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Research Report

Theoretical conceptions of transnational solidarity in working relations

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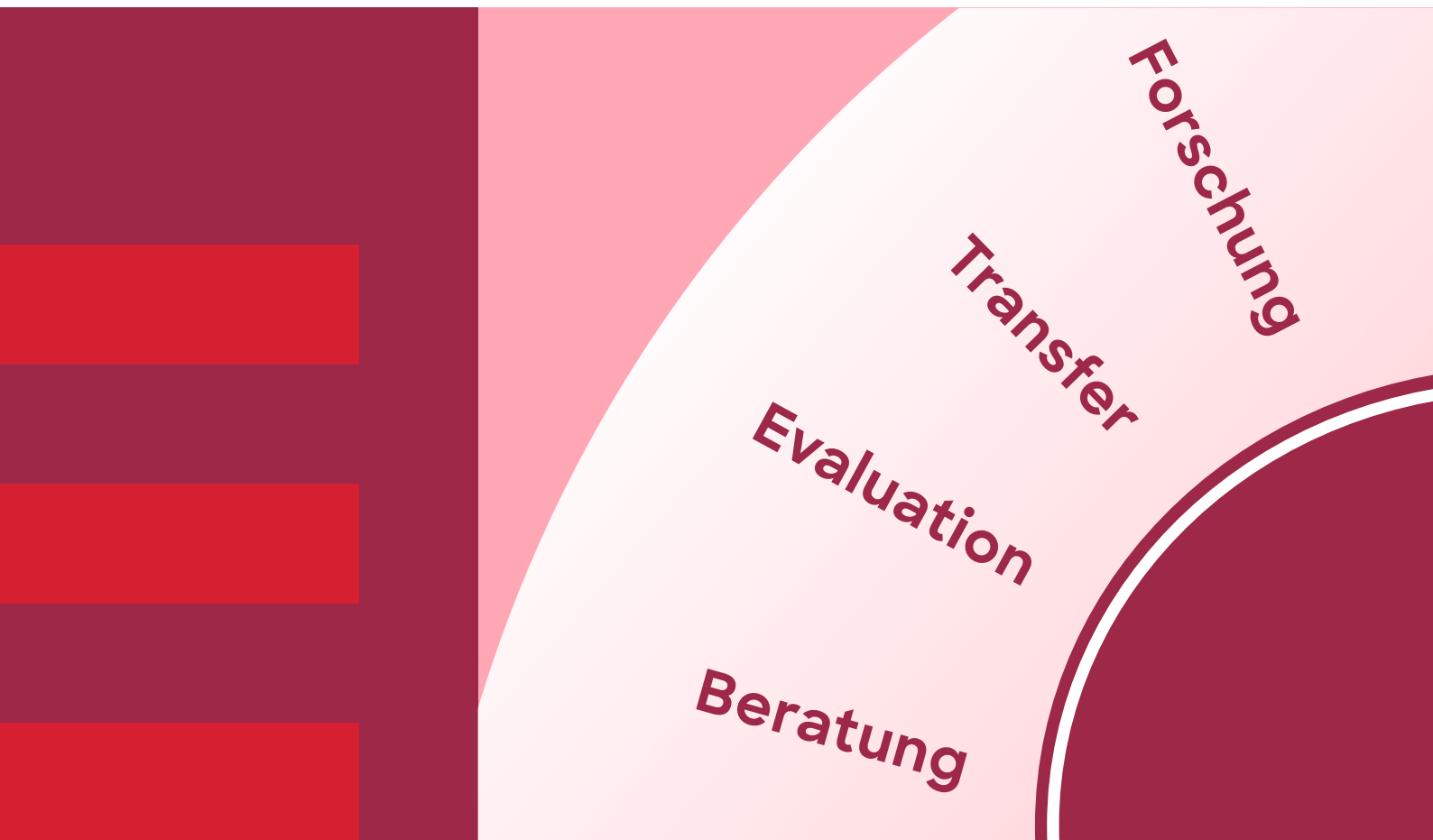
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solidarity in working relations**

Abstract

Solidarity is probably one of the most undeniable concepts of the social sciences as it is present in every group formation being this a country, a family or a trade union. But globalization has questioned the core of traditional solidarity and has challenged us to find new forms of solidarity that go beyond the borders of nation-states when we focus on the transnational or international level. Being once based on the identity and homogeneity of a group, solidarity must now transcend one specific group with a clear identity, clearly defined borders, constant and close interactions and settled stabilization mechanisms, the four prerequisites Engler (2016) found to be at its basis. Globalization brings two issues into play that break with these four prerequisites. On the one hand, it opens up the possibility to constitute groups beyond a specific geographical place and to grasp global problems such as climate change within transnational groups. On the other hand, globalization reinforces the idea of individualization and a decline of collectively shared identity which threads the classical idea of solidarity. In this paper we look for an enlarged concept of solidarity that can be grasped in different “places” in transnational working relations, taking the European Union as an example.

It is not new that solidarity may transcend the borders of the nation-state. The history has shown how workers organized in trade unions based on a shared class identity have formed international movements. Based on the idea of mutual self-interest, workers were able to pass from an individual self-interest to a broader group self-interest based on a shared identity of being a community. In this sense, they moved from an altruistic to a cooperative form of solidarity based not only on a specific common consciousness, but on reciprocity. This allowed them to develop different forms of social security, which with the time were taken over by the welfare state. The welfare state introduced a redistribution of the risks between those who belong to a given nation-state showing clear borders, a common interest and specific stabilization mechanisms such as laws and courts.

Globalization challenges these criteria in at least three main issues when we deal with the transnational sphere: (i) identity must now be understood as a process due to declining homogeneity. Not only at the transnational but also at the national level, class as well as nation-based identities become blurry given the heterogeneous composition of groups. Competition among workers with different employment conditions as well as international competition increase and they are therefore pushed to expand their understanding of solidarity towards more economic-rational arguments. (ii) Borders and stabilization mechanisms are much more fluid in the globalised era. Transnational solidarity occurs in multilevel systems that combine different group demarcations and institutions affecting the cohesion of the group. Even though we could argue that within the EU clear borders and stabilization mechanisms are to be found, still trade unions need to overcome the socio-spatial distance and the diversity of traditions. At the same time, stabilization mechanisms are needed at different levels. (iii) There is a need of new forms of interaction and new forms of collective action, which can be able to bridge gaps of established national forms of organization and action. Differences in languages and cultures must not be forgotten.

Based on the work of Morgan and Pulignano (2020), who focused on three types of bonding and bridging elements (language of morality; political calculation and coalition; and the understanding of the rituals, symbols and narratives of a particular context), we highlight (new) bonding and bridging elements in a transnational context as being relevant to the development of solidaristic action. Moreover, we distinguish

different motives and relate them to different forms of interaction between collective and individual actors. Our multidimensional conceptual framework of transnational workers' solidarity in the EU is based on:

- Stabilization mechanisms as a form of institutionalisation from the outside or the inside: EU treaties and directives are seen as external stabilisation mechanisms supporting workers' organisation. Internal stabilisation mechanisms exist in the establishment of transnational union organisations that overall build on support and power resources of the national organisations. Both forms interact creating different borders of a given group.
- Group formation as a process of bonding and bridging: bonding elements based on identity or common interest interact with bridging elements like common discourses or symbols. More and less formal groups may emerge creating new cross border solidarity networks.
- Motives and forms of interactions: economic-rational motives are intertwined with moral motives of solidarity helping to create a common identity as well as power resources to promote workers' interests.

In order to see how transnational solidarity emerges and is put into action, we propose to focus on three 'places' of solidarity where we apply our multidimensional conceptual framework: (i) the political arena of the EU, respectively EU institutions and the actions of federal European union organisations, but also of national organisations, to influence decisions taken by EU institutions, (ii) multi-national enterprises and institutionalized or organized representatives of workers in the companies, as for example in European Works Councils, and (iii) cross national, regional or local organisations and actions, possibly linked to particular workplaces, respectively driven by individual actors, promoting cross border action. Using network analysis, expert interviews and survey data, we scrutinize how these three 'places' of solidarity are configured, what actors are involved, how and why do they come together, and more broadly, how and under what conditions does solidarity emerge in transnational labour relations.

This working paper is part of the project "Places and motives of acts of solidarity in transnational working relations" financed by the BMBF and conducted jointly by zap and iaw (Bremen University). It seeks to develop the theoretical framework of the project and to work as a conceptual outline for further research in the topics of transnational solidarity.

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1 Introduction

Solidarity might be one of the most undeniable concepts of the social sciences. As Engler (2016, p. 30 our translation) points out “hardly any sociologist doubts the existence of solidarity as a social phenomenon”. It is present in almost any idea of group be it a family, a trade union or a community. Solidarity is at the core of our societies, of the possibility of living together and cooperating as a group. But since societies change and evolve with the time, the idea of solidarity has also been changing along the way. Still being a widespread concept in many social fields, when thinking about solidarity one confronts at least two questions: solidarity of whom? And to what purpose? When taking as a standpoint the “traditional” society or the *Gemeinschaft*, as Tönnies called it, and following the ideas of Durkheim, the answer to these questions seems to be pretty clear. Solidarity from the community and for the community is based on common values and beliefs in order to maintain the social order. Over time, with the division of labour and the emergence of nation-states, the notion of solidarity also changed. Its basis, however, is still rooted in the idea – or the myth – of a more or less homogenous group of people bounded by a shared identity and common interest. The organization of labour unions is based on these ideas (Stjernø, 2009, p. 95). However, with the advent of globalization, individualization, the heterogeneity of the labour force due to feminization and migration, these understandings become blurry. Hence, we have to answer a third question, namely ‘What are the prerequisites to solidarity on a transnational level, the motives of actors and the forms of interaction used?’ Globalisation¹ has introduced a new form of society, one that surpasses and brakes with national borders not needing to share a geographical space nor having a common (national) identity. On the one hand, this opens the possibility to understand solidarity beyond national borders and to grasp problems such as for example the climate change, highlighting the common fate of humanity as a source of inter- or transnational solidarity. On the other hand, globalisation brings a potential threat to the idea of solidarity by reinforcing individualization and the decline of a collectively shared identity (Calhoun, 2002). Moreover, depending on the concrete space of action and issue to be addressed, the practice of transnational solidarity has to bridge institutionalized differences due to organizational and ideological traditions developed along the national (welfare) state in order to facilitate cooperation and mobilization – even when a common interest is given. This is also true for workers in the European Union, although the labour movement traditionally has had aspirations of international action².

In the words of Richard Hyman (2004), the named questions are also related to different motives of solidarity, namely solidarity as a kind of charity and solidarity as an active and reciprocal action. Whereas the first one is a morally inspired motive, for example an obligation for the strong to support the weak, the second one is essential to labour movements in a world where many of the old reference points of identity and status have eroded. In practice, of course also mixed motives are to be found (Hooker, 2009). With respect to the transnational level Hyman also states that an adequate perception of solidarity requires “mutuality despite difference” and may be based on a sentiment of interdependence, generating what might be called a second-order community of interest in sustaining a set of social relationships in which all are

¹ We understand the concepts of globalisation and transnationalisation as related but different. On the one hand globalisation refers to “worldwide and ubiquitous social facts and events, interactions and communications, risks and rights” (Pries, 2008, p. 147our translation). In this sense, globalization can be seen as a precondition and consequence of the worldwide expansion of transactions and communication. At the same time, it also refers to a worldwide perception of common and shared risks and problems. On the other hand transnationalisation “refers to sustained and continuous pluri-local transactions crossing state borders” (Faist, 2010, p. 1673), it deals with social activities, personal interactions and social formations such as organisations or networks across national borders. Globalisation and transnationalisation go hand in hand and they enhance each other.

² These were represented by the idea of international worker solidarity promoted by socialist parties until the outbreak of World War I, but also by the founding of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in 1949 (Stjernø, 2009).

positively implicated” (Hyman, 2004, p. 36).

However, the questions formulated above may have to be answered more precisely according to the respective context. In order to do this, we do not only consider general definitions of and challenges to solidarity, but also refer to existing forms of solidarity in the transnational sphere of the European Union. We explore different prerequisites, motives and forms of interaction according to different places where transnational solidaristic action has been enacted already. This might help to sketch a kind of landscape of multiple forms of workers’ solidarity in the transnational space of the EU in order to develop a conceptual framework for further analysis.

Hence, we start to review more generally on the development of the idea of solidarity. The next section (II) shows a short historical review of the concept of solidarity with particular focus on workers’ solidarity followed by a discussion on the challenges to solidarity within a globalized world (III). Our goal is to build on these ideas to develop a conceptual framework of transnational workers’ solidarity in Europe, highlighting both different places and motives (IV).

2 Short history of the concept of “solidarity” and its expression

The idea of solidarity³ is rooted in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution where it became a political concept of struggle that was counterpoised to the idea of charity coined by the Catholic Church. Hence, *Solidarité* in combination with the notion of *Fraternité* refers to a “cohesion amongst equals” (Metz, 1999, p. 191). This introduced a horizontal dimension in opposition to the vertical or hierarchical notion intrinsic to the Christian concept of charity. In this sense, the concept of solidarity finds its starting point at the beginning of modern society. It has been defined by many authors along different socio-historical traditions (for an overview see Smith & Sorrell, 2014; Stjernø, 2009). As we will see, solidarity evolved from a first idea of cooperation within groups based on common values and identity, to the idea of cooperation based on interdependency and interest.

Durkheim’s (1893 (1984)) idea of solidarity probably is one of the most emblematic. The question he tries to answer is, how society sticks together, or how it is possible that while individuals become more and more autonomous, they are still more and more dependent on society. According to him, individuals with common values and beliefs interact to create relationships based on a collective consciousness. Traditional societies have based their collaboration on a *mechanical* form of solidarity constructed upon this collective consciousness. Mechanical solidarity presupposes a homogeneous group of people with clear borders and dense interactions within the group. Cohesion is based on a moral effect and non-codified rules that are internalized by each member of the group creating a collective conscience. With the increasing division of labour that took part in the transition to a modern society, social cohesion changed its form. In more specialised societies heterogeneous groups emerged and cohesion did not come any more from similarity, but rested on mutual dependence. What Durkheim called *organic* solidarity rooted in cooperation and interdependence between different individuals that may not fully share common values or behaviour. With this distinction between the two types of solidarity, the author describes the changes in the structural basis of solidarity along the development of society and the consequences it has for social integration (Dallinger, 2009, pp. 48–50). Durkheim’s idea of organic solidarity helps us to understand how different individuals with different interests and identities come together and cooperate to achieve certain goals. Leaving beside the idea of a collective consciousness and turning to the idea of mutual dependence, the

³The word ‘solidarity’ comes from the Latin *solidus*, meaning “sturdy, firm and undivided” (Liedman 2020, p. 11)

author manages to explain collective action between heterogeneous individuals. This theoretical starting point leads to what most definitions of 'solidarity' have in common, namely, a reciprocal connection between the members of a group of people (Mau, 2008), which involves mutual obligations, a certain awareness of being involved in the group and some degree of reciprocity amongst the members of the group (Engler, 2016, pp. 33–34). With the advent of industrialization and the workers' movement, solidarity acquired a class component and derived in the formation of the welfare state.

In modern society and especially during the Industrial Revolution social problems such as poverty and miserable working and living conditions (Hobsbawm, 1963) gave way to a form of *organised* solidarity. Trade unions were created by workers to express their interests. Traditionally, unions organized according to different occupations, a given employer or different economic sectors. This permitted high internal solidarity of the group, but, at the same time, an easily division of the workers as a whole. Beyond the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions, a main action of unionised workers' was the foundation of insurance systems based on mutual support as a way to compensate for the lack of private or public social protection (Burgiavini et al., 2003, p. 163).

Following Lindberg (2014, pp. 136–139), trade unions' solidarity can be seen as a special form of solidarity developed in action and based on the idea of mutual self-interest. It requires workers to pass from an individual self-interest to a broader group self-interest based on a shared identity of being a community of workers (an imagined community in Benedict Anderson's (1983 (2016)) understanding). A central element of this notion of community is related with the perception of being part of "a proud but underprivileged working class ruled by a privileged few" (Lindberg, 2010, p. 219).

The notion of class was able to unite workers proposing a shared vision of the future and the idea of class solidarity based on shared common interests of labour against capital helped to overcome divisions according to different union organisations (Hyman, 2004, p. 37). When unions succeeded in creating and mobilizing large groups with common interests, sometimes even internationally, and in making alliances with political parties, they were able to gain political visibility pushing for a change within the organisation of the state and expanding workers' social rights (Burgiavini et al., 2003).

In this sense, unions' solidarity merges, on the one hand, personal efforts and sacrifices for the rest of the group and, on the other hand, long-term self-interests of the individual and the organisations. This form of solidarity goes a step beyond the previous forms, because it involves collective action between individuals as well as between groups in formal as well as informal ways as a power resource, connecting solidarity as a moral fundamental value with self and group interests.

In some countries, authoritarian governments – such as the Bismarck regime in Germany – reacted to the workers' movement introducing social policies together with repressive tools to stop collective action and inhibit workers' organisation (Therborn, 1984). The branches with social protective function of workers' movements that were created, developed, and managed based on individuals' solidarity were thus taken over by or transferred to the emerging welfare state. This enabled an *institutionalized form of solidarity* based on the redistribution of economic risks among citizens (Baldwin, 1990). Hence, formalized stabilization mechanisms to support and safeguard social solidarity were created, since redistribution takes place through taxation and social security contributions (Ciornei & Recchi, 2017, p. 2). Welfare states impose (legal) obligations and mutual concerns regarding social justice to all members of a society creating an "ethic of social membership" (Kymlicka, 2015, p. 4). It often depends on central organization and not on individual consent and action. This nevertheless indicates inclusive and exclusive elements of solidarity based on social rights that are conditional to citizenship and/or the fulfilment of obligations (paying contributions or taxes) in the welfare state. People who do not meet these conditions are excluded.

Since the 1970s the welfare state has experienced a restructuration based on a globalisation trend and neoliberal modernization which defend the idea of a free market and less state control. By changing the

infrastructure and framework conditions of social security systems, as well as of the labour market, economic liberalism substituted the Keynesian approach introducing more personal responsibilities and obligations in regard to social 'rights' (Dingeldey, 2011; Kröll, 2013). Moreover, increasingly validated market mechanisms, respectively commodification conquered different areas of social life (Kröll, 2013; Taylor-Gooby, 2011, p. 455). Secular trends like deindustrialisation, tertiarisation and individualisation destroyed working class milieus and social cohesion in neighbourhoods as basis of in-group solidarity (Smith & Sorrell, 2014, p. 237). The consequences of a pluralisation of lifestyles and the formation of new social groups and social risks (Beck, 2006) have negatively impacted organisations of class solidarity, namely trade unions and social democratic parties, which have been constantly losing members and, thus, bargaining power, respectively political power (Kelly, 2015).

Overall, globalisation in combination with digitalization has increased international dependencies of production, but also competition between different production models related to different forms of industrial relation systems (Prosser, 2020). It also opened up opportunities of encounter on a transnational or international scale that is facilitated by the easiness of digital communication and the awareness of problems and living conditions in other countries. All these developments thus indicate a paradox namely, on the one hand, more individualisation and privatisation of risks and, on the other hand, the possibility to easily extend social relations beyond the local community and the borders of the nation-state (Stjernø, 2009, p. 342). Considering this paradox, the questions we posed in the introduction, namely, solidarity of whom and to what purpose, takes on a new meaning, respectively indicates a challenge to the assumed prerequisites of solidarity.

3 A Challenge to prerequisites of solidarity in transnational spheres

As we have seen in the previous section, there might be two notions of solidarity, differentiating between 'altruistic' and 'cooperative' reasons for solidarity, of which the former is based on 'conscience' and the later on 'reciprocity' (Volland, 1999). However, the two often are entangled. Hence, solidarity describes motives and capacity a specific group of people has to cooperate with each other and possibly generate collective action as a power resource. Solidarity may be more or less steady, depending, among other things, on formal as well as informal rules created by the group in order to maintain cohesion. These rules regulate the cooperation in the group itself, the distribution of rights and resources and/or the contribution each member is expected to provide. According to this understanding: "solidarity is a particular social norm that applies to a specific collective, is reciprocally recognised by its members, translates into certain practices of cooperation and mutual renunciation, and is backed by sanction mechanisms" (Engler, 2016, p. 35 our translation). However, overall the altruistic motive of solidarity enables to solidaristic action beyond (collective) self-interest and thus allows to 'cross' the borders of a defined group and to create a new understanding of a common identity as well as new forms of social action.

Solidarity, thus, traditionally presupposes at least four criteria according to Engler: (i) a certain level of homogeneity of the group to create an identity, (ii) specific borders, (iii) stabilisation mechanisms and (iv) interaction processes within the group. As in the transnational sphere new stabilization mechanisms beyond the nation state go along with new borders of groups, these two prerequisites are discussed jointly in the following. Hence, we highlight only three prerequisites to solidarity, that, at the same time, reinforce its existence and development, but also hint at challenges in a globalized world. We therefore indicate both problems and possible solutions – highlighting overall the development of solidarity with respect to workers' and trade union action.

3.1 Identity as a process due to declining homogeneity

Theories of solidarity agree with the idea that a given level of homogeneity is needed from which a shared identity or common ground arises, which in turn fosters solidarity within a given group. Socially homogeneous groups tend to share similar values and life situations, which lead to more uniform interests (Engler, 2016, p. 50). Similarity also brings identification with the group, which works as one of the “action formation mechanisms that generate commitment to solidarity” (Gajewska, 2009, p. 39).

Hence, for example institutional solidarity is traditionally considered to be practiced within the limits of the national (welfare) state (Prosser, 2020, p. 135). It is associated with a given identity that emerged from the nation as a group and related to a certain feeling of belonging and attachment to this group. Thus, identity easily coupled with self-interest to promote solidaristic action. For trade unions overall class opposition or the “enmity” to capital and the future goal of establishing an alternative social order created a kind of class identity and common interest. This helped to bridge differences within the workforce that always existed – even in the era of Fordism – and to go beyond the factual fragmentation of unions that were traditionally organized on particular constituencies according to sector, occupations or specific employers (Hyman, 2004, p. 37).

However, with the increasing individualization, the neoliberal restructuring of the welfare state and the new communication possibilities that technological change and globalization brings into play, identity based on conditions of homogeneity due to shared experiences of precariousness at the workplace and of living conditions has been challenged. The heterogeneity of employment conditions, diversified life styles and the unequal distribution of social risks according to sector of employment, education, gender or ethnicity within the nation state go along with different interests concerning the improvement of working conditions (Oesch, 2015; Sachweh, 2021).

Moreover, competition among workers with different employment conditions in the same workplace (Holst, 2009) as well as international competition increased (Prosser, 2020), because globalization has provided companies with economic incentives and opportunities to transnationalise and outsource their production reducing labour costs. For trade unions, this means either to propose exclusive forms of solidarity, protecting only the core workforce, possibly highlighting ideas of protectionism and nationalism. Alternatively, they can create rationales that overcome these differences, i.e. for example that in the long term core workers undermine their own bargaining power when they don't show solidarity with vulnerable workers (Doellgast et al., 2018). At the same time, they are pushed to develop “transnational structures of struggle” (Bieler et al., 2014, p. 2) in order to avoid price dumping and secure their work place.

Hence, an economic argument to support solidarity comes into play (Börner, 2014, pp. 64–66). This kind of rational choice approach has already been used to explain organizational behaviour based on shared interests in line with an utilitarian incentive considering costs and benefits of collective action (Olson, 1965). Another pragmatic rationale to helping the weak is for example that the roles between the weak and the strong might on some occasion be reversed (Rawls, 1971 (2020)) or that the expansion of precarity in the long run also undermines the position of the privileged.

This view helps to expand the solidarity scripts to a wider, more heterogeneous group. For the practice of workers' solidarity in a globalised world this understanding opens paths to develop strategic alliances between different production levels and countries in order to face problems based on different scenarios, but that unite workers around a common interest. Moreover, Hooker (2009) argues that rational pursuits and emotional identification have to be coupled with an account to normative motivations to action. Hence, a common identity cross borders and varying nationalities – as a precondition to solidarity – has to be created within a process based on strategic interaction and mutual understanding (Gajewska, 2009, p. 32). This closely links to Marx's distinction of a ‘class *in itself*’ and a ‘class *for itself*’ saying that an objectively shared interest does not lead to solidarity, but needs the recognition of this interest and the definition of a common

relationship (see Smith & Sorrell, 2014, p. 237).

3.2 Seeking for stabilisation within blurring borders

A second condition for solidarity is seen in the demarcation of a specific border that allows to identify who belongs to the group and who is excluded from mutual solidarity and obligations. This demarcation line can be class, workers' status or formal membership in an organization as well as citizenship. Following Parson (1951), stabilization mechanisms are based on specific cultural values that function as standard in the selection of choices and actions and in the coordination between members of a group. Along time, stable expectations defined in roles arise and are detached from the shared values giving way to what the author calls institutions. When groups get bigger, formal institutions – as another condition – are required to safeguard the norms that promote and reinforce solidarity. In the nation-state societies this role is played by various institutions, i.e. written laws, the police, and the courts (Engler, 2016, p. 55). Hence, on the macro level, the nation state and its rules demarcate who is included and excluded from the benefits of the modern welfare state as institutionalized form of solidarity. Trade unions are aligned to these institutions. However, the formation of specific organisations create additional demarcation lines according to industry, enterprise or profession, in different regions, etc.. Still, both institutional and organizational structures can be analysed as a stabilizer due to an intersubjective social context in which workers are protected under the umbrella of the national demarcation. All this is typified as different systems of industrial relations (Bernaciak et al., 2014; Ferner & Hyman, 1993) often in conjunction with different types of capitalism and welfarism (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hall & Soskice, 2001).

With globalisation and transnationalisation, however, the “national container society” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), is not longer the only socio-geographical and legally defined dimension where solidaristic practices may occur. In addition to the existing national, regional, sectoral, local and individual level – where solidarity as a base for collective action can take place – the transnational and international level, respectively cross-national activities have to be added. Hence, transnational solidarity has to tackle the increased complexity of a multi-level system that blurs the borders of given groups, but also combines different levels of group demarcations. This may on the one hand affect the cohesion of the wider group or movement, but on the other hand, it allows a greater number of more complex interactions. Lahusen (2020a, p. 302) refers to solidarity in modern societies as “organised and stabilised on various levels of aggregation and institutionalisation (informal networks, civil society, welfare states)”. He points out that these different levels are interrelated, but stabilization may be weaker and more fragmented when it comes to transnational solidarity.

In the transnational sphere the EU is a special case as its foundation was fostered not only by the idea of free trade within a common market, but also by the idea of solidarity and peaceful cooperation. This goal is fixed within the treaties (Knodt & Tews, 2014; Mückenberger & Nebe, 2019, pp. 35–54) to “promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States” (Art. 3(3) TEU). Moreover, the EU defines concrete borders by membership and has wider competences of rule setting than any other supranational entity. Thus, it contains more substitutes to national stabilization mechanisms than other transnational spaces providing opportunity structures for transnational or international solidarity and cooperation (Lévesque & Murray, 2010b, p. 241). Therefore, it opens up a space to workers', respectively unions' solidarity as a group within the borders, respectively the different institutions of the European Union. But even within the European Union, a main problem for unions is heterogeneity because of the socio-spatial distance and the diversity of both traditions of union organisations and individual members (Prosser, 2020). Forming organisations and networks on the transnational level bring some kind of stability on the one hand, but, at the same time, can get stuck in internal struggles (Bandy & Smith, 2005, pp. 231–232).

This also affects the allocation and use of resources that highly influence their capacity to act. This comprises not only financial resources that are necessary for travelling, translation and campaigning, but also the discursive capacity of trade unions and/or the commitment and willingness of national trade unions to foster transnational action (Lévesque & Murray, 2010b, p. 240). Hence, stabilization mechanisms for trade unions' action of solidarity are needed at different levels: among the members of single organisations and concerning the interaction with other organizations. Therefore, national or sectoral unions' support and empowerment of local unions to engage in cross-border alliances as well as international brokers, such as international regulations or international actors, are relevant (Lévesque & Murray, 2010b, p. 242).

3.3 Need for new forms of Interaction

Another condition for solidarity is the existence of interaction processes within the group. However, on a transnational level, we have to distinguish interactions between representatives of collective actors or organisations and individuals, respectively members of these organisations. In general, however, we can assume: when these interactions are dense, i.e., when members of a group have increasingly more interaction experiences with each other, a strong consciousness of interdependence can be developed boosting solidarity within the group. Labour solidarity was and still is based on the experience of precarious work and living conditions and on the demand for a just distribution of resources. The opposition to capital included an international form of class solidarity that, however, remained weak. From beside union organisations the respective goals are promoted by campaigning and mobilising, coalition building as well as negotiation and exchange with other political actors or employers – albeit to a different extent according to the traditions of the respective countries (Crouch & Streeck, 2006).

With globalization, the outsourcing of production and competition between countries questions and fosters transnational solidarity of unions at the same time. International interdependence of production has increased and the emergence of digital communication, simultaneous and real time interaction processes of different actors or groups located in different corners of the world have become possible. At the same time, they are still complicated due to existing problems of language and competition between different groups of workers, possibly in different countries.

For the association of workers, respectively unions on the European level, the question is, whether forms of interaction can be created that are able to bridge gaps of established national forms of organization and action shaped by different ideological ideas and national institutional contexts and experiences as well as to overcome competition. A central prerequisite for transnationalisation thus is to engage in frequent interactions, develop a common discourse, create networks and organizational structures and institutions as well as to mobilise for collective action. In societies with higher degrees of division and specialization, these interactions and mutual associations may change or reorder the relations within a group of different organisations and help to develop a common identity with respect to union representatives as well as individual members (see above).

This may also give way to collective action based on (new) cultural expressions and/or goals that oppose to certain practices and meanings of the main society, respectively the 'home society'. In this sense, solidarity is part of a transformative process that may enable collective action that bears a certain conflict against the social context allowing for the potential emergence of new ideas and structures (Fantasia, 2012, p. 234). These conflicts and practices may appear in different socio-geographical levels and may not depend on face-to-face interactions.

According to the general discussion of the prerequisites of solidarity in a globalized world, we well understand the great challenges to develop solidarity among workers and their organisations across borders, respectively on the transnational level. At the same time, however, the emergence of European trade union organisations and their actions, as well as the creation of European Works Councils, but also various

occasions of cross border collective action among workers at the workplace level, give evidence that different forms of transnational workers' solidarity already have emerged (Bernaciak, 2010; Rosenbohm & Hertwig, 2021, pp. 141–154). We therefore want to develop a concept that helps us to understand and to distinguish these different forms of transnational solidarity and their prerequisites.

4 Towards a more integrated concept

In the following we line out and enlarge a concept of Morgan & Pulignano (2020) that distinguishes different types of solidarity, relating different motives, respectively resources at the discourse level with particular conditions and levels of aggregation. Complementing the concepts of Engler as well as Kotthoff & Whittall (2014) or Lévesque & Murray (2010b, 2010a), who emphasized the different outcomes and limits of solidarity-based cohesions, this concept manages to make tangible the contradictory dynamic of solidarity as the authors are showing ties of compensation regarding (cross-border) exclusiveness with the possibilities of inclusion. This overall gives an idea, how the already discussed prerequisites of solidarity may be developed, combined or substituted on the transnational level, taking into account different places of action in a multi-level system.

With reference to Putnam (2001), they highlight 'bonding' and 'bridging' elements. While the first emphasizes the similarity within the group and the strength that this gives the group to act together, the second requires the development and maintenance of common discourses, networks of collaboration and organisational structures. When bonds are weak, the bridging provides strength of collaboration also beyond relatively isolated moral communities. Hence, the resulting kind of solidarity is socially constructed and institutionally embedded (Morgan & Pulignano, 2020, p. 20). When bonds are strong in local workplaces with face to face contacts, they may act on rather exclusive principles of solidarity. Hence, bridging becomes more difficult with spatial distance and fractioned interests, i.e. due to sector or national contexts and therefore becomes more important for transnational acts of solidarity.

According to Morgan & Pulignano (2020), types of bonding and bridging may differ according to different types of solidarity, that are defined by them according to resources at the discourse level, namely (a) *language of morality*, (b) *political calculation and coalition* as well as (c) *the understanding of the rituals, symbols and narratives of a particular context*. In this understanding, (a) *language of morality* binds into relationships which go, and are based on doing "the right thing". This motive may be less generalizable – overall when coupled with a strong feeling of belongingness and identity. In contrast to this, the (b) *political calculation and coalition building* is based on "developing a collective understanding of the situation of different groups of actors and/or how this can be defended or improved by collective action" (Morgan & Pulignano, 2020, p. 22). Even bonds may be forged around political programs and issues, but need active and often compromising forms of coalition building and success in order to be maintained over time. Disadvantages in their long-term interest are mutually accepted in the expectation that the others will behave likewise. However, political calculation may bear a problem of mobilization due to a missing moral vision.

In the reading of the authors, another resource of discourse is (c) *the power of rituals, symbols and rhetorical appeals and vocabularies* that may turn on mythologizing of past struggles and the reconstruction of new meanings as 'bonding'. It is prone to emerge as a bursting "forth of energy" from often unanticipated events to defend traditional expectations of moral norms of solidarity or to oppose the status quo. This *performative form of solidarity* emerges – according to Morgan & Pulignano – in more or less spontaneous actions related to spectacles, rituals and narratives, often performed by both old and new marginalized groups. Although this often enables 'bridging', it is a more unstable force of solidarity. The authors recog-

nize that the different resources of solidarity strongly interact, involving “moral frameworks, political calculation and coalitions, and an understanding of the rituals, symbols and narratives of particular contexts” (Morgan & Pulignano, 2020, p. 24).

Moreover, the authors (2020, pp. 24–27) explicate, how these different resources as well as bridging and bonding develop according to different levels of action, firstly the workplace and the community; secondly the organisational level of trade unions; and thirdly the institutional level. These levels of action are defined by formal and informal norms, which shape the conditions under which collective action can take place and solidarity can be expressed. Thus, their concept helps to disentangle the complexity of solidarity. According to the above given definition of solidarity, the *‘language of morality’* is closely linked to the ‘moral or altruistic motive’, while *‘political calculation and coalition’* is related to the ‘rational, interest related or cooperative motive’ of solidarity. Furthermore, *‘the understanding of the rituals, symbols and narratives of a particular context’* seems to be necessary to form a joint discourse, create a common identity and mobilise for collective action. This can help to bridge different interests based on national, sectoral or other fractions – albeit with different capacities. Moreover, the idea that forms of interaction are linked to different ‘places’ or levels of already aggregated forms of solidarity within organisations and institutionalised interactions within a multi-level system seems to be important. However, a more detailed concept that connects the above named discussion on identity as a process, stabilisation mechanisms and borders as well as forms of interaction to the concrete places and levels of organisational or institutional aggregation of workers within the transnational space of the European Union within the state of the art still marks a desideratum.

5 A multidimensional conceptual framework of transnational workers’ solidarity in the EU

As we have seen in the previous sections, globalisation has challenged the idea of clear borders and ‘given’ identities in a group as prerequisites to solidarity and widened the fields and levels where solidaristic interactions between collective or individual actors may occur. On that background we want to design a multi-dimensional framework for transnational solidarity in the field of work in Europe. Against the background the previous discussion we acknowledge particular stabilisation mechanisms in combination with borders of ‘groups’. We highlight (new) bonding and bridging elements in this context as being relevant to the process of identity creation and group formation. Moreover, we distinguish different motives and relate them to different forms of interaction between collective and individual actors.

In this respect we overall understand

- **Stabilisation mechanisms as forms of institutionalisation – from the outside or inside**

Institutions and formal regulations, founded by the EU treaties or EU directives, are seen as external stabilisation mechanisms supporting the organisation and consultation of workers’ organisations at EU-level. In contrast, internal stabilization mechanisms are seen in the establishment of transnational union organisations that overall build on support and power resources of the national organisations. Often external and internal stabilization mechanisms interact, as for example the ‘borders’ of the group with respect to membership in the (umbrella) union federations or works councils at European level are defined by the institutional settings of the EU. Within and sometimes even beyond these borders, however, membership and group formation in cross border action or networks is less formalized.

- **Group⁴ formation as a process of bonding and bridging**

Even when borders of the (umbrella) organisations or works councils at European level are more or less given, bonding elements based on identity or common interests have to be developed within a process. Thus, they are very much depending on bridging elements like common discourses, using rituals, symbols and rhetorical appeals as well as practice of joint interaction and mobilization to create mutual understanding and trust. However, according to particular issues or events also new and less formal groups – even within these organisations – may emerge and create new cross border networks or organizational structures or just be occasionally based on a common interest concerning a particular issue.

- **Motives and forms of interactions**

In general, we expect motives based on rather rational considerations that inspire coalition building and organisational setups to represent workers' interests. Hence, forms of interaction within transnational union organisations would be exchange of information, but also negotiations to find joint positions and bundle power resources to enforce them. Interactions with actors beyond the unions include consultation and negotiation within social dialogue or other institutional settings. But also agenda setting within the transnational discourse is relevant.

However, a combination with moral motives seems to be necessary for building transnational identities within these organisations as prerequisite for mobilization and collective action. These forms of interaction themselves not only help to create a common identity, but also power resources to promote workers' interests – overall when these include oppositional or transformative positions. This may also allow to open up to social movements or other interest groups sharing these convictions and thus blurring organizational boundaries. Moreover, less formal cross border actions of solidarity at the workplace may be primarily inspired by moral motives as they are prone to mobilise in order to defend marginalized interests or claim for support to hinder developments that may infringe workers' interests.

Our transnational solidarity model allows to see solidaristic actions beyond borders and, at the same time, to focus on the structure of these actions. Following Morgan & Pulignano, we can understand the different resources and levels of transnational solidarity. By complementing their theory with Engler's preconditions for solidarity, we develop a multidimensional and multilevel framework where different discourses, identity formation processes, borders, forms of interaction and stabilization mechanisms can be studied together in specific 'places' where solidaristic actions take place. By focusing on the structure of these actions as well as on their formation and operating processes, we would like to contribute to an idea of transnational solidarity that can be found and reconstructed in specific given 'places'.

We suppose – in line with Lahusen (2020b) – that all the preconditions mentioned above, motives and forms of interaction vary very much with the level of organizational aggregation. We therefore concentrate on different 'places' of solidarity in the field of work in the European sphere. We understand these 'places'

⁴ As 'group' we assume, both associations of individuals as well as of collective actors. Hence, different national organisations – or their representatives act as members in transnational umbrella associations may develop solidaristic action, as well as individuals as constituency of work place organisations or local cross border action – albeit on different terms.

of solidarity as fields where solidaristic actions may arise:

- a) the political arena of the EU, respectively EU institutions** and the actions of federal European union organisations, but also of national organisations, to influence decisions taken by EU institutions,
- b) multi-national enterprises** and institutionalized or organized representatives of workers in the companies, as for example in European Works councils, and
- c) cross national, regional or local organisations and actions**, possibly linked to particular workplaces, respectively driven by individual actors, promoting cross border action.

In the following, we give a brief overview on how we expect the different preconditions, motives and forms of interaction relate to transnational solidarities at the named places. This is to be understood as a kind of assumption deduced from the state of research that, however, has to be explored by empirical research in order to be confirmed or neglected.

a) The political arena of the EU is a multi-level space (Sonnicksen, 2021, pp. 4–5) and a transnational arena, where the European federations of trade unions were created by national unions to represent European employees and to lobby according to their interests. Hence, they should influence the European public discourse and the decision-making processes within the institutions of the European Union. But also an internal exchange of information and opinions within the trade union movement and to the programmatic level is relevant (Baum, 2018).

As the creation of the respective federations entails various forms of transnational cooperation, already the existence of these organisations can be regarded as a form of enacted solidarity. In this sense, transnational European trade unions and employers' organisations can be seen as solidaristic actions in themselves. They are bridging national differences and share resources on the base of embedded forms of solidarity. Motives may be related overall to political calculation and coalition building and to engage in the social dialogue. We see different bonding commonalities: For example the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) as an encompassing umbrella organisation encloses more or less the entire camp of labour organisations, while others, like IndustriAll join sectoral associations (Müller, 2012). All these organisations, however, may be considered as highly institutionalized and stable.

To all these organisations the EU itself sets 'borders' for membership and functions as a kind of stabilisation mechanism. Membership in the European federations of trade unions is strongly related to unions of EU member states or countries with already formalised membership aspirations (Mitchell, 2014) – albeit there are exceptions as for example the unions organising the transport sector. The EU is providing support and recognition when enacting particular regulations concerning rights and opportunities of consultation and working relations, for example as partners within the social dialogue (Dølvik & Visser, 2001). Beyond the organisations themselves, also the forms of interaction they have with the European institutions can be seen as solidaristic actions. Interest representation via consultation and negotiation within the different forms of the social dialogue or lobbying European institutions and policy making in order to launch workers' interests and concrete demands are examples of how trade unions and employers' organisations enact solidarity. But also mobilization is an issue, although in concrete a 'day of action and solidarity' may manifest in rather different forms in the different countries (Mitchell, 2014).

The creation of European Union federations and their willingness of joint action may be regarded as a kind of institutionalised and stabilised transnational solidarity per se. Decision making within these institutions and organisations as well as collective action, however, face the above-named problems of transnational solidarity. Problems of diversity and heterogeneity may arise as problems between different (national) organisations within the federations (Mitchell, 2014). Single members or groups of members may have different interests and ideas due to national or sectoral economic conditions or types of industrial relations.

They may defend national modes of governance in form of particular regulations of co-determination or compete for employment opportunities in their countries being positively or negatively influenced by certain regulations. The resulting fractious connections may go along with an unequal distribution of power resources and give rise to struggles or claims of domination. Hence, the promotion of acts of solidarity and its permanent renewal on the basis of discourse and identity creation based on relations of (mutual) support "despite differences" among various organisations (Hyman, 2004) are also goals of internal coordination.

In order to build a socially constructed group also feelings of identity and belongingness of individual members in different European countries as European workers have to be created. The use of the power of rituals, symbols and rhetorical appeals and vocabularies may help to create a shared identity. This can lead to internal cohesion between peers creating social relations driven by a sense of reciprocity, group commitment, mutual responsibilities and obligations (Lahusen, 2020a, p. 301). To some extent the individual members' readiness to engage in solidarity with other union members of other countries is a prerequisite for support and mobilization (similar to Lahusen & Grasso, 2018, pp. 266–267)⁵. This seems to be given with respect to provide financial resources to European Federations. However, so far transnational mobilization seems to be often initiated 'top down' using more or less symbolic actions to support particular issues. Cross border collective action seems to be linked to rhetorical appeals etc. and to provoke only symbolic action (Mitchell, 2014) rather than – up to date – to the mobilization of manifest strike action.

We propose to focus on solidaristic actions within the multilevel framework of the EU on at least two points. On the one hand, the organisation of trade unions and employers' organisations as such, their coordination and networking as well as, on the other hand, the concrete actions, which they are part of or they promote such as lobbying, media campaigns and consultations, among others. It is within these organisations and actions where we see a more or less stabilised transnational solidarity backed up by the institutionalised context of the EU.

b) Multi-national companies are another 'place' for workers to enact solidarity. We perceive the founding of European Works Councils as an act of solidarity in a multi-national company. The founding act of an EWC is based on the EU Directive 94/45/EC, which was updated by Directive 2009/38/EC in 2011 and enables EWCs⁶. This directive serves as external stabilization mechanism and framework of acts of cross-national, company-wide collective action. It regulates the information and consultation of employees with regard to company-related developments on a transnational level and can foster a dialogue between company management and employees (Waas, 2009). Without this directive as transnational regulation, or in our words stabilization mechanism, Platzer & Rüb (1999) expect transnational workers representation existing to a lesser extent. In practice, EWC activity can range from the mere symbolic existence of the institution EWC to "powerful actors at European level which influence management decisions through negotiation" (Pulignano & Waddington, 2020, p. 7). Hence, although the directive is regulating transnational

⁵ Here also the difference between solidarity and collective action may be anchored. As solidarity can be linked to very different rules, norms and motivations (see also Lahusen, 2020b, p. 13), the transformation in joint collective action, needs identity work (Greer and Hauptmeier, 2012). This is based on narratives and frames within public or organizational discourse highlighting common threats, legitimate needs and/or common demands to strengthen mutual interests and overcome existing differences. This might be achieved by addressing ideal goals related to a desire for transformation – in relation to particular issues – as spontaneous forms of cooperation or collective action. We would consider them as transnational solidarity when indicating cross border or transnational cooperation on a mutual base or active help to those in need.

⁶ We acknowledge that other forms of more or less institutionalized places, such as Transnational Company Agreements or Societas Europaeae do exist in the context of European transnational working relations where acts of solidarity can and do appear. However, within this working paper, we focus on European Works Councils only.

collective action, the implementation of the directive is depending heavily on the actors' willingness, especially the willingness of the respective management (Pulignano & Waddington, 2020).

Internal stabilization mechanisms are regulated within the respective EWC agreements, negotiated by the EWC and the management of the respective multi-national company. This gives a minimum standard on, e.g. the number of meetings, the provision of training or translation, communication facilities, or the coverage of expenses. This also means that each negotiated agreement under this directive may vary or enclose other topics of the founding procedure (Gies, 2018, pp. 130–147). Moreover, we expect company-wide rules and the ongoing development of EWC traditions to serve as internal stabilization mechanisms, while at the same time we acknowledge that other regulations, "regime shopping" (Streeck, 1992), national traditions of collective action and labour dispute might likewise impede transnational collective action (Hann et al., 2017; Seifert, 2019; Spiegelaere & Waddington, 2017). According to Haipeter et al. (2019), positive effects of transnational collective action in multi-national companies often are based on resources, sources of power and a positive attitude towards the representation of employees' interests on the national level. Overall, transnational acts of solidarity are highly dependent on the composition of the EWC whose actions might be influenced by varying dimensions such as nationality, culture, language or tradition of industrial relations of the respective members (Hürtgen, 2011; Kerckhofs, 2017; Klemm et al., 2011).

Due to this fragmentation and diversity of transnational collective action within EWCs, processes of bonding and bridging are particularly relevant and fluid. Along with Morgan & Pulignano (2020) we perceive the transnational work of EWC as a constant process of group formation and identity-definition (see also Kotthoff & Whittall, 2014). We expect bonding on a company-level especially during the development of a common interest of the EWC which evolves during their exchange in preparation and during the assessment of content presented by the management in the course of information (e.g. about restructuring of the company). Throughout processes of consultation this common interest or common identity might become even stronger due to the fact that during such a dialogue and exchange of views the common identity as worker in opposition to the management might be emphasized.

Due to the fact that the EWC is an institution which consists of employee representatives from different company sites from more than one European country, processes of bridging are fundamental for transnational collective action. We expect bridging to mostly be promoted by trade unions on the national as well as the transnational level. Trade unions accompany and support the EWC during their work at the transnational level. At the same time, they serve as linking element supporting transnational action, fostering collaboration and enabling exchange (see above). Moreover, trade unions have the right to appoint an expert especially in charge to accompany EWCs during their work, which often serves as EWC coordinator for the respective European Trade Union Federation. This EWC coordinator supports EWCs and links them with trade unions and European Trade Union Federations (Rüb et al., 2013). With this expertise and knowledge of transnational collective action, this EWC expert can foster processes of bridging within the body of the EWC.

In terms of the motives of solidarity within the context of multi-national companies, we first and foremost expect political calculation in a sense of building strategic coalitions within the body of the EWC. In an economically-driven context where matters of company restructuring might threaten jobs and hereby worker's financial basis, EWC members aim at finding a common solution (Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012). In order to speak with a common voice towards the management, political alliances may emerge in certain cases even when the EWC usually does not work collaboratively (Kotthoff & Whittall, 2014). Equally, the language of morality and hereby the constant construction of a workers "we" against a management "them" is of relevance. In a negotiation setting between the management and the EWC, where power resources are shared unequally, this discursive distinction necessarily occurs (see Marginson & Keune, 2012 with the focus on the European social dialogue). Hence, motives for transnational collective action often arise in the course of interaction.

Rational interests and considerations have to be considered as guiding elements of EWC work especially in times of crisis and potential restructuring. In these situations, members of the EWC have to represent the workers interest towards the management which has to be reconciled with the economically-driven interests of the company. A common interest of the EWC, which is also in line with employees' interests shapes their behaviour. At the same time, identity work, e.g. through regular face-to-face meetings for cross-national exchange can foster relations of trust and solidarity amongst EWC members. Greer and Hauptmeier (2008, 2012) even give evidence for processes of solidaristic action with the aim to "share the pain" in times of crisis (Greer & Hauptmeier, 2008, p. 94). With reference to the famous case of General Motors they say: "Because of the union leaders' framing of interests and problems, development of shared norms and goals, strengthening of social ties and building trust within the EWC, and mobilization of workers more broadly, labour transnationalism emerged and was sustained in the face of conflicts of material interest" (Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012, p. 276). The authors outline, that questions of a common identity and a self-definition as worker are relevant aspects throughout labour dispute. Moreover, training (implemented by national trade unions as well as ETUC) of EWC members is not only aiming at developing skills and knowledge, it is much more an opportunity to foster a stronger self-understanding as unionist which entails a specific attitude and values (Föhrer & Erne, 2017; Forrester, 2010).

c) Cross national, regional or local organisations and actions: We also see more *informal phenomena of solidaristic action in the sphere of work relations*. Gould (2020, pp. 23–24) understands transnational solidarity organized "in terms of overlapping networks of relations between individuals or groups and distantly situated others (again, individuals or groups), in which the former aim to support the latter through actions to eliminate oppression or reduce suffering". This is overall expressed in (local) cross border initiatives related to particular workplaces or organisations, respectively network based forms of mobilisation (Lindell, 2010, 2011; Üyüç, 2021). Particular situations, such as closure of plants in different locations, spontaneous cross-border support to workers on strike, help in times of crisis or precarious transnational working conditions in a particular sector (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2017) may lead to mobilization and collective action, respectively concrete support of exploited work-migrants as forms of interaction. These forms of less formalized solidaristic actions are shaped by specific transnational (de)regulations such as the situation of mobile workers under the Posted Workers Directive or the austerity measures during the economic crisis.

Although such cross national, regional or local solidaristic action does not rely on institutionalized structures, we perceive existing internal stabilization mechanisms as supporting factors. For example, trade unions can serve as network throughout mobilization of (cross)national labour movements. They do possess structures, knowledge and channels of communication which informal labour movements can make use of (Üyüç, 2021). However, in informal working contexts traditional collective action governed by trade unions reaches its limits. Therefore, trade unions either have to extend their scope of action "beyond the sphere of production" (Lindell, 2008, p. 219) or cooperate with other actors such as e.g. social movements or local organisations (Köhler & Calleja Jiménez, 2015). In the past years, informal mobilization and self-organized collective action of e.g. "rider unions" in the food delivery sector have emerged. These examples show that it is possible "to organise the unorganisable" (Chesta et al., 2019, p. 822) and hereby establish new forms of solidaristic action. Nevertheless, due to the fluidity of informal action of solidarity, group formation processes rely heavily on bridging. For instance, social media as a tool of communication and mobilization, e.g. of for a riders strike across the country are essential for collective action (Tassinari & Maccarrone, 2017; Üyüç, 2021).

While also these types of solidaristic actions may enclose rationales of self-interest, they are often dominated by a 'moral motive', namely to help those in struggle or in need by sharing or redistributing resources. Hence, they are most likely to make use of symbolic and rhetorical appeals and vocabularies. These forms

of transnational mobilization are often linked to local and/or time-dependent situations and therefore may not be stable. In the case of the riders movement, collective action ranges from rather symbolic action on May Day to stronger measures such as e.g. a strike mass which was organised by Deliveroo employees in Milan (Chesta et al., 2019, p. 826). Hence, in these informal settings of solidaristic action, we perceive a variety of activities to organise this kind of action which comprise non-traditional, new concepts but might also be closely intertwined with traditional actors and activities. More independent are spontaneous acts of cross border solidarity that are often based on motives of morality. These may create 'bottom up' initiatives that, however, can result in the creation of more institutionalized forms of support with relation to particular problems. Moreover, morally motivated cross border action at the workplace seems to be a most relevant interaction to create a shared identity among individual workers in Europe that forms a grounding element to the power resources of the more institutionalized organisations acting at the European level.

Hence, there are strong linkages between the different places of solidaristic action. To some extent the stability of the European Union federations – and even more of European Works Councils – are leaned on the supranational structure and rule setting of the EU defining competences and opportunities of representation. In concrete we refer to institutions or actors that are created 'in the shadow' of the EU or even by EU regulations. At the same time, however, the interlinkage with more spontaneous forms of solidaristic action seems necessary to create bridging and bonding ties among workers as a founding element of transnational identity, which enables transnational collective action.

6 Conclusion

The developed conceptual framework is able to distinguish different forms of transnational solidarity. This ranges from the creation of transnational organisations or European Works Councils in the shadow of the supranational institution of the EU due to rather rational motives, i.e. information sharing, coalition building and participation in the social dialogue. But it also includes more spontaneous solidaristic actions or actions related to cross border cooperation that are more likely to be motivated in moral motives of solidarity.

It is, however, prone to empirical research to demonstrate whether solidaristic action based on rational-political or moral motives of solidarity have dominated the framing within the transnational discourse or the networking and coalition building with respect to particular issues. According to particular topics, new networks of collective action may create spill overs between different levels and places and thus enable and enlarge the range of solidaristic action. Other topics may challenge established forms of solidarity enhancing fractious interests and action. The respective assessment may only serve as an orientation to a system in flux. Hence, empirical evidence of concrete case studies concerning the named organisations, but also particular forms of cross-national acts of solidarity have to be researched in order to identify when mutual interests can be strengthened and divisions be overcome.

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