Title
Transnational Strategies and their Determinants: Czech Social Movement Organizations Acting Abroad

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Publication Date
2011-11-20
Introduction

Transnational level political activism has recently dwarfed its nationally-bound counterpart in terms of both political and research attention. Since the beginning of the 1990s the European Union (EU) has started to support various interest groups and movement organizations in order to reduce the burning problem of its publicly perceived “democratic deficit,” which has at least partly resulted from the skewed structure of the EU interest groups clearly dominated by business (Greenwood, 2007). Thus a new transnational political mantra emerged: the more interests involved on the EU level, the more chances for European citizens to get involved, and the better for the legitimacy of the EU (Greenwood, 2010). Accordingly, transnational activism began to preoccupy much of the recent political science research.1

For all its focus on the international level, contemporary research seems to have almost forgotten that even the deeply internationalized context of the EU is formed by its constituent states (see Beyers, 2002). Thus in studying transnational social movements and interest organizations, the available studies primarily concentrate on international-level actors. The role of nationally-rooted organizations in transnational politics, namely those expected to provide the link between the citizenry and international institutions in the first place, still remains understudied (but see Beyers, 2002; Kriesi et al., 2007; Poloni-Staudinger, 2008; della Porta and Caiani, 2009; Beyers and Kerremans, 2011 for various West European countries). This gap in the literature pertains especially to activist groups in the new EU member countries (but see Stark et al., 2006). Here lies the main contribution of our paper, which focuses on transnational activism of domestic social movement organizations (SMOs) representing various social movement industries (SMIs) in a new member state, the Czech Republic.

Specifically, this article addresses two main issues: First, it aims to show how the Czech SMOs externalize their strategies and act transnationally, and whether their transnational activities form specific types of repertoire. Thanks to its unique dataset, the paper will be able to show whether transnational activism is the business of an elite group of SMOs alone, or whether a majority of the groups are involved. Second, the article addresses the important debate over EU funding and how it influences transnational activism of local SMOs. In particular, we focus on the role EU resources play in transnational activism: do they have any potential to foster it, or do they create instead additional obstacles for SMOs becoming involved in international political process? While EU funds are expected by their critics to work as a demobilizing and depoliticizing element, others hold them up as an empowering factor enabling SMOs to autonomously engage in political battles (Bell, 2004; Hallstrom, 2004; Fagan, 2004, 2005; Cisař, 2010; Vedres and Bruszt, 2011).
The analysis uses data from an organizational survey of 151 SMOs in eight SMIs in the Czech Republic. Focusing on the case of the Czech Republic is important for two reasons. First, the Czech Republic represents a broader group of Central-East European post-Communist countries that have experienced a massive influx of foreign funding in support of local political activism during the democratization process since 1989, when the old Communist regimes collapsed. In this respect, the lessons learned in this context can be consequential for other democratizing regions, too. The second reason is that empirical evidence on social movements in general and the transnational dimension of social movements in particular is markedly skewed towards the US and West-European countries. There is very little systematic knowledge of what is happening in the region of post-Communist East-Central Europe, and what the outcome is of EU funding in this specific political context. Compared to old EU member states, political activists in the new post-Communist member states face a markedly less conducive environment for their activities, especially in areas such as the environment, and human and minority rights (Ekiert and Kubik, 2001; Howard, 2003; Fagan, 2004; Vermeersch, 2006).

Transnational Activism of Social Movement Organizations

In this paper, transnational activism is conceptualized as an externalization of SMOs’ strategies (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005: 5), which simply means political activism performed abroad. As Tarrow (2004, 2005) explains, under certain conditions SMOs and interest groups externalize political pressure, and start working in a different political arena than the nation-state they originate from. Specifically, while pursuing their political goals, such as striving to change the policies of international institutions and states, SMOs are under certain conditions able to move their activities beyond the borders of their nation-state to increase their leverage over their opponents (see Keck and Sikkink, 1998; della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; della Porta and Caiani, 2009; Beyers and Kerremans, 2011).

According to Tarrow, opportunities for transnational activism have become abundant enough in contemporary international politics as to justify characterizing it as “a dense, triangular structure of relations among states, nonstate actors, and international institutions” (Tarrow, 2005: 25). Nowhere are such opportunities as developed as in the EU. As a result, some authors even expect transnational social movements and civil society to develop on the European level, bringing European policy and decision-making closer to national citizens (Habermas, 1998; Marks and McAdam, 1999; Anheier et al., 2001). Generally, transnational non-state organizations are assumed to play the role of communication channels, connecting international political elite with national publics, and making international institutions more accountable (O’Brien et al., 2000; Keohane, 2002; Buchanan and Keohane, 2006).

However, is the transnationalization of social movement activities generally widespread, or is it rather a very specific pattern characteristic of only a minority of elite activists? Available studies can only provide a limited answer to this question. With some notable exceptions, empirical evidence on the transnationalization of SMOs remains fragmentary. Case studies of specific transnational organizations and international campaigns are generally available (for example, Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Florini, 2000; Wang and Rosenau, 2001; Clark, 2001; della Porta et al., 2006). When social movement scholars focus on social movement industries, they usually select environmental, global justice, and anti-war/peace groups (Rohrschneider and Dalton, 2002; Meyer, 2003; Meyer and Corrígall-Brown, 2005; Doherty, 2006; della Porta et al., 2006; Poloni-Staudinger, 2008; Cisař 2010; Teune 2010) that can in any case be considered the most transnationalized industries of political activism.
There are only a few studies systematically focusing on transnational activism of SMOs in EU member states, and there are no studies including the new member states (to our knowledge, only Stark et al. (2006) studied the effect of transnational ties of Hungarian NGOs on their domestic networking). Imig and Tarrow (2001) studied transnational and domestic protest events in 12 ‘old’ EU member states in the period of 1984–1997. They show that transnational/EU protest events constituted only 2 percent of all protest in 1993-1997 (Imig and Tarrow, 2001: 35-36). Della Porta and Caiani (2009: chap. 3) examined externalization of total 77 SMOs/NGOs, representing three policy sectors in seven West-European countries. As regards domestic SMOs/NGOs, they discovered that both transnational mobilizing and lobbying are performed approximately three times less often than the same activities at the national level (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009: 105; see also Kriesi et al., 2007). Largely the same results were submitted by Beyers (2002) who focused on (public interest) SMOs and economic interest groups in Belgium. All these studies demonstrated that only a minority of the domestic actors studied were actually active at the EU level.

Similarly to Imig and Tarrow (2001), we study all SMIs in the selected case of the Czech Republic; however, since we intend to capture not only protest but also conventional types of action, our research did not rely on protest event analysis as Imig and Tarrow did. We opted for the SMO as a unit of analysis. The same strategy was used by della Porta and Caiani (2009); however, in comparison this paper includes more SMIs and more SMOs, covering not only a few selected organizations, but the whole population of domestic social movements (see data and methods section). In contrast to both studies and similarly to Beyers (2002), this analysis is limited to one country.

Focusing on the transnational action repertoire, including a wide range of activities from demonstrations to lobbying, the conceptual and empirical question of its internal structuring emerges. Is transnational activism a one-dimensional phenomenon, consisting of a number of activities, or should we rather speak of its specific types, formed by certain strategies that ‘go together’ more than other activities? A similar question has been dealt with in the literature on individual-level political participation. Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) showed long ago that the individual level political participation is a multidimensional concept. Accordingly, they and other “individual-level” scholars differentiate among various modes of participation such as protest, political consumerism including boy-/buycotting, individual contacting of officials/lobbying, and party and campaign activity (see Dalton, 2008; Verba et al. 1978). These modes shape people’s individual participation so that if individuals perform one activity from a specific mode, they are also likely to perform other activities included in the same type of mode (Verba et al., 1978: 51-55).

Based on the individual-level findings, we can expect that a similar pattern also exists at the mezzo-level of organizations and their action repertoire. Therefore, we do not expect transnational activism to be a one-dimensional phenomenon and all activities to be equally popular for all SMOs. Rather, we can expect that there are specific types, or particular repertoires, of transnational activities that ‘go together’ (see also Tilly, 2008).

The Role of EU Funding in Transnational Activism

In addition to determining how many organizations act transnationally and what types of activities they use when entering the international arena, this article is interested in how EU funding contributes to or suppresses transnational activism of Czech SMOs. Political activism in Central-Eastern Europe has been foreign-funding dependent since 1989. The dependence on international funding has made it possible for local SMOs to survive organizationally, even without the need to mobilize resources from individual members and/or supporters, which
would anyway be a nearly impossible task in the post-Communist countries, with citizens not interested in civic and political engagement (Howard, 2003). In the first half of the 1990s local SMOs were supported by American and European state and non-state actors; since the end of the 1990s EU funds have become the most important source of funding. The EU began to support a host of local SMOs to create a missing link between the citizens and the European level of decision making. As a result, the ‘Americanization’ of post-Communist SMOs was replaced by their ‘Europeanization’ (Fagan, 2005; Císař and Vrábliková, 2010).

From the beginning of the 1990s, lack of accountability and democratic responsiveness began to be perceived by European citizens and politicians as one of the main obstacles to the continuation of the common European project. Since then, the EU has deliberately opened up to and even started to provide support for external, especially non-business, groups and organizations in its effort to fight this perceived “democratic deficit” (Greenwood, 2007, 2010). The EU not only provides non-state actors with opportunities for political action on the international level, but also directly finances them. By sponsoring its own potential critics, the EU hopes to include all concerned interests and bring its own policies and decision making closer to European citizens. Hence the European Commission spends over a billion Euros each year to support NGOs that advocate public interest issues (Greenwood, 2007). What is the effect of EU funding on the transnational activism of SMOs in our selected case of the Czech Republic?

By consensus the literature has pointed to the EU as the main factor in the activist organizations’ transformation, including their action repertoire (Fagan, 2005; Vermeersch, 2006; Císař and Vrábliková, 2010; Vedres and Bruszt, 2011). However, there are two major perspectives on how EU funding actually works. One group of researchers identifies cooptation as the main effect of EU influence, and associates it with the depoliticization and de-radicalization of SMOs (Bell, 2004; Hallstrom, 2004; Fagan, 2004, 2005). The other group instead sees the SMOs’ increased empowerment as the main result of EU funding, resulting in their ability to engage in high-cost protest activities transnationally (see Císař, 2010; Vedres and Bruszt, 2011).

The Cooptation Hypothesis

Drawing on the generally accepted knowledge, the literature usually assumes that external funding dependency results in the de-radicalization of SMOs (for a review see Jenkins, 1998). This suggests that by providing funds, external institutions actually contribute to the cooptation of SMOs by political elites. The external dependency of social movement organizations results in their professionalization, which “siphons movement activists from grassroots organizing, thereby diverting them from their original goals and demobilizing the movements” (Jenkins, 1998: 212). Hence, according to this general thesis, the external agents, by some accounts consciously, help through their funding to transform militant movements into more moderate and less contentious actors.

This argument has recently been taken up by the critics of foreign patronage in East-Central Europe. In this perspective, this process of cooptation was initiated back in the early 1990s; nevertheless, as EU funding gained in importance in the second half of the decade, the pressure towards further moderation and “institutional procedures – lobbying, consulting on draft legislation, researching and writing reports and opinions, attending public meetings” – increased even more (Hicks, 2004: 225).

According to the cooptation thesis, international patronage in general and EU funding in particular impede popular contention and protest by creating professional NGOs, whose main goal is grant seeking, instead of helping establish independent non-state and non-
business challengers to the EU bureaucracy (McMahon, 2001; Narozhna, 2004; Fagan, 2004, 2005). From this perspective, the main goal of the EU is not to contribute to the building of autonomous agents of social change in the form of capable SMOs, but to co-opt them in nonpublic, routinized interactions and information exchange. The EU might well be interested in what SMOs think; it is not, however, interested in their autonomous capacity for staging public collective action whenever they deem necessary. Therefore, while the EU prompts SMOs to engage in conferences, seminars, round tables, policy consultancy, and individual contacts with European institutions, it is not interested in contributing to the collective, or protest, capacities of these organizations (Marks and McAdam, 1999).

How is the EU said to accomplish this goal? Its primary tool is funding. In order to qualify for funding, SMOs must abandon protest in favour of policy monitoring, media politics, and lobbying. Furthermore, they lose the ability to independently determine their agenda; organizations’ goals now have to fit EU preferences (Hallstrom, 2004; Bell, 2004; Hicks, 2004). Indebted to their donor, how can SMOs be independent challengers of the EU? According to the cooptation perspective, SMOs adjust their repertoire, agenda, and organizational structure to EU requirements in order to get funded. As a result, in terms of their action repertoire these organizations prefer cooperation with political authorities to more contentious forms of claims making. Therefore, based on this cooptation thesis, reliance on EU funding decreases transnational protest and should encourage less contentious and non-public types of action, particularly lobbying, information provision, and media politics (see also Kriesi et al., 2007).

Cooptation scholars argue that in order to facilitate the emergence of more autonomous and contentious social movement actors, the SMOs should change the revenue structure of their budgets in favour of individual contributions generated from within their countries. It is argued that such a change would allow for a more independent agenda on the part of the local SMOs than is presently the case. This agenda would mirror the needs of local population instead of EU requirements. In addition, as they would be freed from reporting obligations towards the donor, they would also be free to engage in more contentious collective action.

The Empowerment Hypothesis

Compared to the cooptation argument, an alternative perspective on the role of EU funding in transnational activism draws on a somewhat broader thesis, that of channelling. Craig Jenkins (1998: 212) argues that funding agencies’ “goals are complex”, thus it is not possible to see them merely as tools of strategic moderation. In his research on US social movements Jenkins shows that channelling did indeed take place: external foundation funding did not necessarily lead to cooptation and goal displacement, in other words grant-seeking, on the part of SMOs; rather, it contributed to the professionalization of some components of the movements, and “allowed them to consolidate their gains and protect themselves against attack” (Jenkins 1998: 215). According to his research, the US social movements’ activities were not co-opted, but channelled towards professionalization that did not necessarily diminish the militancy of their collective action.

A similar interpretation has been argued for the role of EU support in those EU member states which did not at the time provide domestic SMOs with conducive conditions for political action. Effectively, EU support helped these groups to become ‘emancipated’ from their unfavourable domestic context, and play the ‘EU card’ in their effort to by-pass their national governments. In their study of biodiversity policy in the generally non-conducive UK context, Fairbrass and Jordan (2001) demonstrated the empowering effect of
the European Commission on local environmental groups, which in direct cooperation with European institutions started to play a pivotal role in the implementation of EU biodiversity-related directives. By focusing on a critical case in a domestic context that was closed to the demands of actors in question, Fairbrass and Jordan argued for an empowering effect of EU intervention regarding transnational action in domestically non-supportive – conservative – environments.

In terms of both political elite and population support, the post-Communist Czech Republic provides us with a case of a similarly closed environment regarding the demands of virtually all domestic SMOs and voluntary associations, including trade unions as well as environmentalists, feminists, minority rights advocates, and LGBT groups (Ost, 2000; Saxonberg, 2003; Fagan, 2004; Vermeersch, 2006). If these organizations were to primarily rely on a local constituency, they would mirror its rather conservative stance, and never engage in open political conflicts. Hence those local organizations that became relatively contentious policy advocates became capable of challenging the prevailing social norms not in spite of their foreign dependency, but thanks to it.

There is no reason to believe that they would be more autonomous and/or radical if they mobilized resources via individual aggregation. Nearly every type of resource mobilization entails more or less explicitly some kind of commitment to the source of money. We should not automatically assume that if SMOs relied on individual membership dues or donations by ordinary citizens that they would be more independent, more radical, and more inclined to protest. Exactly the opposite can be true if the constituency the SMOs rely on shares anti-activist attitudes and demands that they be observed by the groups who represent them.

Regarding the issue of minority rights in the Czech Republic, the overall context can be seen as non-conducive in terms of support from both the domestic elite and the population (Vermeersch, 2006). Yet one can find organizations using radical strategies such as litigation designed to fight the discriminatory practices of the majority population against the Roma minority. It was EU funding that helped activate these groups to gain autonomy from the domestic context and help the implementation of EU anti-discrimination policies. Given the rather negative attitude of post-Communist populations towards the Roma minority, it is doubtful whether these organizations would use such strategies if they were to decide to mobilize individual contributors. Similarly, in a qualitative comparative study of two Czech environmental SMOs, Císař (2010) shows that the group that depended on foreign patronage was actually more contentious than the one financed by the ‘independent’ source, i.e. individuals. Since the local population was not willing to support what it viewed as a radical environmental agenda such as the anti-nuclear campaign, the locally embedded organization had to observe the popular and from the point of view of environmentalism conservative attitude.

According to the empowerment argument, we can formulate the following expectation: external dependency does not necessarily decrease transnational political action, but under certain conditions can foster it. In contrast to the cooptation thesis, the empowerment argument sees EU funds as the factor that gives SMOs in conservative contexts, such as those characteristic of the Czech Republic and other Central-East European states such as Poland and Slovakia, the autonomy to act on the international level. By providing know-how and prioritizing issues that are relevant to EU institutions and/or across EU member states, we assume that EU money will work as a ‘elevator’ to transnational politics. Therefore, based on the empowerment thesis, we expect EU funding to increase all types of transnational activism, including protest.
Controls

While interested in the impact of EU funding, we control for other factors derived from the resource mobilization theory as well as internationally mobilizing grievances/issues. As the adherents of the resource mobilization paradigm pointed out long ago, contemporary organized political activism is based on the availability of resources, such as money and the way it is mobilized, and human and organizational resources (see McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Cress and Snow, 1996; Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). As specified above, this study is particularly interested in one type of resource mobilization – EU funding. However, there are other important resource factors that can influence transnational activism, and we need to control for them.

First, while important domestically, material/financial resources play an even bigger role in transnational activism. It is more costly for an organization to act politically externally than in its domestic context; thus only most resourceful national activists are usually expected to be active on the international level (Marks and McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 2005). Therefore we control for SMOs’ income/size of budget.

The second group of resource factors that our analysis controls for is international organizational resources (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004; Cress and Snow, 1996), namely whether the organization has access through its transnational network to an office at the EU level that clearly contributes to SMOs’ transnational activism (Tarrow, 2005; Doherty, 2006). Members of transnational organizations typically have access to such an office.

Next, although disregarded for a long time by the mainstream social movement scholarship, mobilizing grievances have recently been rediscovered as an important determinant of social movement mobilization and strategy choice. Grievances can be defined as collectively shared and perceived problems serious enough to lead to a social movement mobilization (Snow and Soule, 2010: 24). They are addressed by SMOs in the form of issue campaigns. In the case of transnational activism, it makes a difference whether the grievance a group deals with originates primarily at the national or international level. Similarly, Rohrschneider and Dalton (2002) study the international orientation of environmental NGOs. Their analysis shows that a focus on international issues over national ones has a positive influence on the transnational cooperation of an environmental organization. Therefore we control for the effect of the international grievance/issue: an organization focusing on grievances originating primarily at the international/European level should be more inclined to act transnationally.

Data and Method

The study aims at analyzing the whole population of SMOs in one country – the Czech Republic. In other words, the paper concentrates on the country’s social movement sector (SMS) defined by McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1220) as consisting “of all SMIs in a society”. The SMI includes “all SMOs that have as their goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement” (McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1219). In short, it is a social movement. Finally, an SMO is a “complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals” (McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1218). We use the acronym ‘SMO’ interchangeably with the words ‘activist group’ and ‘organization’.

Several strategies can be used to determine what specific SMOs constitute the SMS and/or SMI. Authors usually either rely on official directories such as NGO yearbooks and various registers (Minkoff, 1994, 1999; Minkoff et al., 2008; Smith, 2002; Bruszt and Vedres,
2011), or draw on data coming from protest event analysis in order to determine what SMOs belong to a specific SMI or SMS (Everett, 1992; Soule and King, 2007). This paper uses a different strategy. Our research did not go to the official directories since the goal was to also include informal groups that are not officially registered. Besides, only a general list of thousands registered NGOs exists in the Czech Republic; however, this study is focused on social movements, which form a more specific category. Taking into account the media selection bias especially regarding radical groups, and the fact that social movements in Eastern Europe tend not to use protest often, protest event analysis was employed for selection of particular SMOs only to a limited extent.

In order to study the Czech SMS, the most important SMIs were selected on the basis of the results of a protest event analysis executed in 2007, as well as previous case studies, and according to the industries that are usually studied by social movement literature. Hence, environmental, women’s rights, gay and lesbian, civil rights, agrarian, social services, radical Left and Right groups, and trade unions were selected. Due to the inaccessibility of radical Right groups, our research was able to study all of the industries but theirs. Within respective SMIs, we followed Diani’s definition of social movements as “a network of groups, associations, and individuals” (della Porta and Diani, 2006: 4) to decide on the sampling method of individual SMOs. Specifically, the snow-ball sampling method was used to capture the networks of activist organizations and include the organizations relevant from the point of view of political actors themselves. An individual SMO was included as a member of a specific industry if it 1) was mentioned at least two times by other members of that SMI as belonging to it, and 2) identified itself with the SMI or the goals this SMI focused on (see McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1220). As a result, the dataset of the Czech SMS includes 151 organizations, distributed among the individual industries as follows: 26 environmental, 29 women’s rights, 18 gay and lesbian, 24 civil rights, 9 agrarian, 15 social services, 16 radical Left and 14 trade union organizations. The response rate was high, ranging from 69 to 80 percent in individual industries. In order to take into account our sampling method, when first particular industries and subsequently individual organizations were selected, the analysis uses hierarchical modelling (Hox 2002). The selected organizations constitute the first level of analysis and their industries are included as the second level structure (so-called random effect).

Our organizational survey was conducted in the period of October 2007 – December 2008. Key informant face-to-face interviewing using a standardized questionnaire was employed in order to obtain information from the representatives of selected organizations.

Dependent Variable

We asked the SMO representatives whether their organization performed some of the listed activities abroad within the last two years. Figure 1 displays the items. In order to study specific modes of transnational activism, a principal component analysis was conducted. The predicted factor scores for three obtained dimensions of transnational activism are used as dependent variables for the subsequent hierarchical regression analysis. Transnational lobbying ranges from -1,1 to 4; transnational protest ranges from -1 to 5,4; and transnational public persuasion ranges from -1,8 to 3,1.
Independent Variables

Percentage of EU grants: In order to indicate EU funding, we use proportion of budget covered by the EU, which the SMO representatives were asked to estimate. Using proportion instead of the absolute number shows the relative importance of EU funding from the perspective of organizations themselves. SMOs not receiving EU grants at all were coded 0.

Controls

Budget: Budget is indicated by the question on the total income/size of the SMO budget in 2006. Because of missing data in the case of some of the trade union organizations that refused to answer this question, the values of this variable were recoded. The new coding consists of ten values that represent ten groups of equal size. A qualified estimate was made to measure the cases with missing value on this variable.

Office at the EU level: This variable is measured by the question on whether and what type of a multi-level territorial organizational structure the SMO has. Those groups that indicated having an EU level organizational unit are coded 1, the remaining organizations 0.

International grievances/issues: SMOs that indicated at least one of the following issues when answering the question on their thematic focus were coded as working on international grievances: globalization, third world development and defence, national security, and foreign affairs.

The Transnational Activist Repertoire in the Czech Republic and its Types

Representatives of the studied SMOs were asked whether their organization had performed various types of activities abroad within the last two years. Figure 1 presents the results. As we can see, none of the observed activities was performed by the majority of the surveyed groups. There is only one activity performed by a substantial portion, yet still a minority, of activist groups, i.e. giving lectures, attending conferences and seminars, done by 40 percent of organizations. This is one of the least costly and least politically-oriented activities. The second most common activity is consultancy and advisory activities, carried out by 21 percent of the organizations. Meeting politicians abroad is the third most common activity, with 15 percent of organizations having engaged in this activity. All these are less costly, inside activities. Not surprisingly, the least employed types of action are those that entail high costs and are public oriented (similarly for Western Europe; see Kriesi et al., 2007). Only 3 to 6 percent of organizations said that they had organized petitions, demonstrations, or performances abroad. As in the findings of studies focused on Western Europe (Imig and Tarrow, 2001; della Porta and Caiani, 2009), our results do not give any evidence of a broad transnationalization of social movement activism. Only a minority of Czech SMOs engage in political action on the international level.
As indicated above, we are also interested in whether the observed transnational activities represent a single dimension of transnational activism, or whether its specific types exist in the Czech Republic. As in the individual level political participation literature, we carried out a principal component analysis that was able to answer our question. Table 1 presents the results for six transnational activities.\(^4\) As we can see, the activities “meeting politicians or officials” and “contacting politicians or officials by email or phone” loaded significantly on the first factor that can be interpreted as *lobbying*. Lobbying consists of individualized activities, not collective action. From this perspective, lobbying ranks among the low cost types of action. It requires neither mobilization of a large number of people nor organizationally demanding sponsorship of collective action, which includes tremendous logistic problems in the case of transnational action (McAdam and Marks, 1999). At the same time, these activities can only be employed if there are open opportunities to perform them. If public officials in international institutions do not provide such opportunities or pay no attention to what activist groups say, the organizations can hardly utilize this type of action (Greenwood, 2007). In the individual level political participation literature, this type of SMOs transnational activism corresponds to the “contacting” type (Dalton, 2008).

The second factor corresponds to the activities “organizing petitions” and “organizing demonstrations” and represents *protest* action. While lobbying is not based on collective action, this one is. Also, while lobbying is non-public and targets politicians in a direct way, the characteristic of protest is publicity; instead of politicians it targets media and public opinion. At the same time, both lobbying and protest share one important characteristic in common, namely a clear political claim: when employed they express a political demand that bears on someone’s interests (Tilly, 1995; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). They both express specific political claims in order to influence specific political outcomes. Again, in political participation research this type of SMO transnational activism overlaps with the individual-level protest type of citizen participation (see Dalton, 2008).

The third factor is composed of “giving lectures, attending conferences and seminars” and “organizing cultural events, festivals” and can be called transnational *public persuasion*. These activities tend to be public, and are aimed at influencing a wide range of public opinion.

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\(^4\) The principal component analysis was performed using the SPSS statistical software.
or selected segments; or the media or individual politicians and officials. Compared to the other two types, the main purpose of public persuasion is usually not to express a specific political demand. This type of action can and usually does carry some political message, such as in the case of an exhibition of photographs from a war zone, but it is not typically politically-oriented in terms of targeting a specific institution and expressing a specific demand. Rather, it transmits both specialized knowledge and general beliefs and norms.

This third type of transnational activity is about persuasion and education more than about openly displayed influence and power of leverage (see also Keck and Sikkink, 1998). However, it is very important for political activism. First, through these activities organizations build coalitions, meet each other, communicate their goals, exchange know-how, and build collective identity. Secondly, it is also a way to inform and influence public opinion and experts. Employing these types of strategies activist organizations can publicize themselves, put issues on the political agenda, show their expertise and focus, and demonstrate that they have something to say in the first place. Like lobbying, this type of activism is not very costly, since it does not require mass mobilization; on the contrary, a handful of activists are enough to perform these activities. This type of transnational activism does not have an individual level counterpart.

Table 1: Dimensions of Transnational Activities (Principal Component Analysis, N=151)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. component – lobbying</th>
<th>2. component – protest</th>
<th>3. component – public persuasion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting politicians or officials</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>-0.174</td>
<td>0.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting politicians or officials by email or phone</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing petitions</td>
<td>0.393</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td>-0.232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing demonstrations</td>
<td>-0.214</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving lectures, taking part at conferences and seminars</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>0.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing cultural events, festivals</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% variance</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Entries are factor loadings from Pattern Matrix, Oblimin rotated solution of a principal component analysis. Loadings larger than 0.7 are in bold.
Source: Czech SMOs Survey

For further analysis, three dependent variables, i.e. transnational lobbying, protest and public persuasion, were created as three predicted factor scores. The correlations between the three factors are positive, ranging from R = 0.2 to R = 0.4. This means that organizations performing transnational protest are also likely to lobby and perform public persuasion at the international level.

The Effect of the EU Funding Tested

Table 2 shows the results for the three types of transnational activism. As we can see, reliance on EU money has a positive significant effect on transnational protest and public persuasion,
which means that the more individual SMOs are dependent on EU grants, the more they protest transnationally and engage in transnational public persuasion activities. Looking at our results, we can say that the EU sponsors transnational protest and persuasion, but in a somewhat specific way. When reliance on EU grants is included in the model as an absolute number, it does not have an effect. It is the proportion of their budgets that SMOs cover from EU money (displayed in the table) that increases their transnational public persuasion and protest. Given the EU effort to motivate SMOs to get engaged in information exchange and resource sharing across borders, the former is not at all surprising, and is in line with what both the above-specified theories expected. However, the latter goes against what the cooptation perspective would expect from EU money. Contrary to the cooptation thesis, the result for protest confirms the empowerment hypothesis suggesting that EU funding contributes to transnational contention in the case of the Czech organizations.

Surprisingly, reliance on EU grants has no effect on transnational lobbying, either as an absolute number or as a proportion of SMO budgets. This finding goes against the expectations of both perspectives, and against the general assumption that the EU supports transnational lobbying only. Czech SMOs engage in transnational lobbying regardless of their reliance on EU money. When we look at the effect of the other factors we use as controls, we see that it is not EU funding, but representation in Brussels that determines SMOs’ lobbying. The effect of an office at the EU level corresponds with the findings of the available case studies (Imig and Tarrow, 2001; Doherty, 2006; Císař, 2010). They show that Euro-offices of transnational organizations primarily coordinate EU lobbying strategies.

If SMOs act transnationally and enjoy EU funding, they tend to get involved in public persuasion and protest. While the former is not surprising; the latter finding challenges the notion of the EU as contributing to the de-politicization and de-radicalization of national SMOs. Our results show that it is not just SMOs adopting moderate strategies, but also protest-oriented organizations that can enjoy EU support. In this respect, even organizations radical in terms of their strategies engage in interactions with international institutions, which as a result are not as exclusive in terms of prioritizing conventional over contentious strategies as generally supposed. By showing which SMOs are transnationally active, we show which demands can potentially enter the international/European political process. From this perspective, the EU in a neo-pluralist fashion funds even protest SMOs, its own potential critics, trying to bring in underrepresented interests and broaden the portfolio of internationally represented positions.

The positive effect of the level of reliance on EU funding on transnational protest and public persuasion holds when controlling for both other resource variables and the focus on international grievances/issues. As displayed in the lower part of Table 2, contrary to general expectations which associate transnational activism with resource endowment, the size of SMO budgets has no effect. The non-effect of internal resources, measured as the number of full-time employees, on multi-level venue shopping in the EU is also demonstrated by Beyers and Kerremans (2011) for France, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. Contrary to the expectations of resource mobilization theory, internal resources do not seem to be a condition for transnational activism at all, meaning that a certain organizational size is not a necessary condition for entering the EU arena.

However, as already pointed out in case of lobbying, the international organizational factor matters a lot; not size, but connectedness is the key to transnational activism. Our indicator of transnational connectedness, i.e. a Euro-office, has the expected positive effect on transnational activism. This finding demonstrates that in an internationalized world, it is more the capacity to be connected across the levels of decision-making than a huge organizational structure that determines transnational action. Looking at the same findings from a different angle, we can say that there seems to be a clear possibility for the EU to facilitate diverse
interest representation even with fairly limited resources. There is no need to invest in building up huge organizational infrastructures, just to motivate organizations to get networked transnationally. Regarding the SMOs focus on international grievances/issues, we see their positive and important effect only in case of lobbying.

Table 2: EU Funding and Transnational Activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRANSNATIONAL PROTEST</th>
<th>TRANSNATIONAL LOBBYING</th>
<th>TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC PERSUASION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% EU grants</td>
<td>Coef. (St. error)</td>
<td>St. coef</td>
<td>Coef. (St. error)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0,005* (0,003)</td>
<td>0,139</td>
<td>0,003 (0,003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROLS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0,014 (0,029)</td>
<td>-0,041</td>
<td>-0,018 (0,029)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office at the EU level</td>
<td>1,181*** (0,527)</td>
<td>0,165</td>
<td>2,707*** (0,531)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int. Grievances</td>
<td>0,776*** (0,207)</td>
<td>0,311</td>
<td>0,585** (0,201)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0,203 (0,212)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0,358* (0,198)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANDOM EFFECT</td>
<td>Parameters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMOs variance</td>
<td>0,772</td>
<td>0,788</td>
<td>0,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMIs variance</td>
<td>0,045</td>
<td>0,027</td>
<td>0,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>18,3 %</td>
<td>23,9 %</td>
<td>2,4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table displays the results of hierarchical linear regression with random effect for the SMIs. The analysis using fixed effects for SMIs gives generally the same results.
Source: Czech SMOs Survey
* significant at the 0,1 level, ** significant at the 0,05 level, *** significant at the 0,01 level.

Conclusion

Although much attention has been paid to the issue of transnational/European civil society and social movements in terms of the democratic deficit in international governance in general, and the EU in particular, we still have rather limited knowledge of how widespread this phenomenon actually is, and what factors facilitate its growth. This paper has aimed at partly filling this gap by looking at the domestic level SMOs in one country, the Czech Republic, representing a larger group of post-Communist states from Central-Eastern Europe. Specifically, we focused on two questions: 1) What is the level and form of transnational activism of the Czech SMOs, and do the individual transnational activities create specific types? 2) Focusing on the widely debated issue of the effect of external patronage on political activism, we asked how the EU funding contributes to transnational activism of SMOs.

The analysis has shown that only a small minority of Czech SMOs utilize explicit political strategies at the transnational level. Only from three to 15 percent of SMOs organize
demonstrations, petitions, or lobby politicians transnationally. The most frequent transnational activity of the Czech SMOs is not an explicitly political strategy, but rather participation in international conferences and seminars. Still, it is done only by 40 percent of the groups. As in the individual level political participation research, we then explored whether a typology of transnational activism can be derived. The analysis has shown that there are three specific types of Czech SMOs transnational activism: transnational lobbying, protest, and public persuasion. Transnational lobbying includes activities that are political, targeted, individualized, and not demanding in terms of resources. Transnational protest is political, public, collective, and much more costly for the organizing SMOs. Public persuasion is not explicitly political, but rather educational; like protest it is public, although not as demanding in regard to resources. This typology has been used in our further analysis focusing on the role EU funding plays in transnational activism of the Czech SMOs.

Contrary to the EU critics who see EU grants as a demobilizing and depoliticizing factor, our analysis brought support for the empowerment argument advocating that, at least under the conditions of domestic non-conducive environments, EU support works as a mechanism giving political autonomy to social movements and enabling them to engage in transnational political struggles. However, due to our case selection we cannot say anything about the EU effect on SMO-conducive environments. Specifically, we have found that in the Czech case, those SMOs whose revenues are proportionally more dependent on the EU tend to do more transnational protest and engage in public persuasion. Surprisingly, we did not see any effect of EU funding on transnational lobbying. To be able to lobby at the international level the SMOs do not seem to need financial support from the EU, but need to be organizationally connected through an EU-level representative.

We started our paper with the observation that transnational politics, especially on the EU level, has recently become not only a popular research problem, but also a matter of deep political concern. By supporting underrepresented interests on the international level, the EU strives to fight its own perceived lack of accountability. Based on our findings we can say that the EU is in some sense successful in that mission, since thanks to one of its tools – money – it helps SMOs enter international political arena even with a challenging and potentially contentious repertoire. However, owing to our data we are not able to say what specific demands these SMOs express, and how autonomous and independent they actually are.
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Endnotes

1 Acknowledgement: We are grateful to the Center for the Study of Democracy for providing us with a stimulating research environment, and to Russell Dalton, David Meyer, Evan Schofer, Bernard Grofman and Yang Su for their comments and suggestions.

2 Specifically in the case of the Czech Republic, EU enlargement and the increasing dependence on EU funding has been interpreted as the main factor in the general demobilization and de-radicalization of environmental groups (see Carmin and Vandeveer, 2004; Hicks, 2004; Fagan, 2005; Börzel and Buzogány, 2010) as well as women’s groups (Hašková, 2005).

3 Although not primarily interested in social movements, Bruszt and Vedres (2011) show a similarly positive relationship between local actors’ autonomy to act and their exposure to EU funding for an even wider group of domestic organizations and groups.

4 Items “consultancy” and “organizing street activism” loaded significantly on more than just one factor so were not included in further analysis.