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Why Do some Labour Alliances Succeed in Politicizing Europe across Borders?

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Many studies on the politicization of the EU see the main dividing line running between transnational EU elites on one side and nationalist leaders whipping up anti-EU sentiments on the other. But the politicization of Europe is not a one-way street, as transnational democratic counter-movements have also emerged in response to recent EU integration pressures. As we show in our new JCMS article, which compares European Citizens' Initiatives (ECIs) of European trade union federations, popular counter-movements are not necessarily constrained by national silos and nationalist outlooks. But under what conditions are labour alliances succeeding or failing in politicizing EU policymaking across borders?

Pairing two campaigns that were organized by similar actors allowed us to focus on key differences that explain the different outcomes of the campaigns. Our comparison reveals that *actor-centred factors* matter, namely unions' ability to create broad social movement coalitions. Successful transnational labour campaigns, however, also depend on *structural conditions*, namely the prevailing mode of EU integration pressures faced by unions at a given time. Whereas the successful Right2Water ECI of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), pre-emptively countered commodification attempts by the European Commission in water services, the unsuccessful Fair Transport ECI of the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) attempted to ensure fair working conditions after most of the transport sector had already been liberalized. Vertical integration attempts by EU executives that aim to commodify public services are thus more likely to generate successful counter-movements than the horizontal market integration pressures on wages and working conditions that followed earlier successful EU liberalization drives.

Strong union-social movement alliances: EPSU and ETF share similar structures of small secretariats with little authority over national affiliates, as well as similar methods of influencing Brussels policymaking. In other respects, EPSU was even in a weaker position compared to the ETF. Being the first to launch an ECI, EPSU could not learn from earlier campaigns, also its Right2Water campaign had a much smaller budget. EPSU succeeded against these odds as it could rely on union-social movement alliances that spanned from the local-community to the global level. Trade union officials were working together with grassroots activists, as more than half of the organizations assisting the collection of signatures belonged to grassroot movements,

broader audience.

The two campaigns had different goals and framed them in different ways to the public. EPSU's ECI combined its anti-privatization message with an agenda of human rights that was broad enough to unite actors with diverging views on the details of water sector management. By focusing on the threat of privatization, EPSU also identified precise targets of discontent: the European Commission and the two large water multinationals, Veolia and Suez, which had benefited most from water services privatization in the past. The other goal of the Right2Water campaign, to make water services a human right connected a set of positive goals, such as good drinking water and wastewater facilities. The framing of the Fair Transport initiative was built around the idea of fair competition between all transport operators. These demands side-lined the point that, no matter how fair competition is, it still creates inequalities and tensions. This alienated the ETF campaign from more radical unions who were against competition *tout court* and it had little currency among workers in the EU's East and South. ETF also framed its Fair Transport ECI exclusively in industrial relations terms which made it difficult to find non-union allies. Social movement-union coalitions and framing around well-defined goals are actor-centred factors that can explain the different outcomes of the campaigns. At a deeper level, however, actors' choices in the two cases were structured by the different modes of EU integration.

Horizontal vs. vertical EU integration. We distinguish between two modes of EU integration pressures: *vertical integration* advances through direct interventions by a 'supranational political, legal or corporate authority'; horizontal integration refers to the increasing exposure to transnational market pressures. Horizontal integration reinforces the opacity of power relations and provides few tangible targets for mobilization, while vertical interventions are easier to politicize, albeit within a limited timeframe, as the impact of vertical intervention increases horizontal competition in the medium term.

After the earlier vertical EU laws liberalizing one transport modality after another, horizontal market pressures are prevalent in the transport sector. This hinders transnational action, as horizontal integration puts workers in competition with each other across different transport type (public versus private) modality (rail against road) and geographical areas. By contrast, the Commission's more recent vertical liberalization attempts in the water sector, that started with the proposal of the Services in the Internal Market (Bolkestein) directive, provided crystallization points for successful transnational collective action.

Similarly, the more service providers are subject to horizontal market integration pressures, the more difficult it becomes to find a common platform with service users. Whereas vertical EU laws motivated unions, consumer groups, environmental NGOs, and even municipal water companies to support the Right2Water ECI, horizontal competitive pressures across modalities go a long way towards explaining the absence of such alliances in the Fair Transport case. Had the Fair Transport ECI focused on public rail transport, it would have been easier to attract support from environmental groups. This idea did not prevail however, given ETF's aim to also represent workers from other modalities competing with rail.

between workers (a characteristic of non-traded public services including water provision) does not have to be a hindrance on transnational action. Public service unions can create effective transnational links not only with unions in other countries, but also with social movements. For the theory of EU integration, we highlight the importance of interest politics at the meso-level, and show how vertical and horizontal integration pressures shape social actors' ability to politicize the EU across borders, which is a precondition for its democratization.

The blog draws on the JCMS article Why Do some Labour Alliances Succeed in Politicizing Europe across Borders? A Comparison of the Right2Water and Fair Transport European Citizens' Initiatives

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