continuity in actors promoting them is necessary and needs to be explored. Therefore, this section proceeds with the following steps. First, it inspects the patterns of the strong ties across different periods of political and economic context and identifies key actors promoting them. Second, it will evaluate the role of weak ties in the overall diversity of cooperation networks in different periods and identify key actors promoting them. Third, it evaluates the continuity of elite collective actors promoting strong ties and weak ties across various periods. Fourth, it further evaluates the overall stability of weak ties across various periods. Fifth, it inspects the relations between strong and weak ties: both as potential parallel products of a narrow group of "super-brokers" and as a sequential process through which weak ties in one period become strong (or at least stronger) in the following period.

Strong ties arise from frequent interactions, which typically combine emotional investment and practical aspects of the relationship (Diani 2015: 145). Here, we inspect to what extent strong ties emerge from one-off protest cooperation. Obviously, the period of the Revolution was not an ideal environment for building strong relations between the collective actors as these actors were emerging out of informally organized networks; their number was increasing nearly exponentially due to the dramatic and intensive process of democratization and previous ties and mutual trust were necessarily missing. Thus, the first serious patterns of growing frequency of protest might be observed during the Transformation period (see Table 25). The strong ties here are represented as a triangle among trade union federation organizing doctors, trade union federation organizing employees in the healthcare and social services, and professional

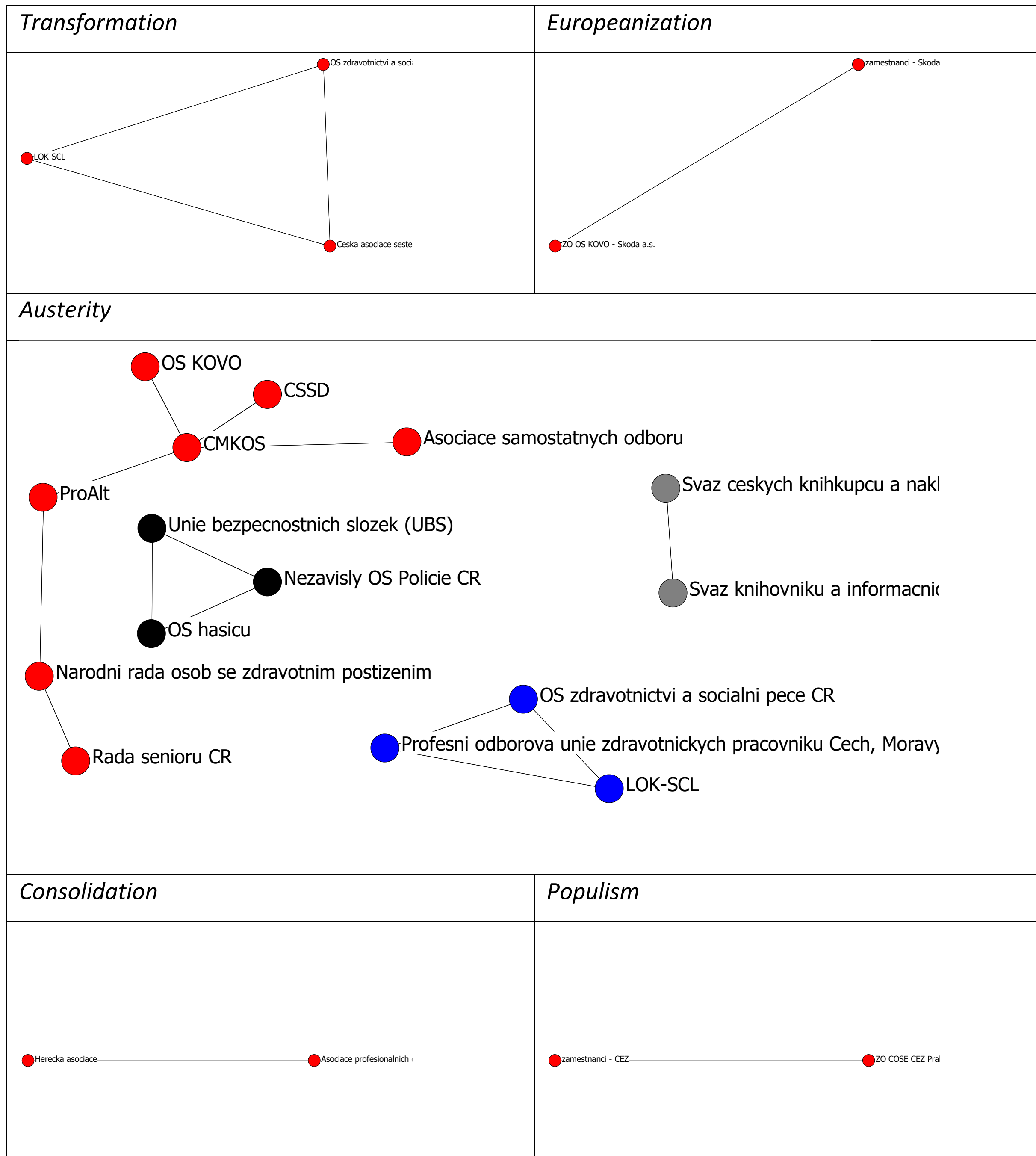
association of nurses. All of the actors are formally organized. The strong ties thus connect two different sectors – trade unions and professional associations – but all of these actors are embedded in the area of healthcare and social services.

During the period of Europeanization, an expected decrease in strong relations occurs as opening opportunities are expected to stimulate searching for new alliances or own strategies. A strong connection occurs between local trade union organizations in automotive company and employees from the same company. The connection is thus between formally and informally organized actors. This pattern nicely illustrates the period of the Europeanization era: on the national political level, the rhetoric of elites changed and slowed down previous liberalization policies, but at the same time, FDI quadrupled in this period, and economic liberalization continued on more mundane companies, everyday level.

As expected, the Austerity period brought much more complex recurrent protest alliances – large-scale austerity policies pushed actors to initiate more numerous and widespread coalitions and repeat these patterns of protest cooperation. During this period, four disconnected clusters of strong cooperation emerged, consisting of two, three, and seven collective actors. The smallest coalition – pair – consists of two professional associations in the sphere of publishing. The two triangles consist of three trade union federations of security forces and three trade union federations from healthcare and social services (one of the pairs in the latter triangle was part of the strong triangle during the Transformation period). Finally, the largest component here is unique in the sense that it does not consist only of actors engaged in the same thematic sectors. Its center is the CMKOS, which interconnects the trade union federation of steelworkers, another major confederation, and a civil initiative contesting austerity policies and dominant economic discourses – ProAlt. ProAlt further connected formal organizations representing vulnerable groups – older adults and people with disabilities.

During the period of Consolidation, all patterns of strong connections were dissolved, and only one strongly connected pair emerged here – two professional associations engaged in the cultural sphere (theatres). Again, this pattern nicely illustrates the Consolidation era: opening political opportunities and fiscal expansion provided incentives for regular cooperation only within a specific, narrow milieu. In the last period, we observed the same structure as in the Europeanization and Consolidation: the strong tie emerged only between one pair of actors – employees of a company and the branch of trade union organization in this (state-owned) power engineering company. Again, the change of major political conflict had only a small impact on the strong patterns of protest coordination and led to the coordinated mobilization of actors with very similar particular interests – employees and trade unions in a limited issue area.

Table 25: Strong ties in cooperation networks across five periods



Note: Nodes denote collective actors. Ties denote the frequency of coalition greater than 3. Colors denote weak components.

In the second step, we aim to find out to what extent the weak ties constitute the overall diversity of protest alliances and how this changes across various periods of political-economic context. There are two dimensions to consider when exploring this issue. The first question is to what extent weak ties represent the overall diversity of cooperation in terms of the number of

alliances they promote. In other words, what is the relation between the number of weak protest ties (degree) and all (dichotomized) ties? Second, what is the relation between weak dyads between collective actors and all (dichotomized) dyads? Furthermore, how do these change over time?

Two measures of correlations are used to answer these questions: Pearson correlation and the Jaccard similarity method (see Table 26). As both measures capture similar aspects of network difference, the results have similar trajectories (even if the Jaccard measure seems to be more sensitive to the period change). Obviously, the weak ties represent the backbone of the whole structure of protest cooperation during the period of the Revolution (emerging new actors, rapidly opening political opportunities, and extensive networking led to the promotion of new ties, testing new actors, and searching for new allies). The decline in the importance of the weak ties took place since then (Transformation), slowed down during the period of Europeanization (opening political opportunities and creating new connections), and reached the lowest value during the Austerity period. The relatively lower relevance of weak ties suggests that these started to be replaced by stronger – repetitive – connections. This feature confirms our expectations that in the period with higher threats and closing opportunities, the actors tend to build (return to) enduring alliances with reliable or at least known partners rather than to experiment with new connections as in times of opening opportunities and reduced threats. After the austerity period, the importance of weak ties increased again and, quite surprisingly, rose during the period of Populism. This development is related to the broader change of the major societal conflict, which – similarly to during the Revolution period – increased the number of new actors in the field and, consequently, the rise of new alliances.

Table 26: Correlations between binary cooperation networks and weak tie networks

	Pearson Coefficient	*Significance*	*Jaccard Coefficient*	*Significance*
Revolution	0.967	0.000	0.937	0.000
Transformation	0.944	0.000	0.893	0.000
Europeanization	0.945	0.000	0.893	0.000
Austerity	0.922	0.000	0.852	0.000
Consolidation	0.923	0.000	0.853	0.000
Populism	0.952	0.000	0.906	0.000

Note: Results of QAP correlation.

In the next step, we explore the inequality in the use of weak ties or, in other words, identify the most active actors promoting them. As suggested in the previous section, various actors use

the weak ties to different extents – while some of the actors are brokering weak ties systematically (either as being attractive to other actors for various reasons or being active and searching for new allies), some of them are rather passive or suspicious, and/or rely on more cohesive connections, or engage in protest activities in isolation. Furthermore, weak ties provide invaluable outcomes not only through direct connections to distant actors but also – and maybe more so – indirectly through (weak) connections with actors who have many other weak connections. In analytical terms, we aim at identifying actors with the highest capacity to promote and utilize weak ties on the one hand and actors who use these ties only sporadically or never. To separate these two types of actors, we apply core-periphery analysis of weak ties patterns. The resulting partition of actors into the core (densely connected through weak ties) and the periphery (isolated or loosely connected) is summarized in Table 27. The results suggest that the core-periphery model best fits the structure of cooperation during the Consolidation period with its densely connected – but at the same time very small – core and dispersed pairs of actors or isolates. Generally, the number of key brokers of weak ties changes across different periods, both in absolute and relative terms. In relative terms, there is quite a balanced share of collective actors in the core group, but this lapses during the period of Austerity: consistently with a rise of repeated, stronger connections during the period of closed opportunities and heightened economic threats, weak ties are limited (or, turned in to stronger connections) and key brokers turn to established patterns of protest cooperation. During the Consolidation and Populism, with both opening opportunities and the influx of informally organized actors, we see a small but steady rise in a community of weak ties brokers, both in absolute and relative terms.

Table 27: Core-periphery model applied on weak tie protest cooperation networks

	Core/Periphery model fit	*No. of actors*	*No. of core actors*	*% of core actors*
Revolution	0.51	98	8	8.2
Transformation	0.46	193	17	8.8
Europeanization	0.23	476	47	9.9
Austerity	0.30	451	19	4.2
Consolidation	0.63	187	9	4.8
Populism	0.23	294	15	5.1

Who are the specific collective actors generating most of the weak ties? During the period of the Revolution, most of them were informally organized groups. Employees, politicians,

teachers, and the public – these were the key activists proposing new connections during the transition to democracy. The Transformation period is characterized by the absolute prevalence of political parties – among 17 core actors, there is only one non-partisan organization, the radical left. The parties consisted of both parliamentary (typically left-wing) and non-parliamentary (typically regionalist, conservative, nationalist, agrarian, or green) subjects. The Europeanization period witnessed the highest number of well-networked proponents of weak ties, which were quite evenly shared by the trade unions, political parties, and radical left (engaged typically in alter-globalization protests). A similar case is the composition of the key weak-ties brokers in the Austerity period – it is balanced among political parties, vulnerable groups organizations, trade unions, employees, and economy-focused NGOs. The era of Consolidation has quite surprising characteristics in terms of actors´ composition. While one would expect similar diversity as in the case of the Europeanization period (with lowered economic threats and more open political opportunities), only two sectors are represented here: these are dominantly professional associations and only one trade union organization: open political space provided incentives for networking of collective actors who would otherwise remain passive or isolated. Finally, the composition of actors changes again in the last period – Populism: here, the actors are again more balanced while consisting mostly of political parties, unorganized activists, employees, religious organizations, anti-vax NGOs, and organizations representing vulnerable groups.

In the third step, we inspect the continuity of elite collective actors promoting strong ties and weak ties across various periods. Generally, the continuity of strong ties patterns across different constellations of political-economic context is extremely weak – only one pair of actors connected via strong ties in one period also occurred in a different period. These were the trade union federation of doctors and trade union federations of healthcare and social workers: this strong alliance occurred during the Transformation and Austerity period. The case of core promoters of weak ties represents a similar story. It is obvious that in different periods, the composition of core actors promoting weak ties changes very quickly, even if the general stability of these actors in time is rather high. In fact, there are only 13 actors who are part of the core group of weak ties network in more than one period: two of them in three periods, eleven of them in two periods. The former group of actors consists of the Trade Union Federation of Workers in Education and the Social Democratic Party, the latter of the Association of Homecare, CMKOS, Communist Party, Civic Democratic Party, Trade Union Federation of Steelworkers (OS KOVO), Trade Union Federation of Workers on Healthcare, association of elderly people, radical left organization, Association of Pensioners, Green Party,

and association of patients. This result suggests – as in the case of strong ties promoter – a very low continuity in terms of actors using and promoting multiple new, weak ties in the protest cooperation networks in the field and stimulating the diversity of protest cooperation.

In the fourth step, we analyze the stability of weak ties in more detail. While strong ties are rare, the weak ones represent the extensive part of the whole protest cooperation patterns and may not be sufficient to look only at the stability of the elite brokers. This incursion into the overall stability of weak ties is important for several reasons. Most importantly, if the same weak ties patterns (i.e., ties between the same collective actors) keep occurring across various periods – and longer time spans – the chances of strong ties emergence are higher. The similarity between the distribution of weak ties at one period and their distribution in the subsequent period is inspected using a correlation between matrices[32] of protest cooperation to check to what extent the discontinuity in the core promoters of weak ties across various periods mirrors larger discontinuity in weak ties creation. The results are quite unambiguous (see Table 28). There is considerable continuity in weak tie promotion between the Revolution and Transformation period: one-off alliances created during the first period are quite often repeated during the Transformation period. This pattern might be surprising since we have observed the emergence of plenty of new actors during the Transformation period, which the existing ones could approach. However, after this shift, the continuity further decreased after the shift from Transformation to Europeanization and remained at the same level also after the shift to Austerity. However, the shift towards Consolidation led to a complete transformation of the weak tie patterns, and some continuity occurred again only after the shift from Consolidation to Populism. This – quite surprisingly – means that the most dramatic change in the continuity of weak ties took place not after the coming of Austerity but after the shift from Austerity to Consolidation period: while some weak ties remained in place during the dramatic economic threats and closed political space, most of them withered away when the space opened again and paved the way for new cooperative patterns.

Table 28: The relations between weak ties across periods

	Number of actors	Pearson Coeff.	Significance	Jaccard Coeff.	Significance
Revolution x Transformation	15	0.505	0.002	0.333	0.002

[32] The matrices were adjusted for the QAP correlation and QAP regression procedure. First, all isolates from the matrix of weak protest cooperation (ties with value 1) during the period P were removed to keep only existing weak ties. Second, a matrix of protest cooperation with weak ties (ties with value 1) from period P+1 was created. Finally, an intersection matrix for P and P+1 was created, leaving only nodes present in both matrices.

Transformation x Europeanization	44	0.149	0.003	0.094	0.003
Europeanization x Austerity	70	0.175	0.000	0.105	0.000
Austerity x Consolidation	43	-0.017	0.775	0.000	0.775
Consolidation x Populism	31	0.275	0.003	0.167	0.003

In the fifth step, we explore the relationship between weak and strong ties. We do this on three levels. First, the analysis focuses on the overlaps between the strong ties and weak ties of elite brokers in general to probe the possibility that making of both multiple weak and strong ties is an outcome of a limited group of collective actors. If true, this would imply that both types of ties may be promoted by a few super-brokers who have a disproportionate influence on the cooperation in the field. Second, the analysis continues with the focus on the thesis of the emergence of the strong ties out of the weak ties by exploring this sequence in the case of the elite actors. Third, the analysis probes the same thesis, this time more generally, while looking at the whole network transformation and its determinants.

Let us start with the thesis of "super-brokers." As we have shown previously, the most engaged actors in the field are responsible for a disproportional share of alliances, so the narrow group of highly networking actors may easily promote both types of alliances. The logic might be simply the capacity of key actors to create and maintain *simultaneously* weak and strong alliances: they could be focusing dominantly on either of them depending on the existing constellation of political context in five periods – Revolution, Transformation, Europeanization, Consolidation, and Populism, there are no significant[33] overlaps between the actors representing the most active (core) weak ties brokers and actors promoting strong ties. These results suggest that during these periods, the key brokers opted for either form of protest coalitions – either increasing the diversity of their protest cooperation patterns or engaging in recurring, verified protest alliances. As there is such a low number of strong ties, the promotion of weak ties clearly represents a much more preferred strategy. However, there is one important exception – the Austerity period. Here, almost half of the core actors (7 out of 19) promoted weak ties, and occurred also in the largest strong cooperation pattern in the period. These were the organizations representing the elderly, CMKOS, trade union federations of steelworkers, workers in education, healthcare and firefighters, and Social Democrats. While this is only a small part of the actors in the field, it illustrates two things. First, the active combining of

[33] One of the actors in the strong-ties cooperation during the Europeanization period – branch of trade unions in automotive company – is a member of trade union federation of steelworkers, which was at the core of weak tie cooperation in this period. However, only the branch was active in the protest cooperation with the employees within the company.

multiple instrumental, one-off alliances with stronger, recurrent partnerships exists – even if it is rather rare. Collective actors typically engage in only one of the types of cooperation. Obviously, the simultaneous use of strong protest partnerships and engagement in protest relations with new actors occur – during highly unfavorable conditions. In this instance, the composition of actors (most active core members of the field and the representatives of the vulnerable groups) is clearly linked to the rise of economic threats stemming from the proposed policy reforms in combination with the lack of access to (or the lack of real impact on) the political process (Tripartite, Ministries).

Alternatively, following the thesis of the sequential strengthening of protest cooperation, the weak ties of core actors could be easily transformed directly into strong relationships during the next period (pre-existing ties are one of the key factors contributing to coalition formation (Van Dyke 2003). All in all, this is the process of creating strong ties, in which instrumental ties may give birth to emotionally loaded relationships. The co-occurrence at protest events promotes shared solidarity among engaged actors as it is always connected with some level of shared vulnerability, responsibility, and risk (ranging from soft repression through public reputation and stigmatization by the political elite to physical repression by the police). Before the analysis, the assumption of sufficient continuity (stability) of collective actors across the periods of the study needs to be assessed. In other words, the actors who take part in two consecutive periods and, therefore, might drive the strengthening of protest cooperation needs to be identified. Table 29 summarizes that there is indeed a sufficient pool of actors who could promote and intensify their protest alliances between the two consecutive periods.

Table 29: Collective actors overlap between periods of the political-economic context

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*
number of actors	98	193	476	451	187	294
No. of shared actors	15					
% of shared actors	15	8				
No. of shared actors		44				
% of shared actors		23	9			
No. of shared actors			70			
% of shared actors			15	16		
No. of shared actors				43		

% of shared actors		10	23	
No. of shared actors			31	
% of shared actors			17	11

To explore the thesis on the sequential strengthening of cooperative ties, we inspect to what extent the elite weak tie brokers (the "core") in a given period turn these ties into strong ones in the next period. In other words, to what extent can we identify a shift from elite weak tie brokers in one period to strong ties brokers in the subsequent period? However, there is very little evidence of this shift. We may identify only four overlapping collective actors between elite weak and strong tie formation. All of these represent weak ties formation during the Europeanization period, and we see these actors also as strong tie brokers during the Austerity period. These are CMKOS, the trade union federation of steelworkers, the second major trade union confederation, and Social Democrats. However, three of these actors (without a second major trade union confederation) belong to the core weak tie brokers also during the Austerity period, so the question remains to what extent the making of weak and strong ties is a parallel (short-term) rather than sequential (long-term) strategy.

Finally, to see to what extent the previous micro-perspective reveals more general mechanisms in the field, the analysis aims to provide a broader picture of the extent to which all existing weak ties in a given period serve as a basis for building repeated, stronger[34] connections in a consequent period. To further elaborate on this issue, the study focused on the correlations between the weak tie cooperation patterns in period P and any stronger cooperation patterns in period P+1. Second, we apply a regression analysis to see the effect of weak ties in period P on the stronger ties in period P+1[35]. The results are quite surprising (see Table 30). Generally, there is *some* relation between the preceding weak and subsequent strong(-er) ties, and they change over time. However, this relation – and therefore also a continuity between various periods of contention in the field – is much weaker than might be expected if the idea of the long-term evolution of cooperative ties was true. We see a quite loose and still declining relationship between weak and stronger ties over time, which suggests that the tendency of weak ties to serve as a basis for stronger interactions in the next period is weakening. Not surprisingly, there is a missing link between the period of Austerity and Consolidation: during the Austerity period,

[34] To produce more robust results, the analysis focuses not only on strong ties as defined here (ties with value greater than 3) but on all stronger ties (ties with value greater than 1).

[35] The matrices were adjusted for the QAP correlation and QAP regression procedure. First, a dichotomized matrix of protest cooperation with weak ties in period P was created. Second, a dichotomized matrix of protest cooperation with stronger ties (ties with value greater than 1) from period P+1 was created. Finally, an intersection matrix for both matrices was created, leaving only nodes present in both matrices.

many weak ties vanished or got stronger and thus do not explain the weak tie patterns during the Consolidation. On the other hand, the relationship between weak and stronger relations strengthened after the Austerity was over: weak protest alliances during the Consolidation – to a limited[36] extent – explained stronger patterns of cooperation at protest events during the Populism.

Table 30: The relations between weak and strong ties across periods

	Number of actors	*Pearson Coeff.*	*Significance*	*Jaccard Coeff.*	*Significance*	*Adj. R-Sqr.*	*P-value*
Revolution > Transformation	15	0.341	0.079	0.125	0.079	0.108	0.057
Transformation > Europeanization	44	0.162	0.008	0.056	0.008	0.025	0.009
Europeanization > Austerity	70	0.102	0.005	0.052	0.005	0.010	0.008
Austerity > Consolidation	43	-0.012	0.879	0.000	0.879	-0.001	1.000
Consolidation > Populism	31	0.211	0.042	0.111	0.042	0.042	0.023

To summarize, this analysis confirms a dramatically low continuity of both strong and weak ties in the field of economic contention and of actors making them. It practically illustrates the Polanyian idea of chaotic counter-movement mobilizing against the increased commodification of society and demobilizing while this pressure decreases while washing away almost any previous patterns of coordination. According to the Marxist account, we should be observing a rising and more or less stable set of actors sharing resources, making new alliances with new actors, connecting new protest sites, and creating strong, bonding alliances. However, the section illustrated that strong ties are an extremely rare type of cooperation in the field, and these are promoted by very few organizations that reflect closely the existing political-economic context. On the other hand, weak alliances are the key substance for the whole network of cooperation as they – in contrast to strong ties and are in line with theoretical expectations – constitute a great deal of its diversity. This pattern holds during changing political contexts, even if there are some ups and downs (most notably, during the Austerity period, when weak ties are, as expected, deleted or selectively replaced by the stronger ones and thus do not serve as a basis for cooperation continuity in the next period). Similarly, as in the case of strong ties,

[36] The results are statistically nonsignificant (due to relatively small sample size).

the weak ones are made quite unevenly, and a small core group of most active brokers may be distinguished: only a small portion of actors in the field are responsible for its density.
Quite surprisingly, these elite brokers do not represent a stable set of actors, but they typically alternate with other brokers across various periods, and the same holds for the promoters of the strong ties. There is also quite a low continuity in the distribution of weak ties in various periods, which may further prevent the emergence of strong ties. Even if we might hypothesize that the discontinuity of the weak alliances over different periods is given by the cycle of their strengthening in time, the data show something different: neither the core weak ties promoters nor the actors in the field in their entirety appear to turn instrumental cooperation patterns into coherent and stable alliances across changing political-economic contexts at a larger scale.

7.4 Intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral cooperation

Assessing the capacity of the actors populating the field of economic contention to mobilize and coordinate does not just require analysis of the structure of their instrumental and bonding alliances. While these might be present, there could still be a considerable amount of sectoral segmentations that represent a parallel, not a related, aspect of field collective action coordination. Sectors of political activism might be differentiated and organized in various ways. The concept of sectors applied in this analysis reflects the combination of functional and thematic differentiation while necessarily leaving aside some – e.g., ideological or geographical – differentiation. Therefore, it might be assumed that – specifically in the field of economic contention – the ideological link plays an important role and that, by default, there is a considerable amount of inter-sectoral cooperation driven by shared political beliefs and goals. This was already illustrated in the section 7.1. Here, the analysis aims to provide a relational analysis of intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral cooperation. It proceeds in three main steps. First, it focuses on the internal cohesion of thematic sectors of actors existing in the field and relates it to the change in the political-economic environment. Second, it repeats this analysis for inter-sectoral cooperation of these sectors. Third, it focuses on the relations between these two sets of relations and on the stability of inter-sectoral partnerships.

The first step is the analysis of the internal cohesion of specific sectors existing in the field, which relies on several theoretical assumptions. Following the research outline mentioned above, we assume that the dominance of the economic conflict combined with closed political opportunities and high economic threats shall be related to increased internal cohesion of sectors in the field. Furthermore, the dominance of economic conflict combined with open political opportunities and low economic threats shall be related to decreased internal cohesion of existing sectors. Finally, the dominance of conflict over democracy with open political opportunities and low economic threats shall be related to increased internal cohesion of the sectors.

First, we are interested in the evolution of intra-sectoral cooperation across six periods of changing political-economic context of the field. More specifically, we analyze the change in the diversity of cooperation patterns between subsequent periods and the change in the intensity of cooperation patterns between these periods. Here, we differentiate between two aspects of the density of cooperation: diversity and intensity. Conceptually, the diversity and intensity of intra-sectoral cooperation represent different aspects of intra-sectoral protest cooperation. While the diversity indicator (density of binary connections) captures only the number of

unique intra-sectoral connections, the intensity indicator (density of valued connections) also reflects the quantity or multiplicity of these connections between the two actors within a sector. Theoretically, the diversity and intensity of protest alliances may combine in various ways (see Table 31): a low number of intra-sectoral connections may combine with a low strength of these ties, which represents minimal sectoral cooperation (or, in extreme cases, a non-cooperation). A high number of protest alliances with low strength signals good formal coordination and resource exchanges on the sector level, which combines with a lack of cohesive, identity-related ties. A low number of protest alliances combined with strong, recurring protest connections indicates a segmented and community-oriented sector (typically with political, ideological, or issue differences). A high number of protest alliances with high tie strength indicates a cohesive thematic sector with a high level of mutual trust and low intensity of mutual conflicts.

Table 31: Relations between diversity and intensity of intra-sectoral protest cooperation

		diversity of intra-sectoral protest cooperation	
		low	*high*
intensity of intra-sectoral protest cooperation	*low*	political or issue segmentation	instrumental cooperation and resource exchanges
	high	strong political/issue communities in the sector	cohesive activist sector and low conflicts

However, the question is: do contextual conditions of the alliances in the field push actors toward one of the ideal types of intra-sectoral cooperation? Which one? In the case of diversity, the shifts occur as predicted by the theory: the number of unique cooperative patterns decreases in times of decreased economic threats and opening political opportunities (Europeanization, Consolidation) and vice versa, and a period of Populism has the same effect as political closure/economic threats (see Table 32).

Table 32: Change in diversity of intra-sectoral cooperation

	average density 1	*average density 2*	*average intra-sectoral density change*
Revolution > Transformation	0.064	0.071	0.007
Transformation > Europeanization	0.071	0.000	-0.071
Europeanization > Austerity	0.000	0.031	0.031
Austerity > Consolidation	0.031	0.008	-0.023

Consolidation > Populism	0.008	0.036	0.028

The exploration of intensity of intra-sectoral cooperation brings nearly identical results – here, the shifts in diversity and intensity are very close to each other, unlike in the case of inter-sectoral cooperation where the trajectory of shifts of cooperation intensity was more dynamic than that of diversity of cooperation (see Table 33). This result is not surprising given the generally low average degree of intra-sectoral ties compared to the inter-sectoral ones[37].

Table 33: Change in intensity of intra-sectoral cooperation

	average density 1	*average density 2*	*average intra-sectoral density change*
Revolution > Transformation	0.088	0.075	-0.013
Transformation > Europeanization	0.075	0.026	-0.049
Europeanization > Austerity	0.026	0.037	0.012
Austerity > Consolidation	0.037	0.010	-0.027
Consolidation > Populism	0.010	0.039	0.029

In terms of average shifts in densities across various periods, the values are nearly identical both in terms of diversity and intensity and thus represent the overall shift in diagonal direction. Both aspects of intra-sectoral cooperation reflect the contextual change proportionately and in line with the theoretical expectations.

In the second step, the focus is on the density of inter-sectoral cooperation ties, which is the primary indicator of the overall inter-sectoral protest alliances. Again, the question is: under what contextual conditions do the alliances in the field shift towards one of the ideal types of inter-sectoral cooperation? Similarly, as in the case of inter-sectoral coalitions, our general assumption is that dominance of the economic conflict combined with closed political opportunities and high economic threats shall be related to an increased number of its inter-sectional alliances. Furthermore, the dominance of economic conflict combined with open political opportunities and low economic threats shall be related to a decreased number of inter-sectional alliances. Finally, the dominance of conflict over democracy with open political opportunities and low economic threats shall be again related to an increased number of its inter-sectional alliances. However, more detailed theses about the shifts in intensity and diversity of inter-sectoral cooperation under changing contexts are missing. They will be

[37] The average number of intra-sectoral ties per actor in the field is 0.89 (Std. Dev. 2.36), while the average number of inter-sectoral ties is 1.42 (Std. Dev. 2.93).

formulated following the empirical analysis, which focuses on the differences between the diversity and intensity of cooperation between each of the two successive periods. Second, the analysis tests whether these differences might have arisen only by chance or not.

Analysis of the inter-sectoral diversity and intensity of protest alliances provide us with a more complex understanding of the protest cooperation patterns in the field. As in the case of intra-sectoral ties, the diversity and intensity of inter-sectoral cooperation represent different aspects of inter-sectoral protest cooperation: while the diversity indicator (density of binary connections) captures only the number of unique inter-sectoral connections, the intensity indicator (density of valued connections) also reflect a multiplicity of these connections between the two sectors. Therefore, diversity and intensity may combine in various ways (see Table 34). First, small diversity and small intensity of inter-sectoral cooperation indicate the presence of strong ideological/political and functional/thematic boundaries in the field. Second, high diversity and small intensity of this cooperation indicate decreased functional/thematic and persevering ideological/political boundaries between actors in the field as these are highly selective in their partners from other sectors (e.g., trade unions cooperate only with one political party and one professional association). Third, low diversity and high intensity of protest cooperation suggest the perseverance of thematic/functional specialization of the collective actors with decreased ideological boundaries (multiple trade union organizations focus dominantly on cooperation with various groups representing employees regardless of their political background). Finally, a combination of high diversity and high intensity indicates the emergence of alliances across thematic and ideological cleavages, which are often a precondition for large-scale campaigns or social movement mobilization (Diani 2015: 16).

Table 34: Relations between diversity and intensity of inter-sectoral protest cooperation

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">diversity of inter-sectoral protest cooperation</td></tr>
<tr><td>low</td><td>high</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">intensity of inter-sectoral protest cooperation</td><td>low</td><td>political/ideological and thematic/functional segmentation</td><td>thematic cooperation along strong political/ideological lines (e.g., left-wing NGO, social-democratic party, party-affiliated trade unions)</td></tr>
<tr><td>high</td><td>broad political/ideological coalitions of thematically focused actors (various trade unions with various kinds of workers´ groups)</td><td>universal thematic and ideological alliances</td></tr>
</table>

Analysis of the binary inter-sectoral cooperation[38] suggests that there are some clear differences, and we might identify three important rifts marking rise, decline, and repeated rise in the diversity of inter-sectoral cooperation (see Table 35). The shift between the first three periods does not show any dramatic changes; quite the contrary. However, the incremental rise in the diversity of inter-sectoral alliances between the periods of Revolution and Europeanization does not meet the theoretical expectations, according to which we should observe the rise of inter-sectoral cooperation during the periods of closing opportunities and emerging economic threats (Transformation). On the other hand, the differences are not significant, and the rising number of sectors present in the field suggests that the role of the political-economic context might be balanced by the emerging (or incoming) of new sectors[39], which provides an opportunity for new alliances even under the conditions suppressing inter-sectoral cooperation. However, during the Austerity period, the contextual mechanism emerged in full force. Here, the rise in the diversity of inter-sectoral is clear and non-random: while the number of the sectors is stabilized, the shift in the inter-sectoral diversity is quite dramatic – almost twice as much as in the previous period. When the opportunities open again, and economic threats are gone, the density is reduced nearly by two-thirds. The dramatic evolution continues during the last period when the diversity of inter-sectoral alliances increases almost at the Austerity level.

Table 35: Change in diversity of inter-sectoral cooperation

	No. of sectors	*Density 1*	*Density 2*	*Difference*	*S.E. of the Difference*	*Sig.*
Revolution > Transformation	19	0.164	0.129	-0.035	0.055	0.385
Transformation > Europeanization	30	0.110	0.156	0.046	0.030	0.126
Europeanization > Austerity	32	0.139	0.260	0.121	0.051	0.000
Austerity > Consolidation	31	0.277	0.075	-0.202	0.045	0.000
Consolidation > Populism	29	0.079	0.239	0.160	0.039	0.000

Note: Estimation of standard errors is based on bootstrap methods.

[38] The matrices were adjusted for the pair density comparison procedure. First, a matrix with collective actors in specific sectors were collapsed into matrix where single nodes represent sector. Second, an intersection matrix for P and P+1 was created, leaving only nodes present in both matrices.

[39] The number of sectors active in the field rose from 23 to 31 between Revolution and Transformation.

The analysis of the second aspect of inter-sectoral protest cooperation – its intensity – reveals that theoretical disproportionality (i.e., shift either in intensity or diversity but not in both) is – unlike in the case of intra-sectoral ties – slightly present – at least based on this first overall analysis (see Table 36). Here, the diversity and intensity of inter-sectoral cooperation display similarly shaped yet differently strong reactions in terms of their trajectories across different periods of political-economic context. In between the first three periods (Revolution, Transformation, Europeanization), we do not see a steady rise in the intensity of cooperation as was the case in its diversity, but we cannot rule out its randomness. Starting with the Austerity period, the differences between the intensity of cooperation across the periods start to be very large: inter-sectoral alliances become significantly more intensive during the unfavorable political-economic context, then significantly decrease during the period of Consolidation, and rise again during the Populism. Generally, the overall intensity and diversity of inter-sectional cooperation have similar trajectories in relation to the changes in the political-economic context, but the dynamics of the changes in intensity of cooperation are considerably higher. During difficult times, collective actors in the field try not only to increase the number of sectors they cooperate with but also try hard to multiply the number of ties with collective actors in these sectors. Thus, dropping the protest alliances during a more relaxed opportunity structure also means a dramatic decrease in the intensity of cooperation. However, since the shifts in both trajectories have the same orientation, the mode of inter-sectoral cooperation on the field of economic contention – as in the case of intra-sectoral cooperation – shifts basically between more and less segmented thematic/functional and also political/ideological alignments.

Table 36: Change in intensity of inter-sectoral cooperation

	Shared sectors	*Density 1*	*Density 2*	*Differenc e*	*S.E. of the Difference*	*Sig.*
Revolution > Transformation	19	0.380	0.550	0.170	0.182	0.209
Transformation > Europeanization	30	0.382	0.487	0.106	0.221	0.435
Europeanization > Austerity	32	0.429	0.845	0.415	0.287	0.012
Austerity > Consolidation	31	0.901	0.131	-0.770	0.261	0.006
Consolidation > Populism	29	0.143	0.594	0.451	0.147	0.002

Note: Estimation of standard errors is based on bootstrap methods.

In the final step, we explore two types of issues. First, we look at the overall patterns of protest alliances both within and between formally and informally organized actors and their change during the evolving political-economic context. Next, we inspect the stability of inter-sectoral cooperation and provide a more in-depth look at the specific sectors and actors across the periods under study.

Data indicates that the conceptual differentiation between formally and informally organized actors is only partially reflected in their tendencies to homophily, as was also suggested before. The patterns of their inter-group and within-group interactions significantly differ from a random distribution. The formally organized actors constantly show a very high propensity to cooperate with other formal organizations across all periods – this is the strongest pattern of all combinations of relations between formally and informally organized actors. Second, informal actors typically exhibit a lower-than-random propensity to cooperate within their milieu, with only one exception: the period of Revolution. Here, the informally organized actors have higher than random tendencies to cooperate with similar actors (during the Revolution period with emerging protest engagement among loosely social groups) and represent autonomous cooperation strategy different both from cooperation within formally organized actors or between formally and informally organized actors. Tendencies to form relations between formally and informally organized actors are in all periods lower than random. This again suggests that these two types of actors have systematically different attributes that prevent them from creating mutual coalitions or coalitions with formally organized actors.

The role of the political-economic context in changing the propensity to form a protest alliance with similar or dissimilar actors is less straightforward (see Table 37). The homophily tendencies of both formally and informally organized actors have strikingly similar trajectories except for the last period. As expected, their homophily declines during the Transformation period, rises during Europeanization (as well as a propensity for cooperation between the two types), and declines during the Austerity. After that, only informally organized actors increased the chances of their homophily during the period of Populism. So, while the periods of Transformation and Austerity led to a decrease in the homophily tendencies for both types of actors (which was expected as collective actors seek more heterogenous alliances in times of threats), only during Austerity is this compensated by the rise of propensity for cooperation while this did not take place during the Transformation period. This feature seems to be related to the large-scale change and rise of numbers of both formally and informally organized actors after the Revolution, which led to the relative decline in all types of cooperation during the Transformation. Again, during the Consolidation period, the unexpected decline in both the

homophily tendencies of formally and informally organized actors and their cooperation is related to the massive decline of the cooperation as such and the fragmentation of the network. Finally, the rise of homophily of informally organized actors during the Populism relates to the massive emergence of the new informally organized actors in the field, but also to the rise of mixed alliances with existing formally organized actors (while central formally organized actors were often withdrawing from cooperation the field and thus lowered their homophily tendencies).

Table 37: Ratio of observed vs. expected ties among types of actors

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*
Chi-square	53.178	204.037	339.470	318.760	87.400	37.605
Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Iterations	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000
Formally <>formally organized	2.140	1.960	2.910	2.571	2.390	1.710
Informally <> informally organized	1.370	0.160	0.600	0.543	0.400	0.720
Formally <> informally organized	0.350	0.270	0.510	0.605	0.380	0.890
Odds ratio	5.792	1.047	1.654	0.946	1.662	0.381

Note: Results are based on relative contingency tables for binary cooperation networks. A number of expected ties are mean values of the entries from all the permutation tests. The chi-square test is based on a randomization procedure. Significance is the relative frequency of the number of times the generated value is larger than the observed.

However, it seems that differentiating between formally and informally organized actors is just too general to understand more fully the mechanisms behind the crossing of various types of boundaries. This is why the final step of the analysis has a more in-depth focus on the stability of existing protest cooperation between particular sectors. Relying again on the differences between expected and observed densities, the analysis focuses on the shifts in the tendencies of specific sectors in the field of economic contention for homophily or for cooperation with other specific sectors across the six periods under study (see Table 38). Only sectors with existing relations in two consecutive periods were selected for the analysis to assess the change in their propensity to cooperate.

Table 38: Statistics of observed vs. expected ties among activist sectors

	Revolution	*Transformation*	*Europeanization*	*Austerity*	*Consolidation*	*Populism*
Chi-square	621.091	2277.851	621.091	2886.588	1644.763	1585.502
Significance	0.006	0.000	0.006	0.000	0.003	0.000
Iterations	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000	10000

Note: Results are based on relative contingency tables for binary cooperation networks. A number of expected ties are mean values of the entries from all the permutation tests. The chi-square test is based on a randomization procedure. Significance is the relative frequency of the number of times the generated value is larger than the observed.

The analysis differentiates between two shifts. First, it explores whether there was a change in the overall propensity of two sectors to cooperate, i.e., whether the ratio of observed vs. expected ties changed from negative (the tendency is lower than the random distribution) to positive (the tendency is higher than the random distribution) or remained the same (positive or negative). The results reveal some stable patterns in terms of pairs of cooperation (see Table 39).

First, the relative share of stable cooperation patterns is very high – ranging between 60% and 91%. Interestingly, the ratio of actors with a higher-than-random tendency for cooperation is continually rising across all periods, which signals a rise of relative stability in the reproduction of cross-sectoral cooperation. In other words, political context seems to have little or no effect on the share of positively reproduced propensity for inter-sectoral cooperation. This result is further confirmed by the declining negative-negative ratio, i.t. reproduction of lower-than-random inter-sectoral cooperation. The shifts between the positive and negative propensity to cooperate are less continual and signal the role of the political-economic context. The ratio of the switch from positive to negative is highest during the Transformation and Austerity periods, which suggests that in times of worsened political-economic context, the propensity for *existing* cross-sectoral cooperation declines. The opposite effect – an increased propensity for cooperation among the same set of actors – occurs during the Europeanization period.

Table 39: Shifts in absolute propensity to cooperate on the sectoral level

	Revolution > Transformation	*Transformation > Europeanization*	*Europeanization > Austerity*	*Austerity > Consolidation*	*Consolidation > Populism*
positive to positive (%)	45	53	59	87	91
negative to negative (%)	27	7	16	0	0
positive to negative (%)	27	0	16	7	0
negative to positive (%)	0	40	9	7	9
total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
total pairs of sectors	11	15	44	15	11

Note: Results are based on relative contingency tables for binary cooperation networks. The number of expected ties is the mean value of the entries from all the permutation tests. A chi-square test is based on a randomization procedure. Significance is the relative frequency of the number of times the generated value is larger than the observed.

Second, the analysis focuses on the more detailed shifts between the cooperation tendencies of various pairs of sectors, regardless of the final state of the propensity of inter-sectoral cooperation (i.e., whether the outcome of the shift led to the lower-than-random or higher-than-random propensity to cooperate). The results (summarized in Table 40) show the results expected by the theory of the role of political context. There are two points in time when there is an increase in the propensity for cooperation between collaborating pairs of actors – shifts from the Transformation period to the Europeanization period and from the austerity to the consolidation period. These are interesting results with regard to the previous probe on the stability of inter-sectoral relations. While the overall increase in the cooperation tendencies after the first improvement of the political/economic context (Europeanization) also improved the overall tendency for existing inter-sectoral cooperation, the same push during the Consolidation did not have this effect. However, this is also due to the high positive-to-positive ratio already existing in inter-sectoral relations. In other words, what we see is a mechanism of increasing and stabilization of existing inter-sectoral cooperation in times of favorable political-economic context.

Table 40: Shifts in relative propensity to cooperate on the sectoral level

	Revolution > Transformation	*Transformation > Europeanization*	*Europeanization > Austerity*	*Austerity > Consolidation*	*Consolidation > Populism*
decrease (%)	91	27	52	27	64
increase (%)	9	73	48	73	36
total (%)	100	100	100	100	100
total pairs of sectors	11	15	44	15	11

Note: Results are based on relative contingency tables for binary cooperation networks. A number of expected ties are mean values of the entries from all the permutation tests. A chi-square test is based on a randomization procedure. Significance is the relative frequency of the number of times the generated value is larger than the observed.

Now we turn to the exploration of the specific cases in order to identify the instances of inter- and intra-sectoral cooperation that were affected the most by the change in the political-economic environment (e.g., these represent the shifts either from lower-than-random tie density to higher-than-random tie density between two sectors, or the shift in the opposite direction). After the transition from the Revolution to the Transformation period with the launch of the key liberalizing and privatizing policies, we observe only one increase in cooperating patterns and ten declines. The only increase relates to the cooperation between *employees* and *trade unions*. On the other hand, we observe following downward shifts in protest alliances of *students* (with academia, local inhabitants, environmental NGOs, and political parties), *trade unions* (with vulnerable groups, political parties, and professional associations), and *political parties* (with employees and human rights NGOs). In general, this is a retreat from revolutionary settings towards more "standard" economic contention in times of economic liberalization.

After the Transformation was over and the center-left government took over, there were mostly increases in cooperation tendencies (11) rather than decreases (4). The former type of shifts most frequently relates to *employees* (and their relations with trade unions, professional associations, and political parties), *political parties* (and their relations to students, professional associations, and unorganized activists), and *radical left* (with trade unions and environmental NGOs). On the contrary, the weakening might be observed in the case of student protest alliances (with academia and environmental NGOs), radical left (with political parties), and trade unions (with professional associations).

The shift from Europeanization to the Austerity period brings a similar decline (23) and increase (21) in tendencies of existing inter-sectoral cooperation. Declines were most frequently related to the relations of *political parties* (with democracy NGOs, political youth organizations, professional associations, students, academia, local inhabitants, employees, politicians, and unorganized activists), *academia* (with students, employees, unorganized activists, and social services NGOs), *employees* (with social service NGOs, professional associations, democracy NGOs and teachers), and the *general public* (with teachers and unorganized activists). On the other hand, the increase related mainly to *employees* (with unorganized activists, the general public, local inhabitants, radical left, politicians, vulnerable groups, and trade unions), *trade unions* (with professional associations, businesses, political parties, and radical left) and *political parties* (with the radical left, management, human rights NGOs, environmental NGOs, and NGOs focusing on the economy).

The relaxation of the political-economic context and the social consolidation of society after the Austerity period introduced a more intensive strengthening of inter-sectoral relations (11) rather than their weakening (4). In the first case, the shift was most frequently related to *professional associations* (with entrepreneurs, employees, trade unions, and NGOs focusing on the economy), *students* (with teachers and academia), and *academia* (with democracy NGOs). In the second case, the shift was related to *professional associations* (with political parties and business) and *political parties* (with human rights NGOs).

During the final period transition, the decline in the existing inter-sectoral cooperation (7) prevailed over the increase (4). The increase was related to *professional associations* (with NGOs focusing on the economy and employees) and *employees* (with trade unions). The decrease was, on the other hand, rather unspecific and not related to any broader pattern or collective actor – most frequently to *teachers* (with management and students) and *students* (with academia).

To summarize, this chapter focused on the three aspects of inter- and intra-sectoral protest cooperation in the field of economic contention, conceptualized them mainly as a problem of network densities, and introduced two key dimensions of this cooperation: its diversity (reflecting the number of connected sectors) and intensity (reflecting the number of connections among the sectors). First, regarding intra-sectoral networking, both dimensions of intra-sectoral cooperation reflected the changing political-economic context in a predictable way: intra-sectoral cooperation increased during heightened economic threats and closed opportunities, but also when the main type of conflict switched to a political one. Second, the same pattern may also be observed at the level of inter-sectoral protest alliances, even if the intensity of

protest alliances exceeded their diversity much more than in the case of intra-sectoral relations. Finally, the chapter showed that formally organized actors prefer cooperation homophily much more than informally organized ones – a fact that was also highlighted in previous chapters – and that this homophily decreases in times of unfavorable political-economic context when broader coalitions are formed. This is also the case of informal groupings, which follow a similar trajectory as formal organizations (even if on a level far below the random level of within-group cooperation). The chapter also provided a more in-depth analysis of the stability of existing inter-sectoral ties across the transformation of the political-economic context. The analysis revealed the rising stability of existing inter-sectoral cooperation, which is nurtured by the rise of the propensity to maintain existing inter-sectoral ties in times of favorable political-economic context. In the last step, it has been demonstrated that these are usually the core sectors in the field that are most frequently affected in their relations with other sectors by changing political-economic context: employees, trade unions, political parties, radical left, the general public, professional associations but also academia, students or teachers.

8. Conclusions

This study applies the Polanyian perspective and explores the character of the Czech economic protest between the start of the transition from authoritarian regime to democracy and from state socialism to liberal capitalism. In more general terms, it conceptualizes and empirically explores the changing resistance to an intensifying capitalist economy, which has become an issue of interest in many disciplines. Furthermore, it answers the call for the return of capitalism and material struggles to social movement studies, specifically in the context of post-socialist countries. The study focused on three interrelated features of post-socialist economic protest: collective actors, their relational strategies, overall patterns of their cooperation, and changes in these aspects of economic protest across different periods of political-economic context. Specifically, it explores the various ways in which the field of economic contention is integrated from the perspective of formal and informal ways of organizing collective action, weak and strong ties, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

Actors engaged in the field of economic contention reflect the Polanyian thesis on complex, chaotic, and reactive mobilizations against the spread of free market policies: most of the actors engaged in the protest are informally organized ones, typically social groupings that emerged due to local causes (and often in isolation from other collective actors) or joining events with more universal claims which established actors primarily coordinate. This pattern reveals a different picture compared to the many contentious politics or industrial relations studies, which tend to prioritize formally organized actors. At the same time, it confirms the relevance of self-organized workers' struggles also in post-socialist societies, including public employees in the public sector (Azzellini, Kraft 2018). Some of the most engaged social groupings are students and unorganized activists (typically prominent former politicians, public intellectuals, or participants in the revolution in 1989), whose role still gains little attention in the studies of post-socialist activism.

On the other hand, the larger part of protest engagement is conducted by formally organized groups, and some of these groups form a narrow core within the field, the most active being usual suspects: trade unions, political parties, and professional associations. Some social movements engaged in struggles against economic liberalization worldwide, which have been subject to previous analyses – such as the global justice movement – are present but under separate, distinct collective identities (radical left organizations, NGOs focusing on the economy, and others). On the other hand, social movement studies have often overlooked the pivotal *protest* role of more formal interest groups (such as professional associations and some

trade unions) and political parties in the processes of protest mobilization and cooperation. While parties have often been classified as actors external to the field that affect the capacity of civil society organizations to form and maintain protest cooperation (Heaney, Rojas (2008), they also often play a crucial role in engaging directly in protest and promoting protest alliances. Thus, a *differentiation hypothesis* (Kitschelt 2006; Hutter, Vliegenthart 2018) predicting limited – if any – protest engagement of political parties is shown to have small relevance here (Borbath, Hutter 2021).

Since the informally organized actors tend to promote substantially fewer ties – both weak, strong, and cross-sectoral – than the less numerous formally organized actors, the cooperation networks do not fulfill their cooperation potential, and nearly half of the collective actors remain isolated. The capacity of key actors to promote weak ties makes them important brokers. On the other hand, due to the core of the network densely interconnected by weak ties, their overall brokerage capacity – a function of weakly connected parts of networks often separated by lack of trust, lack of information about each other, lack of resources, or spatial distance (Burt 2001; von Bülow 2011) – is limited. The brokerage here thus rather follows the model of the flow of information and maintaining transactions among core collective actors in the field and the political elites, who decide on the spread of information – usually centralized and professionalized interest groups (Beyers, Braun 2014).

Interestingly, the relation between the collective action field and its environment is rather selective and reflects the main mode of the actor´s operation: not all actors engaged in the field are mechanically reflecting the changing political-economic context – only those who have their *main stakes* there and belong to the "core" of the field (typically trade unions, radical left, and employees). In other words, other active actors promoting protest alliances in the field have their main engagement outside the collective action field (such as in various institutional arenas), which makes them less reflective towards the context of the field of economic contention. Similarly, while political and economic context – as in this study – tends to be conceptualized as the nationwide processes and activities, some of the actors embedded in the local (towns, factories) or (rarely) transnational (global justice activism) context tend to reflect it in in a different way from the others. This finding further develops the Polanyian notion of divergent reactions of various actors to the realization of laissez-faire policies: while these are typically promoted centrally, many of their practical implementations are highly variable and embedded in local settings. Thus, the reactions of actors are necessarily unsynchronized and different. This feature further contributes to the study of mechanisms underlying the collective action, such as *adaptation*: this mechanism builds on the rule that activists or organizations with

more similar network positions (and thus sharing similar opportunities and constraints) are more homogenous in terms of their strategies, preferences, or goals (e.g., Diani 1995). Here, the similarity in reactions to the changing environment is given rather by the topology of social embeddedness of collective actors in relation to the field than the closeness of their position in intra-field networks.

The general probe into the overall integration of the protest network revealed a high number of isolated actors and a rather small cooperating core and showed that existing ties in the network are mostly weak ones. This finding conforms to the characteristics of the weak ties as rather far-reaching, cross-sectoral transactions that provide overall integration of civil society organizations (Baldassari, Diani 2007). Still, however, their reach within the field of collective action as such is rather limited, and micro-level analysis suggests that the most active brokers of cross-sectoral ties, in general, prefer intra-sectoral alliances and engage with a relatively small number of sectors. Similarly, Wada (2014) has illustrated that while some Mexican civil society organizations (workers, peasants) are active in organizing protests, they also aim at keeping their autonomy, which makes them less central in contentious networks than, for example, some issue-specific groups (student or environmental NGOs). Strong ties in the field are virtually non-existent and represent only a minimal portion of all existing ties.

Furthermore, their overall distribution reveals their tendency to cluster similar or complementary actors, which further increases the fragmentation of the protest cooperation. These findings point to the weakness of Czech civil society, or at least the weakness of its economic protest: the integrative mechanisms are present but are extremely limited. While it should be the combination of strong and weak ties that produces a social movement mode of coordination of collective actors (Diani 2015), this capacity is clearly missing in the case of Czech economic protest. Existing accounts of the absence of large protest mobilizations contesting post-socialist economic restructuring focused on the dysfunctional tripartite institutions and fragmented trade unions (Ekiert, Kubik 1998; Ekiert, Kubik 2001), lacking cultural resources, the social base of protest, and the absence of extreme grievances (Greskovits 1998) or strategic social policies pacifying the wide-spread discontent with economic situation (Vanhuysse 2006). This study presents a different argument as it demonstrates the continuing weakness of Czech economic contention by demonstrating the large gaps and discontinuity in collective, organized protest coordination and broader collective identity construction in the field of economic protest, which prevents more far-reaching, cohesive, and sustained mobilizations from taking place (cf. Hedström et al. 2000; Cornwell, Harrison 2004).

The weak integration of the field of economic protest is further related to the changing political-economic context. This relation represents another task of the study, which aims to fill the existing research gap here (Diani, Mische 2015: 316). It aimed to explore the pendular character of economic contention caused by the process of de/commodification and conceptualized these environmental processes as the sequence of the various constellations of the political-economic context. The study demonstrated that instead of linear evolution of the key aspects of the field of collective action (processes of organizational learning) or long-term cycles, the short-term changes in economic threats and political opportunities – but also after the political threats after the shift of the major political conflict from economy to democracy (typically related to the political orientation of the government) – play a most visible role. Interestingly, the role of different types of threats during the period of Populism has different impacts in terms of weak/strong ties generation: while strong ties remain marginal, weak ties increase.

Most importantly, these changes affect the overall fragmentation of protest cooperation networks and their size and centralization. The concept of centralization is also associated with the importance, power, and influence of nodes in the network, which implies that unfavorable conditions for collective actors increase power hierarchies in the field (typically of established actors). While the role of the political-economic context is often visible and important in relative terms, its absolute impact is not overwhelming: on the other hand, the sequencing of these small cycles might prevent long-term cycles or linear development from occurring.

What is not (at least in a predictable way) affected by the political-economic context is the overall density of the cooperation networks. Despite some shifts, the overall density of protest cooperation remains very low, which sheds light on another aspect of the "weakness" of Czech economic protest. The density of protest networks may be used in explaining the diffusion of protest cycles – for example, as the density of ties in a communication (weak) network, which increases the efficiency of this communication and contributes to the increase in protest activities (Oliver, Myers 2003). The explanation of the low density of protest cooperation may be – among other factors – rooted in the lack of social ties among the individual members of collective actors in the field (Hedström 1994), which is supported by the survey data on the membership in different civil society organizations (Newton, Montero 2007). Another important exception – a positive one regarding the (minor) integration of the protest cooperation networks – is the continually rising propensity to cooperate across various sectors in the field.

In fact, it is the changing political-economic environment that prevents a higher level of continuity in the network as it induces breaks between various periods in terms of both weak and strong ties among actors. The change in the process of intensifying or declining

commodification washes away many previous cooperation patterns, which necessarily destabilizes the patterns of cooperation and prevents their strengthening in the future. Therefore, instead of raising new, broader subjects with encompassing identities, there are only short-term context-driven cooperation strategies that are driven by a small share of core actors. One of the reasons for such short-term cycles of cooperation is the high instability of the core brokers of the weak and strong ties: these alternate across the changes in the political-economic context, so the chances of maintaining stable protest cooperation are generally low. Furthermore, there is little evidence that weak ties are getting stronger in time and across different constellations of political-economic context. The expected role of the socio-economic context was also identified in the case of cross-sectoral and intra-sectoral ties: both are rising during the unfavorable environment, which also decreases the general homophily of formally organized actors.

On the conceptual or theoretical level, the study introduces some issues which might be of further interest. First, it broadens the notion of the collective action field by identifying the collective actors with selective or minor engagement, who, at the same time, play an important role in the field both in terms of activity and alliance building. This aspect makes problematic the assumption that a single or major *context* – opportunities, threats – affecting a collective action field might be identified and explored as playing a major role in the collective action strategies and dynamics.

Second, while the concept of the collective action field brings a complex view of the various aspects of integration of a large arena of collective action, it inevitably blurs the specific character of some locations within the field. This is also the case of this study: the Czech field of economic protest represents strongly fragmented and unequally positioned clusters of collective actors that differ not just in terms of their forms of organizing, goals, and strategies but also – importantly – by modes of their coordination (Diani 2015). In other words, while parts of the collective action field might represent a social movement mode of coordination, a large part of the field may keep their boundaries at the level of organization. This implies that overall evaluation of the level of integration of the collective action field – i.e., its vitality, strength, or capacity – needs to be assessed with more complex tools, most possibly relying on the whole-network-analytic concepts (e.g., clustering, transitivity, or geodesic distances).

Third, some reflections might be necessary for the concept of transactional activism – horizontal and vertical interactions between activist groups and elites compensating for the lack of members and sympathizers (Tsvetova, Tarrow 2007; Císař 2008; Císař, Navrátil 2015; Mazák, Diviák 2018) – which was often associated with specific types of actors, typically post-

materialist advocacy NGOs. However, this study demonstrates that promoters of weak ties – transactions – can also be localized in a completely different area of activism where their role might be similar: making coalitions and promoting ties with elite actors to compensate for their decreasing membership or support. On the other hand, we may also identify "typical" post-materialist transactional activists in the field, such as environmental, transparency, or feminist groups with the same strategy.

Finally, the study implemented a geographical differentiation of collective actors – most importantly, informally organized ones – to capture the diversity of actions in the field and avoid the misleading merging of equivalent actors from different localities. However, the geographical perspective is applied only on the level of collective actor identification, not elsewhere. While the case under study here is a rather compact and not large polity, further theorizing and research of the concept of collective action fields might focus on the geographical attribute of the field and implement these into the analysis: these might relate to the collective actors´ attributes, distances across various protest sites, weighting the cooperation between collective actors depending on the location of their headquarters, or inspecting the diffusion of protest alliances across the physical space (cf. Biggs 2005; Hedström 1994; Hedström et al. 2000).

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