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Contentious Politics in the Transnational Arena

Political Contention in Europe and its Wider Neighbourhood

Edited by Chiara Milan · Aron Buzogány

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Editors

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Praise for *Contentious Politics in the Transnational Arena*

"The volume by Chiara Milan and Aron Buzogány marks a timely and original contribution to the literature on civil society and transnational social dynamics within and across the EU. Its selected cases of transnational contention that have taken place both in the EU and neighboring countries provide us with a new understanding of the nature, repertoire of participatory tools and engagement methods employed in the emerging EU political space. This is a must read collection for anyone interested in the role played and bottom up dynamics unleashed by social movements in the process of EU integration and disintegration."

—Alberto Alemanno, *Jean Monnet Professor of EU Law, HEC Paris and Democracy Fellow, Harvard University*

"This is a wide-ranging collection that gives us insights into the complexity and variation of transnational contention in and around Europe today. The authors tackle that complexity through chapters that focus on the opportunities, resources, frames, and networks that a range of actors use to build their transnational actions in different ways and at different scales. This collection, expertly tied together by the editors, leaves little uncovered, examining movements and civil society actions across issues, space, politics, and scales. A fantastic resource for students and scholars of European politics today."

—Louisa Parks, *Professor in Sociology, University of Trento*

"This volume provides a valuable addition to an understudied field of contention—that of transnational mobilization and activism. The scope is vast, both in geographical and substantive terms. The attention to both "frontlash" and "backlash" movements is of great importance, not least given the changing political constellation in Europe and elsewhere, which the contributions importantly help to explore from an original, transnational, and non-state angle."

—Paul Blokker, *Professor in Sociology, University of Bologna*

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CHAPTER 3

The Contentious Politics of Migration in the EU: The Effects of Organisations' Internal Dynamics on Transnational Networking

Federico Alagna

Introduction

Literature on the role played by civil society organisations (CSOs) in European Union (EU) migration governance has been increasing in quantity over the last few years (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Cuttitta, 2018, 2022; della Porta, 2018; della Porta & Steinhilper, 2022; Strik, 2019, among others). Within this context, several scholars have specifically adopted a multi-scale perspective, such as considering how CSOs aim to influence EU (supranational) migration governance by establishing connections with local actors and institutions (Alcalde & Portos, 2018; Bazurli, 2019; Caponio, 2022; Lacroix & Spencer, 2022; Panebianco,

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2022). In a similar fashion, it has been noted that the transnational scale has also become a key arena for political contention (Alagna, 2024).

In this contribution, I build on the existing scholarship by focusing on the decision-making aspects of those civil society actors who are engaged in the field of migration on a transnational level. Namely, I disentangle the factors that have informed the decision of CSOs to engage in transnational migrant solidarity activism, with a view to explaining why civil society organisations engage in different ways in transnational political contention around the topic of migration in the EU.

Such an approach, which centres on the existing differences among CSOs, contributes to the literature on political contention around migration. More specifically, it engages with dynamics of scale shift (McAdam et al., 2001), in the context of a process of Europeanisation from below (della Porta & Caiani, 2011). While several studies have addressed the transnationalisation of migrant solidarity initiatives, they have often only done so in aggregated terms, considering the transnationalisation process as a whole and devoting less attention to the internal differences between and within CSOs (Monforte, 2014 is one of the most notable exceptions in this regard).

In my approach, I distinguish between horizontal and vertical dynamics of transnationalisation—both of which will be considered in this study. Horizontal transnationalisation is defined as the emergence of a political arena of coordination of collective actions that transcends national boundaries. On the other hand, vertical dynamics of transnationalisation entail a shift in the operational and/or target scale of political activism, from national to upper governance levels. In this case, it will be a synonym of supranationalisation, considering vertical transnationalisation as a shift from the national to the EU level.

In order to make my argument, I will focus on the network From the Sea to the City (FSTC), which includes a range of different organisations from across Europe (see Table 3.1). FSTC was launched in 2020, in the context of the increasing criminalisation of civil society actors and restrictive migration policy. Overall, the network seeks to work with municipalities that are members of the International Alliance of Safe Harbours in order to promote 'a radical change in EU migration policies, including the creation of safe corridors and legal pathways to Europe; the safeguard of migrant people's fundamental rights; an active role of [CSOs]/cities in the management of EU funds; the strengthening of solidarity, also including the possibility of transnational municipal relocation' (Alagna, 2024,

Table 3.1 From the sea to the city – member organisations

Organisation	*Country & main operational scale (migration-related)*	*Main target scale*
Emergency	Italy	EU, Italy
Europe Must Act	EU-wide, Greece	EU
European Alternatives	EU-wide, Italy	EU
Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform	Germany	EU, Germany
Inura	EU-wide	EU
Inter Alia	EU-wide, Greece	EU
Mediterranea Saving Humans	Italy, Mediterranean Sea	EU, Italy
Open Arms	Spain, Mediterranean Sea	EU, Spain, Italy
Sea-Watch	Germany, Mediterranean Sea	EU, Germany, Italy
Seebrücke	Germany	(EU), Germany
Tesserae	Germany	EU
Watch the Med – Alarm Phone	Germany, Mediterranean Sea	EU
W2EU	EU-wide	EU
Zagreb Solidarity City	Croatia	(EU), Croatia

Source: https://fromseatocity.eu/ (accessed 8 April 2022) and interviews

p. 1248). This case study is not only empirically rich, but also analytically sound, as it incorporates an intrinsic multi-scale approach, aimed at changing EU policy by working with local actors such as municipalities.

Previous research has very much focused on the external conditions that made the emergence of this network possible and on its external projection and relationships (Alagna, 2024; Lacroix et al., 2022; Liebscher, 2024). By contrast, in this chapter I will focus on the internal dimension of the CSOs, by addressing the way in which the internal dynamics of the civil society organisations influence their decision to engage in a transnational network, and the extent of said engagement. However, I fully acknowledge the close correlation that exists between internal and external dynamics—such as in terms of political opportunity structures (Tarrow, 1983, 1989)—which is taken into account in my research.

My study is informed by the broad scholarship on contentious politics that looks at the internal dynamics of social movement and civil society organisations. Within this extensive field, two prominent approaches have been particularly relevant in the case at hand, namely those exploring the concepts of collective identity (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Whittier, 2002)

and resource mobilisation (Jenkins, 1983). The former helps us to explore the role played by the construction (and interaction) of different identities and the impact of aspects of internal culture—such as attitudes, beliefs and values—on CSO participation in the transnational network. The latter casts light on how and why differences in material, human and social-organisational resources can explain variations in the process under scrutiny.

The next section will address the methodology of the study. Following this, I will present the empirical findings of the research, namely the influence that internal dynamics have on the decision of a CSO to engage in a transnational network. In the concluding section, I will discuss these findings, assessing whether the influence of such factors can explain the different levels of transnational engagement (within FSTC) of civil society actors, and why this might be the case.

Methods

This chapter presents the results of ethnographic research conducted within a transnational migrant solidarity activist network, namely, From the Sea to the City. It mostly considers meso- and micro-level dynamics, by focusing on organisations and individual actors.

The research adopts a comparative approach: whilst internal factors are firstly discussed with regard to broad tendencies within the network, the analysis then moves on to focus mainly on four civil society organisations. These have been selected because they reveal significantly different levels of engagement in FSTC in terms of their participation in internal meetings, the support they provide to the planning and fulfilment of activities, and, more broadly, their overall contribution to the network. Moreover, whereas two of these organisations are mostly engaged in activism at sea, the other two are mainly associated with city-oriented activism. Hence, they present interesting heuristic strengths, displaying significant differences on two different dimensions (level of engagement and type of activism).These four organisations are anonymised throughout the chapter for research ethics reasons and will be referred to simply as SEA 1 (sea-oriented activism, relatively high level of engagement), CITY 1 (city-oriented activism, high level of engagement), SEA 2 (sea-oriented activism, low level of engagement) and CITY 2 (city-oriented activism, relatively low level of engagement) (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 The four selected organisations: A typology

	Sea-oriented activism	*City-oriented activism*
High engagement	SEA 1 (+)	CITY 1 (++)
Low engagement	SEA 2 (−−)	CITY 2 (−)

Source: Designed by the author

My work is based on original empirical research, which is rooted in the triangulation of different methods of data collection. The first of these is participant observation, which was conducted systematically over a period of six months (December 2021–May 2022) and, following this period, during significant events and meetings—namely the festival organised by Mediterranea—Saving Humans in Naples (1–4 September 2022) and the FSTC internal coordination meeting that took place in Barcelona (28–29 October 2022). Participant observation involved both in-presence and remote/digital activities, such as participation in instant messaging chats, emails, physical and virtual meetings, and personal conversations. I carried out this observation from an insider position, insofar as I was delegated by one of the participating CSOs (Mediterranea—Saving Humans) to participate in FSTC activities. Participant observation was overt: I disclosed my twofold role as activist/researcher from the outset and I made every effort throughout the process to constantly remind fellow activists of the situation (on insider/outsider and covert/overt positions in participant observation in social movement studies, see Uldam & McCurdy, 2013).

Secondly, I conducted fourteen semi-structured interviews with FSTC activists (mostly), policy-makers, researchers and practitioners (see *List of interviews*). Interviewees were selected on the grounds of their expertise and through snowball sampling.

Thirdly, I relied on documentary sources (e.g. official documents, statements and press releases, EU and national policy documents, secondary literature), with a view to integrating specific aspects and corroborating information acquired through the interviews. Data were analysed following an inductive qualitative content analysis technique.

How Internal Factors Shape CSO Participation in Transnational Migrant Solidarity Networks

In this section I inductively consider five key internal dynamics that emerged during my fieldwork, assessing whether they had an impact on the participation of civil society organisations in FSTC, how this manifested itself and why it might have been the case. The first dynamic relates to the political approach of the organisations towards transnationalisation in general, and is considered in the first subsection. Three more dynamics are considered together in the central subsection and relate to differences: (a) in the main focus of their political contention (sea vs. city); (b) between actors that are more social movement organisation (SMO)-like and those that instead are more non-governmental organisation (NGO)-like (cf. della Porta, 2020); (c) in their objectives and strategic vision. Last but not least, a fifth dynamic is considered in the final subsection, and relates to the capacity of the CSOs to mobilise resources.

Horizontal and Vertical Transnationalisation

The first dynamic relates to aspects of collective identity and internal culture and strategy. It consists of the different attitudes that the CSOs have in relation to the EU, Europeanisation and the development of a transnational approach. Therefore, its importance for understanding patterns of transnationalisation comes as no surprise.

All of the member organisations of FSTC were evidently open to a transnationalisation of migrant solidarity activism in Europe. This clearly emerged throughout participant observation, in the interviews and in internal documents. This process was facilitated by the fact that other transnational networks of civil society organisations already existed, in which some FSTC members had participated, such as those active in search and rescue at sea. (Interviews I03, I09, I13). A further significant element was the existence of individual and collective actors actively engaged in the promotion of transnationalisation (Interviews I07, I13).

Interestingly, this transnational orientation combined different perspectives, associated with either normative or rational choice approaches. In other words, some collective actors endorsed transnationalisation because of an ideological preference towards a pan-EU, de-nationalised form of activism (Interviews I07, I10), whereas others considered this transnational approach as a way to achieve concrete results in the field

(Interview I05). The differences on this stance allow us to understand the distance between the approaches that actors take that are more influenced by internal culture and collective identity and others that appear more strategic (cf. above).

Some elements of tension, which were partly connected to the above differentiation, emerged with regard to the specific meaning attributed to the process of transnationalisation—either as a horizontal or vertical process. A number of organisations considered the EU as a crucial operational and target arena for their activism, and aimed to bring their issues to the EU scale in the form of vertical transnationalisation/supranationalisation (Interview I01, I04). A significantly greater number of organisations displayed an approach that was more oriented towards horizontal transnationalisation, considering national governments as their main target and privileging transnational cooperation with other organisations, rather than a stable engagement at the EU level (Interviews I08, I10, I14). Some organisations presented a more nuanced, in-between approach (Interviews I02, I07, I12).

The patterns that were discussed above can also be identified in the four organisations selected for this study.

SEA 1 strongly adheres to a transnational approach to migrant solidarity activism, based not only on the specific nature of their main scale of action—the sea, which is transnational *per se* (cf. Fischer & Jørgensen, 2022, p. 172)—but also on the political trajectory of their core members and on the period in which it was launched. Their approach to transnationalisation combines both horizontal and vertical elements: it strongly pursues a coordination of contentious actions in the field of migration, while, at the same time, also specifically engaging with certain EU-targeted campaigns (Field notes Naples, September 2022; Interview I13).

CITY 1 presents a more marked decoupling between horizontal and vertical transnationalisation. From an operational point of view, they have had a transnational approach to migrant solidarity activism since the organisation was founded, which has been based on the need to 'engag[e] on the European level with other progressive civil society networks working in the same direction', which 'would help [them] develop [an] alternative discourse' (Interview I08). Some of the leaders of the group were involved in another transnational network working on the issue of migration—the Palermo Charter Platform Process, from which FSTC arose (Interviews I08, I14; see also Maffeis, 2021, pp. 34–35)—and found it important to address the misalignment between the transnational nature

of the issue and nation-based activism (Interview I08). However, the approach taken by CITY 1 is significantly different when it comes to vertical transnationalisation/supranationalisation. They are somewhat sceptical, although they do recognise the interest shown to the issue by members of the European Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions (Interview I08). Overall, there is an explicit preference towards campaigning that targets the national level, which is deemed more effective (Interview I14). A more stable engagement with the EU policy arena is thus considered not necessarily useful, as its potential usefulness depends on the direction of the advocacy (Interview I08).

SEA 2 has also had a strong horizontal transnational approach since its foundation, something that is linked not only to the specific dynamics that led to its establishment (Interview I13), but also to the political agency of the organisation outside From the Sea to the City (Interviews I04, I08, I09). In contrast to the previous examples, SEA 2 also tends to be slightly sympathetic towards vertical forms of transnationalisation/supranationalisation, as it is convinced of the 'possibility of a dialogue at an EU level' and working in close cooperation with those organisations that have advocacy offices in Brussels (Interview I04).

Finally, CITY 2 also agrees on the importance of working horizontally at a transnational scale, primarily based on the understanding that 'the migration regime is Europe-wide' and, therefore, there is 'a need to address this well beyond national boundaries' (Interview I11). Even though this viewpoint is not inherently connected to the strategic approach that the organisation had when it was founded, there is no doubt that it is currently present, regardless of the difficulties that it can entail (Interview I11). Insofar as vertical, supranational dynamics are concerned, CITY 2 does not have a specific preference towards EU or national targets and, like SEA 1 and SEA 2, displays a certain amount of openness towards political contention at different scales (Field notes internal meetings).

Overall, the above empirical results highlight the fact that while the propensity towards transnationalisation was indeed a key aspect, it was definitely not a divisive one. Notwithstanding the many differences among actors in this regard, it did not play any significant role in the decision of CSOs to enter into a transnational network, nor in the emergence of differential approaches to transnationalisation. On the contrary, it eventually became a homogenous driver of transnationalisation among all the actors involved.

The Divisive Potential of Other Internal Dynamics

Aside from transnationalisation, other important cultural, identity-related and strategic internal dynamics did play a significant role. This is the case, in particular, of those elements that caused certain tensions to emerge between the CSOs: these mostly involved the way in which pre-existing aspects of internal culture, identity and strategy within each civil society organisation interacted with one another in the construction of a collective transnational identity for FSTC. This interaction did create different degrees of alignment (and misalignment) between organisational and network-wide dynamics, which had the potential to influence the engagement of CSOs in this transnational network.

Empirical research in the case at hand suggests that a number of significant differences emerged around three internal dynamics—both within the network and with regard to the four organisations considered in this chapter, in particular. However, as we shall see below, these differences did not automatically lead to tensions or to potential indirect effects on transnationalisation.

The first difference relates to what one activist defined as the 'sea rescue vs. city rescue' confrontation (Interview I01). A key element of the transnational network is to bring together two of the most important dimensions of migration governance—the sea and the city. This is reflected in the name of the consortium, in its stated goals (cf. above. See also From the Sea to the City, 2021) and in the perspectives and expectations of its member organisations (Field notes Barcelona, October 2022). They believed that the involvement of migrant solidarity organisations that were primarily engaged in either of these two dimensions was not only viable, but also, to a certain extent, necessary. However, this also had the potential to create a certain amount of tension with regard to the forms that this type of integration between said perspectives should have—in turn influencing their eagerness to actively participate in the transnational network.

Internal meetings reveal a recurring preoccupation with the integration of these two perspectives and *ways of doing things* (Field notes internal meetings)—something that also demonstrates the empirical connection between identity/cultural aspects and the strategic organisation of activities. One FSTC activist, for example, explained that after the important convention organised by the network in Palermo in 2021, they felt that it was extremely important to create two different groups—one focusing on the sea, the other on cities—given that the existing cultural diversity would

create problems in working together (Interview I02). Even though this suggestion was not followed—and the internal organisation after Palermo 2021 convention revolved around two working groups focused on cities committed to becoming safe harbours and on the definition of political priorities and campaigns, respectively—the sea/city cleavage did not bring about any significant element of disruption.

Looking at SEA 1 and SEA 2, which are both essentially engaged in sea-related activities, what clearly emerges is that well before the emergence of From the Sea to the City both organisations were interested in and committed to working at a city level (Interviews I01, I03, I06, I09). This openness towards city-focused activities is central to the political action of these organisations, and is further reinforced by the political history and thought of some of their leaders, who even played an important brokerage role in certain key moments (Interviews I03, I13). Rather than constituting an impediment to working with cities, their experience in sea-related migration activism actually created the conditions for a more thorough form of transnational networking—also with cities—building on the experience of their activities at sea and in search and rescue (SAR) networking (see above. Interviews I04, I09).

CITY 1 and CITY 2, on the other hand, had been active in city-oriented activism for a considerable period of time, which entailed both in-depth cooperation with particular municipalities and efforts at networking (Field notes internal meetings; Interviews I01, I12). This focus, however, did not preclude the development of a specific interest towards sea-based activities, both within and outside From the Sea to the City (Field notes internal meetings, chats, emails). In summary, their approach appears to mirror that of SEA 1 and SEA 2.

In spite of a number of remarks suggesting the potential for the sea/city cleavage to create conflict, the empirical evidence offers no concrete indication that differences in these dimensions created any noticeable tensions capable of shaping different processes of transnationalisation.

A second, significant element of difference related to the heterogeneity of the civil society initiatives involved, ranging from SMO-like to NGO-like actors (see above; cf. della Porta, 2020). Whereas this, albeit acknowledged, heterogeneity did not constitute an issue for SEA 1, and did so only marginally for CITY 1 (Field notes internal meetings, Interview I14), it was found to have created significant tensions within the two organisations that showed lower levels of engagement in the transnational network.

SEA 2 considered the lack of professionalisation of the network a critical issue: 'for us this is work […]. If we don't consider this work ourselves, […] we won't ever be treated as professionals from the outside' (Interview I04). This is connected to significant cultural and strategic aspects, and in particular to 'an anti-institutional attitude, [which] is penalising' and 'increases one's self-referentiality'. There is also a need for flexibility: in order to engage in institutional dialogue and advocacy, it is of paramount importance to find a common language (Interview I04).

CITY 2 very much shares these concerns, explaining that activists and non-governmental organisations 'are sometimes in conflict', primarily because NGOs 'have a slightly more constructive approach', whereas 'the world of activism is a little bit more disruptive'. Furthermore, 'since many people are engaged on a voluntary basis, carrying on with the work is a difficult task' (Interview I11).

Even though the differences between the organisations in FSTC in relation to this aspect may not be particularly significant on paper, they do seem to be perceived as extremely powerful by various members—and even more so by those who engaged to a lesser extent in the network. This tension is ultimately connected with internal culture and its effects on how activities are planned. Unlike the sea/city tension, this aspect would appear to be very concrete and capable of having a significant impact.

However, the SMO/NGO issue largely remained latent: a topic that was known and acknowledged by the different organisations involved, but rarely addressed in concrete (Field notes internal meetings). A significant exception to this, however, can be seen in the Barcelona meeting in October 2022, where these aspects were extensively discussed and a working group on internal care was established, to some extent acknowledging the need to reconcile these different perspectives. The purpose of this was to have a number of members in charge of reaching out to those organisations that were expressing unhappiness or showing signs of disengagement due to internal tensions, such as those related to the SMO/NGO issue.

A third and final aspect in which the existing differences in the cultural and identity dynamics of the CSOs were potential drivers of tensions relates to the objectives and strategic vision of individual organisations and of the network as a whole.

Overall, members of From the Sea to the City agree that significant differences exist in their objectives and strategic visions—issues that are considered to require some work and care, in order to avoid them becoming a problem (Interviews I02, I04). As one expert points out, 'a problem of

political objectives exists' and it is key to find a common point among the many instances involved (Interview I06). This lack of clarity was strengthened by the inclusion of new members following the 2021 Palermo convention (Interview I01). Consistently, the network 'decided to not accept any new member organisations', privileging instead 'the development of internal organisation' and shared strategies (Interview I01). While this is considered a positive step by some members (Interview I02), others believe it is time 'to open up to new organisations and stakeholders' and to widen the geographical scope of action (Interview I07).

Both SEA 1 and CITY 1 acknowledged the existence of differences and tried to find common ground and coordinate as much as possible—also aware of the fact that these were potential sources of tension (Field notes internal meetings, chats, emails). One activist from CITY 1, in particular, explained that there are 'differences in how we envision strategy' across the EU (Interview I08). However, research on the examples at hand did not reveal any significant impact of such differences on the engagement of these organisations.

The lack of shared objectives and strategic vision, however, were considered by members of other organisations as key drivers in reducing the engagement of SEA 2 (Interviews I08, I11). In particular, as another activist explained, one extremely significant point of friction related to the proposal of focusing on internal work with municipalities, rather than promoting external events, which was put forward by SEA 2, but barely followed by other network members (Interview I01). The overall misalignment between these proposals and the approach eventually followed by From the Sea to the City is considered the main explanation for the decreasing engagement of SEA 2 in the transnational network (Interview I08, I11). The difficulty in finding a common approach, shared by all FSTC members—including SEA 2—is considered by a representative of this organisation as a sign that 'each and every organisation strives to protect parts of itself': they continued prioritising their own identity, instead of 'finding a compromise solution' (Interview I04).

A very similar process took place in the case of CITY 2, albeit to a lesser extent (Field notes internal meetings; Interview I08). Also in this case, an important component of this approach was the priority given to a number of internal, off-stage activities, with a view to strengthening the network of civil society organisations and cities (Interview I01). In the words of a representative of CITY 2, if an agreed pathway is missing, 'I can approach a city […] but to propose what?' (Interview I11).

One activist with CITY 2 believed that important internal 'constitutional steps were missing' and this was even more problematic given the uneven geographical distribution of the organisations and their different ways of doing things: 'you can fine-tune the approach in the different national contexts, but you can't do two completely different things!' (Interview I11; Field notes internal meetings). These differences, which are associated with elements of national background and internal culture, not only undermined the engagement of CITY 2, but further challenged, from the perspective of this organisation, the effectiveness of the network at a transnational level. As one member reported, 'in order to have talks at the EU level, you need to have some ideas: you can't […] knock at the door of the Commission or Parliament and just say "we want a more human right-based migration policy"' (Interview I11).

The opinions expressed by activists strongly support the existence of a nexus between internal culture and strategy, highlighting the identity-related and political component of the latter.

In concluding this subsection, it is important to note that, while I have explored three different internal dynamics (and the tension related to them), only two of these—namely those related to the SMO/NGO cleavage and network objectives and strategic visions—appear to be instrumental in explaining the different levels of engagement by the various organisations in the FSTC network.

The Mobilisation of Different Material, Human and Social-Organisational Resources

In exploring the internal meso- and micro-dynamics of the network that may have had a bearing on the varying levels of transnational engagement by the CSOs involved, resource availability also is an element that became heavily apparent during the fieldwork. Although it is difficult—and arguably unproductive—to draw clear-cut lines between different internal factors, this type of dynamic shifts attention away from the cultural and identity-related component of the internal debate.

The member organisations of From the Sea to the City had a significantly varied level of access to material, human and social-organisational resources (cf. Edwards et al., 2018, pp. 80–81). Resource availability and management were key issues in the internal debate, not only with a view to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of the network—mainly by securing sufficient funds and dedicated coordination tasks—but also in

order to mediate between different interests and free up network activities from uneven resource distribution between members (Field notes internal meetings).

Focusing in particular on material resources—and most specifically money—one concern that emerged was that such an uneven distribution could create power imbalances, where organisations with more resources would end up acquiring a leading role in the network (Interview I04). Remarkably, even though it was widely acknowledged that some organisations had more financial capacity and resources than others, the concern relating to power relationships was not shared by all of the members. On the contrary, several of them mentioned that organisations with greater resources seemed keen to make such capacities and resources available to the wider network (Interviews I01, I12). This applied not only in the case of material resources, but also human and social-organisational resources more broadly.

From a human resources perspective, the first thing that one might notice is the fact that there are significant differences between the member organisations with regard to the existence of professional and paid personnel, as well as the experience and know-how of working with municipalities (Interview I01. See also the previous section). Secondly, the number and profile of the organisation representatives who participated in From the Sea to the City also varied greatly. Some organisations only delegated one person, whereas others participated more actively and committed several representatives to the network. A further point that differed greatly across the organisations was the amount of freedom for manoeuvre that the representatives enjoyed as well as their role within their respective organisations.

Significant differences also emerged with regard to social-organisational resources, given the fact that the network members range from large-sized, multi-sited, complex organisations to smaller, local associations, run by a few members (Field notes internal meetings, chats, emails. See also From the Sea to the City, 2021). This difference is also reflected in the existing network structures and capacity of individual organisations, especially at a transnational level—such as the presence of field offices in Brussels and/or forms of structural collaboration with those organisations that have such offices (Interview I05).

In turning our attention to the four organisations that constitute our narrower focus, it is possible to disentangle the impact of such differences on their engagement in the FSTC network.

Beginning with the two most heavily engaged actors, SEA 1 could mainly deploy two types of resources for the activities of From the Sea to the City: human and social-organisational resources. Human resources consisted in active members, who were highly engaged in the network activities and had a significant level of know-how in relation to the connection between sea-oriented and city-oriented migrant solidarity activism. Their social-organisational resources were associated with the fact that the organisation boasted a wide network of pre-existing relations and key contacts and was able to share this with the rest of the network in order to advance its activities (Field notes internal meetings; Interviews I06, I08).

CITY 1 also shared the same sort of social-organisational resources, in terms of relations and contacts. Similarly, it had in-depth know-how in working with municipalities on migration-related issues, which was a crucial human resource for the development of the activities of the network. Furthermore, CITY 1 also brought with it significant material resources, in the form of monetary contributions that directly supported the funding and sustainability of the network (Field notes internal meetings and emails; Interviews I01, I02, I08, I12, I13). In terms of human resources, it is also noticeable that CITY 1 had both paid and professional staff that could contribute to FSTC activities, since this allowed it to be constantly involved in the activities of the network, in addition to the voluntary efforts of its activists.

The existence of these resources meant that SEA 1 and CITY 1 were able to contribute substantively to the network and to influence a number of important strategic choices. Examples of this are the decision concerning which cities to focus on in the expansion of the network or the definition of activities that required monetary funds—such as the establishment of a coordination role or the organisation of a network meeting (Field notes internal meetings). From the information that was either disclosed in the interviews or directly observed during field work, neither of these two organisations had any particular complaint in relation to the allocation or use of said resources within the wider network.

SEA 2 and CITY 2 were both characterised by the availability of significant levels of human resources—these being, first and foremost, the paid and professional personnel of the organisations. This element brought an important contribution to the network, by offering the skills, expertise and working hours of professional staff, as was the case with CITY 1. Unlike that example, however, the possibility of offering this type of

contribution created significant tensions, which related to the lack of a broadly shared, professional approach across the network (see above).

Finally, SEA 2 also had important social-relational resources, in terms of connections with a wide network of civil society organisations and municipalities working on migration. These resources were used on some occasions to contribute to the network (Field notes internal meetings).

Looking at the whole picture, it would seem that rather than the mere existence and availability of resources, what really affected the engagement of organisations in the transnational network was their strategic use and how they aligned with the overall objectives of the network and the expectations of each organisation. These aspects will be given due attention in the next, concluding section. However, as a final example of the socially construed relevance of available resources, one might consider the extreme case of those organisations within From the Sea to the City that decided to engage heavily in the transnational network in spite of the fact that they had few resources to share. In particular, the limited availability of resources as such created important incentives to actively participate in joint transnational activities, allowing the individual organisations to gain both prestige and visibility (Interview I02).

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of five important internal aspects and dynamics within From the Sea to the City clearly demonstrates that they contributed significantly to the decision of civil society organisations to participate in the transnational network.

At the same time, however, a closer look—including a narrower focus on four of these organisations with different focuses (sea/city) and different levels of engagement in the network—further highlights a significant difference. Some of these aspects and dynamics contributed to the emergence of varied forms of transnationalisation, especially in the case of particularly divisive issues, whereas other simply encouraged the engagement of CSOs in the network, without creating or fuelling any differences.

More specifically, I firstly considered the way in which transnationalisation was perceived and addressed by the various organisations. It can be said that, while this was a key element, it did not produce any major tension—or consequently any difference—between the CSOs, insofar as it was present in each of them in a reasonably similar manner.

Other key issues emerged and had an indirect influence on transnationalisation. Among these, differences in the level of professionalisation did create some major tensions and led to organisations engaging in the network to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the extent to which elements pertaining to the internal culture, the collective identity and the strategic vision of the single organisation were aligned with those dominant in the network. Similarly, differences between the CSOs in terms of their objectives and strategic vision also produced significant tension, which eventually influenced the level of participation in From the Sea to the City.

On the contrary, other important—and, to a certain extent, contentious—issues, such as the difference between 'sea rescue' and 'city rescue', did not cause any major difference in the CSOs' decision to participate in the transnational network.

Important differences also existed in the material, human and social-organisational resources that each organisation could mobilise within the network. In this regard, it can firstly be noted that the availability of a greater or a lesser amount of resources was not a driver of higher or lower levels of participation in FSTC as such. Differentiated transnationalisation, rather, reflected the *perception* of resource-related unbalances as a driver of different capacities to orientate network activities. Ultimately, this leads us back to the tensions that resulted from the different and, at times, contrasting cultural and identity-related aspects that were explored above. Indeed, resources were perceived as a way of more successfully promoting certain aspects rather than others, even though this was not necessarily the case. Once again, this speaks to the deep interconnection between elements of culture, identity, resources and structure (Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Jenkins, 1983; Whittier, 2002).

In summary, this piece of research indicates that different internal dynamics substantively impact on the decision of migrant solidarity civil society organisations to engage in a transnational migrant solidarity network. These internal dynamics further explain some of the significant differences in the reasons why CSOs engaged in the network to a greater or a lesser extent: in a context in which all organisations share some sort of transnationalisation culture, the extent to which single organisational aspects of culture and identity are aligned with dominant ones—that is, those of the network—is the primary element that determined a greater or a lesser level of engagement. Remarkably, not all culture-related differences become divisive: in the case at hand, an example of that is the 'sea

vs. city' difference. Lastly, differences in the possibility of mobilising resources further reinforced divergences and tensions that were grounded in cultural and identity-related aspects, rather than being an element of differentiated transnationalisation per se.

List of Interviews

I01, Activist, From the sea to the city, 20 January 2022
I02, Activist, From the sea to the city, 21 January 2022
I03, Activist, From the sea to the city, 26 January 2022
I04, Activist, From the sea to the city, 27 January 2022
I05, Activist, From the sea to the city, 27 January 2022
I06, Researcher, 28 January 2022
I07, Activist, From the sea to the city, 31 January 2022
I08, Activist, From the sea to the city, 3 February
I09, Researcher, 16 February 2022
I10, Activist, From the sea to the city, 17 February 2022
I11, Activist, From the sea to the city, 17 February 2022
I12, Activist, From the sea to the city, 22 March 2022
I13, Activist, From the sea to the city, 31 March 2022
I14, Activist, From the sea to the city, 1 April 2022

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