



**MASARYK UNIVERSITY
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Towards „Local Justice Movement(s)“? Two paths to re-scaling the austerity protest in the Czech Republic

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Working paper WP KVE 12/2013

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the responses of Czech left social movements to the coming of economic crisis to the country. It seeks to answer two questions. The first one is whether the coming of economic crisis has activated two processes of social movement transnationalization that take place on the domestic level: the global framing and externalization. The second question is why this activation has not taken place. In our analysis we distinguish between the “old” left (trade unions, social democrats) and “radical” left (anarchists, Trotskyites) in order to explore paths of different modes of left activism.

First, we focus on the evolution of framing scale and of the target scale of Czech Left activism between 2000 and 2010 and suggest that while the trajectories of both modes of Left activism experienced dramatic shifts both upwards and downwards, there are hardly any signs of real transnationalization after the crisis hit the country (2009). On the contrary, it seems that while the old left shifted the framing upwards onto national level, the radical left shifted the target of their protests downwards onto the local level.

Second, following the analyses of institutional and discursive opportunities, we show that it was the timing and way of interpretation of a financial crisis from the

part of national political elites and media that determined the scale and intensity of political contention over its consequences.

The paper builds upon the analysis of protest events organized by left SMOs in the Czech Republic between 2000 and 2010 (N=668). We integrate protest event and frame analysis and code – among other - the scale of framing and targets of the recorded events.

Key words:

Economic crisis, austerity, political conflict, labour unions, social movements.

JEL classification : D72, L31

CONTENT

1. Introduction	4
2. Theories of transnational activism	5
3. Processes of transnationalization of the Czech left social movements	9
4. Data and method	13
5. Evolution of left-wing activism after 2000	15
5.1 <i>Radical left (2001-2008)</i>	15
5.2 <i>Old left (2001-2008)</i>	17
5.3 <i>Financial and economic crisis (2009-2010)</i>	19
6. Evolution of the framing and target scale after the crisis	19
7. Two paths	25
8. Discussion and conclusion	30
9. Bibliography	33

1. Introduction

A new wave of political protest targeting the economic and social justice issues has risen recently. One might treat this phenomenon as some kind of a resurrection of Global Justice Movement (GJM) that was at its height in the beginning of new Millennium and has declined since then. However, a closer look reveals important differences. The examples of Occupy Wall Street movement in U.S. or Spanish Indignados suggest that a strong national dimension of protest has been present; consequently, the claims-making of these movements has rather focused on national and local, than on transnational and global publics and authorities. Therefore one might ask whether and why the claims of contemporary left social movements targeting the austerity measures in many countries miss the transnational dimension of GJM or, at least, the international perspective of the “old” Left, and why they remain mostly on local and national levels. Our paper deals with this problem. It is a case study of leftist protest politics in the Czech Republic but it traces the processes that might have taken place also in other countries. Our main goal is to understand the various paths of how and why the trajectory of claims-making of Czech left activism changed and remained “nationalized” or “localized” even during the times of global economic crisis. Although we analytically focus on the period after 2000, when a massive transnational mobilization took place in Prague, we also describe this exceptional moment of heightened transnational mobilization to contextualize our analysis of the period after it.

First, the paper aims at the theoretical framing of the problem. It introduces major approaches explaining the rise of transnational collective action and key social and political processes and conditions that backed the rise of transnational non-state actors and contentious politics.

Second, this theoretical framework is applied to the case of Czech radical and old left actors in order to analytically describe their transformation toward a member of the transnational coalition of SMOs that was built before and during the Prague IMF/WB summit in September 2000. We conclude by depicting the role of the processes of global framing and internalization of supra-national processes and conflicts as the necessary prerequisites for the transnationalization of domestic collective action.

Third, we introduce the data on the evolution of framing and target scale of Czech radical left and labour in order to show the differences of their reaction to the coming of financial crisis in 2009 to the Czech Republic.

Finally, we discuss several factors to sketch different paths of the shift in framing and claims-making activities of Czech radical and old left – their protest issues, networking capacity and social embeddedness. We suggest that two important shifts took place in case of radical left: the first started after withdrawal of global justice actors' from massive engagement in protests against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (2005) and was maintained during their following involvement in the domestic anti-war activism (2006) when the re-birth of national symbolic and revived conception of “national democracy” effectively weakened the previous global framing. The second shift downwards was the coming of financial crisis (2009), when the radical left transformed into the counter-movement acting primarily against the local events organized by the domestic radical right and thus further shifted the scale of contention to the local level. On the contrary, Czech labour unions and employees followed the upwards shift during the general process of internalization, when they raised their concerns from the local to national level as the consequences of escalating politization of economic debates related to national austerity reforms and the crisis.

2. Theories of transnational activism

The international dimension of collective mobilizations against capitalism and unfavourable economic developments on a large scale was probably first introduced by the 19th century communist, socialist and anarchist organizational networks that succeeded in framing their struggle as international and therefore building joint coordinating and mobilizing platforms (The International(s)). While the supranational dimension of these mobilizations lied in their framing and at the level of their coordination, their targets remained mostly on the national and even local levels. Despite its internationalist rhetoric, the state remained the primary target for the Left.

This changed at the latest during the first wave of mass mobilizations against international economic institutions and their policies in the second half of the 20th century. Targets of protests in the field of economic distribution started to be framed supra-nationally in both recently industrialized and developed countries during the

1970s and 1980s, yet with coordination of challengers remaining dominantly on the national and local scales [Walton, Ragin 1990: 876-877; Gerhards, Rucht 1992; Routledge 1996; Rothman, Oliver 2002].

However, truly transnational collective action arose when both targets of protest were framed as transnational and inter-organizational coordination crossed the boundaries of national states. This kind of collective action therefore consisted of coordination of international campaigns against both national and supra-national actors and might be observed rather from the end of the 20th century [della Porta, Tarrow 2005: 7]. Waves of protest against economic developments that started to cross national boundaries reached the Western countries mostly during the 1990s and flourished there also because of the growing transnational communication, organizational and institutional ties, and opportunities provided by some international institutions [cf. Keck, Sikkink 1998; Smith 2008: 94-95].

These developments in collective action became possible because of changes in a broader social and political environment after the Seattle anti-WTO mobilization in November 1999; the ensuing movement was labelled “anti-neoliberal”, “anti-global” or “global justice” (GJM). Collective actors considered as separate or even competitive until then (unions, ecologists etc.) joined together and organized a series of successful events challenging the symbol of economic globalization, the WTO. The combination of success (closure of the WTO meeting) and extensive media and public attention made Seattle 1999 a founding myth and “coming out” of – at least the Western – GJM [e.g. Munck 2007: 57; Juris 2008: 33]. The Seattle event demonstrated that the movement is a manifold network of organizations, groups and activists that is characterized by innovative strategies and repertoire. The latter ones stems from the GJM’s rejection of existing models of interest representation and preference of grass-root politics.

As it was pointed out, transnational activism generally and global justice activism particularly were enabled by the combination of factors both external and internal to the movement(s). Three categories of changes seem to be particularly important [della Porta, Tarrow 2005: 7-10]: the first - external - factor is described as the change of international political environment after the fall of state-socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe opened the space for diverse cross-border non-state collective actors - both in the field of civil society and economy, which was further

accelerated by lowering the costs for international communication and transportation. The second - internal - factor consists of social movements' reflexivity and their capability to recognize the importance of supra-national actors, events and processes and develop respective framing. The third - also internal factor - describes the coalition-making activities of SMOs that interacts with the process of new identity formation on the supra-national level.

The social and political processes launched after the change of structural settings that led to the formation of transnational collective action were in much detail described within the DOC programme [McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001; Tarrow 2007]. These analyses show in more detail the composition and the sequence of processes that lies behind the rise of transnational contention, focusing on the actors themselves. According to Tarrow [2005], there are three sets of political processes that led to the constitution of the transnational activism. The first of them takes place on the domestic ground and consists of mobilization of international or global symbols to frame domestic conflicts and response to the supra-national and foreign pressure by actions taken in domestic politics (global framing and internalization). The second set of processes focuses on the connection between domestic and international contention: the first one is the transfer of claims from one site to another, and the second one is the coordination of contention at a different level than it was launched (diffusion and the scale shift). The final set of processes is situated entirely on the international level and describes the projection of domestic claims to international institutions and actors and coalition-making among actors from different countries [Tarrow 2005: 32-33].

The processes and factors described above do not universally imply a given sequence of steps – particular factors and processes do not necessarily represent stages with a given priority or a pre-condition for another stage. Some of the processes may occur alone, some of them in combination with others [Tarrow 2005: 33]. However, it seems that some of these factors and processes are more founding than others: while the processes that take place in-between the domestic and international scales, or solely in the supra-national space may be more or less independent of one another, and may combine in different layouts, they all more or less depend on whether transformative processes have taken place at the level of national societies. In other words, the diffusion of a similar type of contention with

similar claims among different states may be paralleled by the creation of transnational coalitions or transmission of national claims onto supra-national institutions or non-state actors. However, none of these either fully or partly transnational processes would presumably take place without cognitive processes that shift the self-understanding of domestic actors who must first start seeing themselves as part of a broader supra-national polity [Nepstad 2002; Smith 2002; Ayres 2004; della Porta 2007; Pleyers 2010]. In our view, this is a condition for their ability and willingness to challenge the processes and actors of this “polity.” In other words, we understand the upward scale shift of protest framing and object targeting as a key indicator of whether other processes leading to the formation of transnational collective action are more likely to take (or be taking) place.

3. Processes of transnationalization of the Czech left social movements

The transnationalization of Czech left politics might be described in terms of the aforementioned processes and factors. Generally, most of the processes have taken place on the domestic level, with only a time-limited shift towards the supra-national political space.

The beginning of the Czech GJM might be traced to protest events from the late 1990s organised by the autonomist anarchist and radical environmentalist scene that gradually reflected and internalized the global frames of foreign/transnational GJ actors. These namely consisted of the resistance towards the icons and proponents of economic globalization which was initially reduced to protests against the local (namely cultural and environmental) consequences of global processes. More specifically, general political-economic issues (international division of labour, social impacts of transnational neoliberal policies, capitalism) were from the beginning less reflected and their importance grew only before the end of the new millennium [Kolářová 2008: 4; Růžička 2007: 37]. The process of global framing was soon followed by protest activities aimed against supra-national actors and policies, but political claims still focused on the local and national level. This internalization of contention may be illustrated by the new phenomenon within the Czech protest culture - the streetparties. They represented the resistance against broader cultural and social patterns that were seen as detrimental to local and national values:

consumerist culture, cultural globalization, automobilism and urbanism. Here the process of internalization intertwined with another process - diffusion of the forms of protest - as the protest repertoire was based on the imported forms of protest - the streetparties. These (sub-)culturally oriented events explicitly imitated the repertoire of PGA and Reclaim the Streets [Císař, Slačálek 2007: 2] and were coordinated with similar events in other countries in terms of their timing. The boom of this type of GJ activism reached its peak in 1998 and 1999.

The peak of the Czech GJM may be identified unequivocally - it was the Prague IMF/WB counter-summit and its preparation (2000). The preparations for the event started already in 1999 and gradually led to the creation of an unprecedentedly wide coalition of domestic and foreign SMOs in a close coordination with PGA, Indymedia and other networks [Welsh 2004]. Despite the on-going formation of transnational coalitions that were highly unique and positively rated in the Czech activist environment, some domestic networks (Trotskyites, communists) did not get involved and chose to participate within the event separately, namely because of their different ideological views. Nonetheless, this event became the single most important moment for the movement in terms of both number of protesters mobilized around the issues of international corporations and economic globalization (estimated between 10 and 12 thousands) and of the capability of various domestic and foreign SMOs and platforms to broker both domestic and transnational coalitions [Welsh 2004]. Even some evidence of externalization might be found during the event when local environmental and political claims were shifted upwards and as a result, they were closely watched from abroad. It was the open critique of the international economic system and successful mobilization of a large number of people that was enabled by the strong transnational dimension of the event and that made this event also hardly comparable with other domestic protests of Czech GJM [cf. Císař 2008: 148; Kolářová 2009: 50–55].

While the radical left used the event to build transnational networks and mobilize people, old labour organizations were in a different position and their trajectories remained nearly untouched by it.¹ First, their position in the national political system was much more institutionalized and legitimized as a consequence of tripartism.

¹ One of the minor trade unions affiliated with the Czech communist party took part in preparation of anti-IMF/WB demonstrations and participated there. Other trade unions including the largest platform ČMKOS officially did not support the demonstrations or the participation of their members.

Second, their formal integration within the international networks had already taken place long before the Prague summit. The largest Czech labour platform Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (ČMKOS) has been a long-term member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (after the transformation of ICFTU in 2006) and had representatives in its regional boards. Furthermore, after becoming an observer in European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1993 it became its full member in 1995. However, despite having formal ties and being a formal member of these supra-national networks, the transnational dimension of Czech trade unions remained rather weak and insignificant²: the main scope of their activities and framing remained on the domestic level (or bilateral at best) and namely ČMKOS did not raise transnational issues, neither used broader framing nor even mobilized foreign partners into their activities.

Despite having the different institutional and political focus accompanied by the close integration into the system of the government-employees-employers elite negotiating structure, ČMKOS still took the advantage of the Prague 2000 summit. Czech trade unions actively and to an unprecedented extent took part in it and framed its own claims and claims of its international networks globally thus forming a genuine transnational coalition. They organized an extra summit of its domestic members where the memorandum commenting on the IMF/WB politics was drafted. The document aimed to depict the consequences and dangers of IMF/WB policies regarding the rise of poverty and inequalities in the former Third World and to introduce the programme of international labour organizations how to humanize economic globalization. During the summit, clear examples of externalization might be identified, for example, when the process of the transformation of the Czech economy in the early 1990s was framed within the IMF policies of privatization and deregulation towards developing countries. Consequently, the final recommendation of the summit was addressed both to the Czech government and transnational financial institutions and criticized these institutions for their support of casino capitalism, mentioned the role of Washington consensus in backing of the undemocratic regimes, failures in assistance to economic transformation of post-

² On the other hand, the responses of these trade unionist networks to economic globalization were also perceived as inadequate and criticized [Waterman 2008].

communist countries, and the uncontrolled liberalization leading to welfare cuts and the negative social impact.

Drawing on the above-discussed theory – three factors and three sets of processes leading to transnational activism – we may conclude by identifying the core conditions related to collective actors themselves that enable the emergence/activation of transnational social movements. After the international and broader social opportunities have emerged, existing actors (or newly emerging ones) have gradually recognized them, reflected them in their cognitive apparatuses (global framing), and launched contention inspired by foreign events (internalization). This was followed by the reflection of international economic and political events and policies through an innovation in their claims and repertoire (diffusion). This in turn lead to/conditioned a development of new (although instant) identities fostering inter-organizational coalitions on a broader scale (transnational coalition formation and activation). These processes were also paralleled by raising domestic claims (namely economic, environmental and human-rights) on the international level (externalization).

Two main lessons may be learned from this story. First, it seems that while the process of transnationalization of Czech left movements was a complicated combination and interaction among various processes and their mechanisms leading to a transnational collective action, two of them were particularly important: (1) developing a cognitive sensitivity towards global processes and events that enabled actors to understand and interpret conflicts they were involved in as a part of broader social and political reality, and (2) the capability to use this sensitivity and to challenge foreign and supra-national political actors, institutions and processes at least on the domestic level. Second, the question remains what has happened with these key domestic processes/conditions of transnational collective action after 2000, and how have they evolved until and after the coming of financial crisis.

4. Data and Method

Our inquiry is based on a protest events analysis. The protest event is defined here as either an actual gathering of at least three people, who convened in a public space, in order to make claims that bear on interests of an institution/collective actor, or a petition addressed to an institution/collective actor (see also Tilly 1995). Only

real episodes of collective action are included; threats of resorting to collective action, such as strike alerts, were excluded.

We used the electronic archive of Czech News Agency and searched the news between January 1989 and December 2010 for selected keywords. The following variables were coded for each event: date, place, duration, collective participants and organizers, number of individual participants, main issues and framing and their scale, target of the claim, repertoire, reaction of elites, and police activity. All news covering any protest event were selected and coded. The whole dataset consisting of 6235 protest events was used to sample out the events that took place since 2000 and in which one of the organizers was a left-wing actor (labour unions, social democratic and communist parties, radical left SMOs) or employees, which resulted in the dataset with 668 events (PEA Czech). For most of analyses we split the dataset according to its organizers into events organized by old left (N=394 - trade unions, social democratic parties and their youth organizations) and radical left (N=274 - anarchist, Trotskyites, Marxist and communist groups, communist parties and their youth organizations). There were only 10 events that were jointly co-organized by the old and radical left SMOs (two in 2000, one in 2003, two in 2007, two in 2008, two in 2009 and one in 2010), these were coded according to the prevailing type of organizers of the event.

Five key variables were used in the present analysis. First, framing scale was coded as local, national or transnational according to the prevailing interpretation of the event on the part of its participants (usually the diagnostic framing was coded, e.g. who was held responsible for the issue or problem on the part of activists).

Second, the target or object of the event was coded as local, national or transnational (depending on the scale/origin of the main issues, actors or processes the protesters were aiming at).

Third, two main protest issues of each event were coded, and the first of them was used for analysis. The items were: performance of state institutions and the quality of democracy; historical justice/recognition; EU; economic issues; industry; urban planning; social policies; cultural and sport policies; agriculture; consumer issues, domestic security, foreign policies and war; environment; women rights; GLBT rights; minority rights, other human rights; religion.

Fourth, names of organizations that organized the events or participated were recorded, and these were recoded into the number of organizations participating at the event. The range of this number was between 2 and 6. Extra code for foreign organization or groups participating at the event was used.

Fifth, event attendance was recorded. In cases when the exact number was not available (several dozens, several hundred etc.), its lower bound was coded (20, 200 etc.). Petitions were excluded from the analysis of the variable in order to assess the movements' embeddedness more directly.

5. Evolution of left-wing activism after 2000

Right after the Prague events of 2000, a steep and imminent decline both in transnational activities and capacities of Czech left movements has been observed. The key domestic radical left coalition organizing the event suffered from serious ideological disputes leading to its split few months later. The downward scale shift of the radical left was further evidenced by the rapid decrease in the number of streetparties with global justice framing and their attendance. Labour unions continued to play the role of the key partner of the government in regulating the domestic labour conflict and remained the member of international labour associations; however, their focus also retreated to the particular domestic problems and issues connected to welfare and economic/social issues.

5.1 Radical left (2001-2008)

There were three key different periods/campaigns the Czech radical left went through after 2000, which represented different mix of discursive and political opportunities for the movement. The first one was the anti-war campaign that started with the protests against the NATO summit in Prague in November 2002 and followed with protests against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The second period started in August 2006 by the official request of U.S. Administration to build a National Missile Defense base in the Czech Republic. The third period started in January 2009 with the occurrence of the first protests discursively related to financial/economic crisis.

The organization of the 2002 NATO summit had already started in 2000, but the first protest events were organized in September 2002. The series of protest events

against NATO may be understood as an overture to the anti-war activism related to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that was launched in January 2003 and continued until the summer 2006. Total of 94 anti-summit (12) and anti-war (82) protest events took place within this period and the GJM and its organizational periphery³ organized or co-organized more than half of these events [Navratil 2012]. The protest mobilizations associated with the NATO event were directed both against the summit itself and against the NATO as an institution. Protest claims comprised of several layers. Considering its scale the issue was framed and perceived as international (or global) rather than as national or even local: the summit in Prague was perceived as an occasion to manifest the disagreement with NATO's global character and strategies rather than with its threat to national or local interests. The issue was interpreted and perceived largely in terms of political economy while threats to democracy and environment were rather seen as minor ones. Campaigns against wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not bring any significant change related to framing or issues of protest. The frames of international political economy, corporate power, imperialism and exploitation were further amplified and the process of global framing was further supported by the diffusion of some key foreign slogans into Czech environment ("no blood for oil" or "not in my name").

An important change in the scale of the anti-war campaign took place in mid-2006, when the talks between the U.S. administration and the Czech government on the location of the U.S. anti-missile base were made public. This was followed by the official proposal by the U.S. to the Czech freshly established liberal-right wing government in January 2007 to join the U.S. National Defense system. The total of 193 protest events took place during the whole campaign, while Czech global justice SMOs and their periphery organized or co-organized again more than half of them [Navratil 2012]. The change in the political context brought also the corresponding change in symbolic strategies of actors that were involved in antiwar activism. There were significant changes both in framing strategies and their scale. At the very beginning the SMOs organizing the "anti-radar" campaign employed the imagery of the Warsaw pact invasion to Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and the mobilizing frames paralleled the preparations of the location for the U.S. radar with the threat to national sovereignty from the world superpower. Other mobilizing frames employed

³ SMOs that only partially fulfilled the definition of GJM: i.e. collective identity, challenging of the symbols of economic globalization or cooperation with global justice SMOs.

the notion of the Munich agreement (1938) or potential conflict with the Russian Federation, which both helped construct the frames of national threat. Drawing on the general unpopularity of the project, the diagnosis of national threat was instantly supplemented by the request for the national plebiscite to decide on the issue. This created the symbolic mix that can be labeled as the “national democratic” framing which largely pushed out a possible transnational or global dimension in agenda setting and framing. The anti-radar campaign gradually vanished during late 2008 and early 2009 in (correct) expectations that the new Obama administration would change the U.S. military strategies.

5.2 Old left (2001-2008)

The opportunities relevant for trade unions (and protest of employees) followed slightly different trajectory (not only) after 2000. Basically, they followed the government economic and social policies and economic cycles on the domestic level. Despite the fact that there were left-wing or centre-left cabinets between 1998 and 2006, some significant conflicts broke out.

Until 2002 the trade unions declared themselves as “apolitical” but they maintained intimate and peaceful relations with the cabinet. While the country started its recovery from the economic hardships of the late 1990s, the leader of ČMKOS publicly announced that the government was not to be blamed for the deeds of its (right-wing) predecessor. The tripartite mechanism was reinforced and deepened, and some trade unions’ experts were even employed at high positions at some ministries. Surprisingly, the first large-scale conflict with the government broke out after the former social-democratic minister of social affairs Spidla won the parliamentary elections in 2002 and formed the coalition with Christian democrats and liberals. During 2003 the Ministry of finance architected the plan for “curing the budgets” that anticipated radical cuts in the welfare system. Trade unions responded with massive strikes that lasted for several months. The situation was repeated – on a lower scale – in 2004 after the announcement of the cuts of wages of state employees. The rest of the period of this central-left government was calm. The only massive demonstration related to the government (November 2005) was actually supporting its plan to issue a new labour code.

The second period that represented a different combination of political and discursive opportunities started after the parliamentary elections in 2006 when Topolánek's liberal-conservative government was established. Right after its instalment the government announced its plan to launch an ambitious reform of public budgets in the areas of taxes, health-care, education, social services and pensions. Trade unions complained for not being involved in the preparations of the reform and for not being consulted within the Tripartite framework. The reform laws were passed in August 2007 and between mid-2007 and mid-2008 the series of protest events was launched against the reforms combining the mass demonstrations and happenings. Most of the claims targeted the reforms as being too restrictive and "simple-minded" and "worsening the situation of 80% of employees". However, unions also targeted the worsening of the dialogue with the government itself: they blamed the government for being ignorant of the situation of employees, for not consulting with social partners, not informing the public about its agenda and even for lying to its partners. During their campaign that united all major Czech trade union networks the unions were also provided symbolic backing from abroad when general secretary of ETUC and some trade unionist leaders from neighbouring countries came to support the demonstrations. However, the framing of the most of the events until 2008 remained at the national level, and no significant public attempts to use the concepts of neoliberalism or Washington consensus, or foreign examples of the failure of strict fiscal reforms in other countries appeared.

5.3 Financial and economic crisis (2009-2010)

While the measurable impact of the global financial crisis on the Czech economy before 2009 was far from dramatic, the Czech right wing government had employed the notion of crisis already after late 2008 to push through a further liberalization and fiscal restrictions in economic, healthcare and social policies that would otherwise had been applicable only with significant political costs and difficulties. While the government repeatedly denied that the Czech economy was severely and directly threatened by the coming financial crisis, it nevertheless threatened the citizens to follow "the Greek road" if there would be no economic restrictions and tax increases preventing the country from an uncontrollable burdening the state with debt and from the consequent severe economic restrictions and hardships. The right wing political parties succeeded in framing the financial and economic crisis as the "last chance" to

avoid the scenario of “spendthrift and debt-booming left-wing policies” and persuaded the public in such a manner that it succeeded in the parliamentary elections in mid-2010. The election result was interpreted as the national consensus with the restrictive fiscal economic policy and encouraged the government to move further with its austerity agenda. Anti-austerity protests in this period were organized both by radical left SMOs (of GJM), labour unions and employees, plus new broad protest coalitions were founded.

6. Evolution of the framing and target scale after the crisis

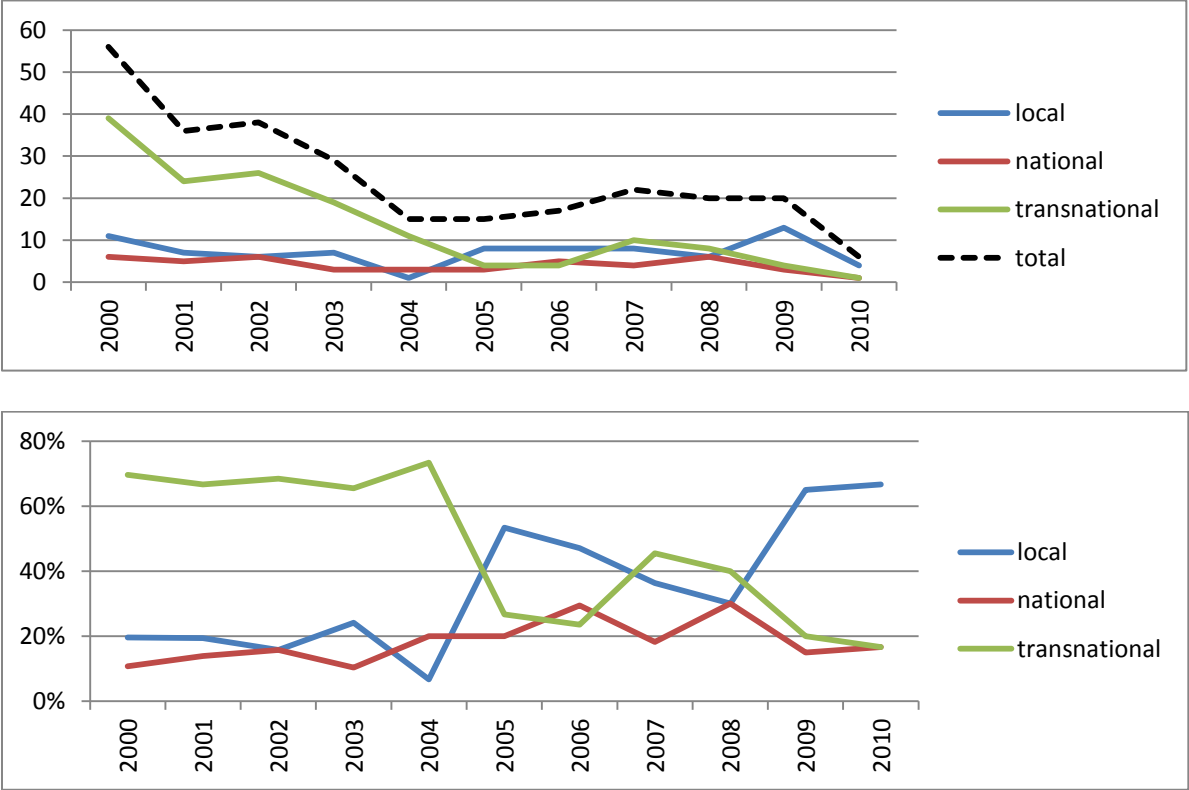
The evolution of the absolute number of protest events organized by the left between 2000 and 2010 suggests two different dynamics. While the protest activities of radical left (or ex-GJM) are clearly in the long-term and steep decline after the momentous Prague events of 2000, trade unions and employees seem to have been following different protest cycles. Their protests’ peaks of 2003 and 2008 suggest that the old left has rather been reflecting the national government policies (welfare and economic reforms imposed by the Spidla’s social-democratic cabinet in 2003 and Topolánek’s liberal-conservative cabinet in 2008). The coming of the financial crisis clearly had a differentiated impact on protest mobilization of the left movements: while the old left seems to have lowered their protest activities after the mass protests against pre-crisis reforms, there is nonetheless some upward turn in 2010 indicating a change of the trend. On the other hand, the radical left seems to continue in its descent trajectory.

The first important domestic indicator of the macro-processes of formation of transnational collective action is the object or target of their domestic protest. What is their scale? What are the trends in the development of their scale? (How) did it change after the rise of financial crisis?

The data on the radical strand of the Czech left social movements reveal a dramatic picture. First, both the ratio and the absolute number of protest events targeting the transnational policies or issues are substantially higher than those targeting national and local issues, even if their absolute numbers have declined after 2002. The only change in this trajectory took place in 2007 (when the focus of anti-war protests shifted more to U.S. policies and institutions). There is an interesting point of convergence in 2005 when the targets at all three levels are represented almost

equally. On the other hand, it is important to note that after 2004, the targets on the national level are both in relative and absolute terms represented less than the other two types (again, with a minor overlap with transnational level in 2006 when the anti-base campaign was launched and the government was temporarily perceived as the primary target). The coming of the crisis do not seem to change the declining trajectory in the number of events, but– quite surprisingly – it led to the significant relative increase in the events targeting the local issues at the expense of issues on two other levels.

Figure 1: Evolution of the target scale of protest events organized by radical left (2000-2010, N=274)

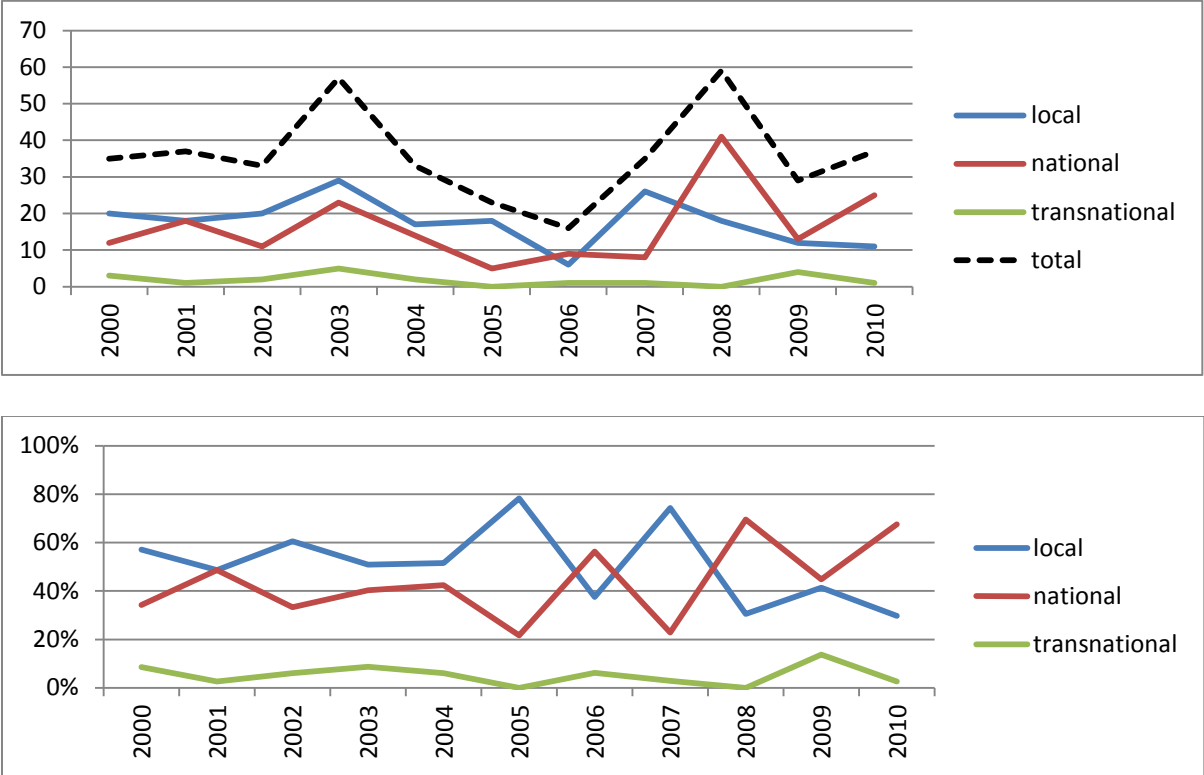


Source: PEA Czech

The evolution of protest events organized by the old left is somewhat completely different from radical activism. There are two significant peaks following the changes in the structure of domestic political opportunity structure – in 2003 and 2008. First, it seems that while the first peak is dominated by protests targeting the local issues and policies, the second one is clearly driven by the national-level focus. Second, the supra-national targets are either missing or their frequency is insignificant – both in absolute and relative terms. The only moment of an upward scale shift in targets may

be identified with the coming of the crisis in 2009 but the change is quite low and temporary. Side by side with this short-term and small scale increase of interests in transnational targets in 2009, there has already been a steady decline in locally oriented protests since 2007 and thus the events targeting national problems have clearly prevailed at the end of the period.

Figure 2: Evolution of the target scale of protest events organized by old left (2000-2010, N=394)



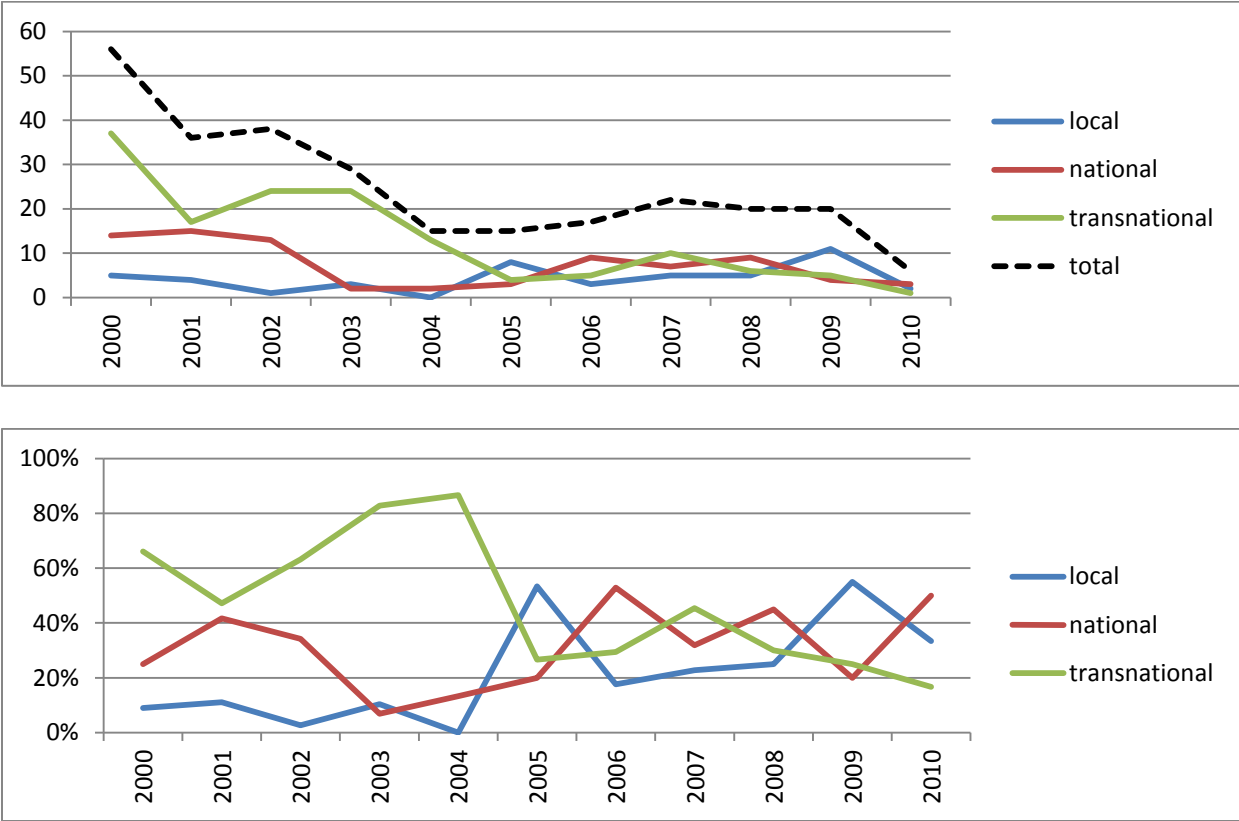
Source: PEA Czech

The second key indicator of the processes of formation of transnational collective action is the scale of framing used in protest events, or the extent to which the local, national and supra-national symbols are used to blame or to identify a problem.

The evolution of radical left protest framing reveals two interesting features. First, during the first half of the period under study the single most important framing level was the transnational one. Its dynamics clearly points to the transnational opportunities and grievances that arose for radical left. The decline of framing on this level between the Prague summit and the rise of protests against the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2002 was followed by another decline in 2005; the rise of a different anti-war issue – the national one - in 2006 prevented its recovery to the

preceding level. What is more important, even the coming of the financial crisis did not change the trend of the retreat from the transnational imagination of the radical left. Second, there is an interesting dynamics between the employment of national and local symbolism: trends in the number of events framed on these two levels have been closely intertwined since 2003 and only in 2005 and 2009 the locally framed events became more frequent. The coming of the crisis was marked by the immediate rise of the locally framed events (in contrast to the rise of the transnational accent of the old left), which was followed by the decline in the frequency of all types of events in 2010 (with the slowest decline of nationally framed events).

Figure 3: Evolution of the framing scale of protest events organized by radical left (2000-2010, N=274)

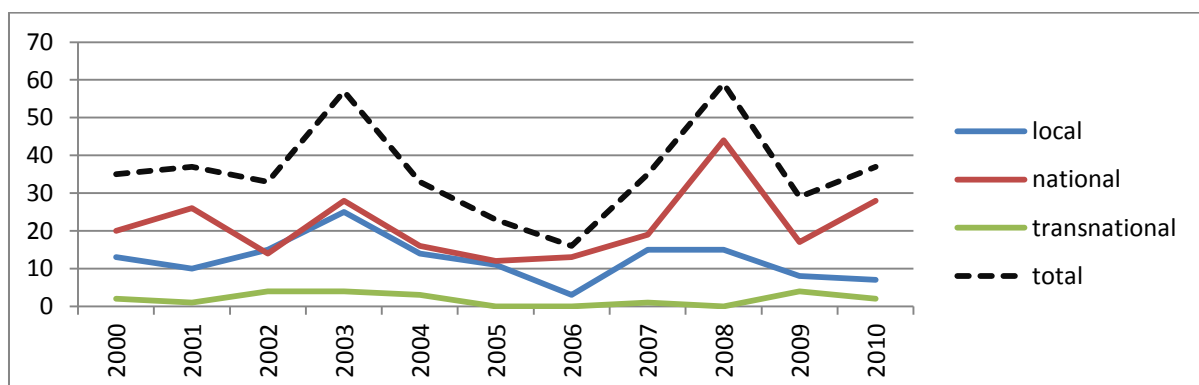


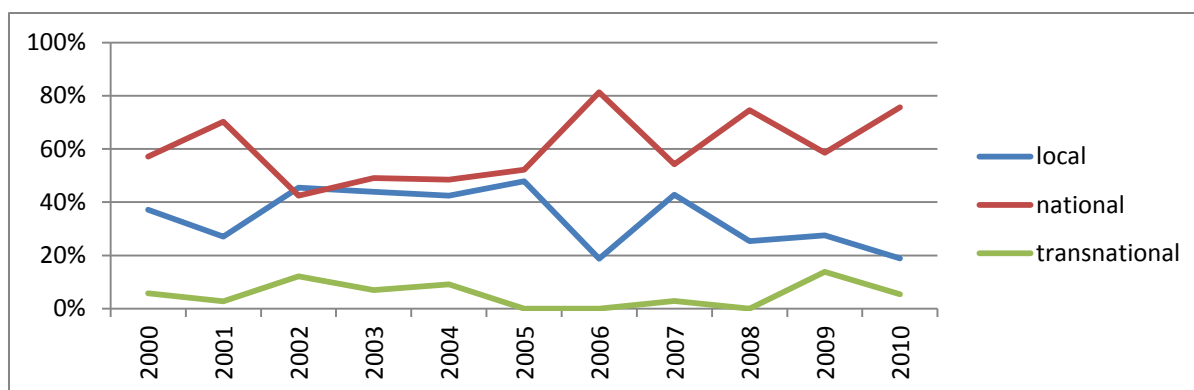
Source: PEA Czech

The analysis of framing strategies used by old left actors shows that its most prominently present scale is the national one, and that the use of transnational framing throughout the period under the study is rare, which is not particularly surprising. Two moments are interesting, though. First, the Prague events in 2000 stimulated the highest peak of transnational framing neither in relative nor absolute

terms: on the contrary, this symbolic level was relatively strongest between 2002 and 2004 (mostly in connection with the necessary regulation of some industries to fulfill the EU accession criteria and also with rising awareness of EU labour regulation) and in 2009 (mostly in connection with EU and global financial crisis, or with foreign/international owners of companies). After the country's accession to the EU in 2004 until the coming of the crisis in 2009, the transnational framing became both relatively and quantitatively insignificant. Second, between 2002 and 2005 the local framing (i.e. blaming particular companies or regional institutions) became similarly important as the national one. An important shift occurred in 2006 with the politization of social dialogue in the nationwide discourse because of the parliamentary elections and the heated electoral campaign amplifying the socio-economic cleavage. The national level of framing has become the dominant one since then, while the symbolic activities aiming at the local institutions, processes and actors (companies, local authorities) have increased only partially. To conclude, it seems that the first year of economic crisis led to the decrease in events with both national and local framing and empowered the contention against transnational symbols. On the other hand, during the following years both locally and transnationally framed events declined and the protests framed at the national level stayed clearly the most important ones.

Figure 4: Evolution of the framing of protest events organized by old left (2000-2010, N=394)





Source: PEA Czech

To sum up, neither of the two indicators suggests any substantial positive influence of the financial crisis on the transnational imagination of the Czech social justice movements. What seemed to be a shift of trade unions towards more transnationally framed events turned out to be just a temporal swing at the expense of national framing. More importantly, although the radical left used to be the key domestic actor that actively brokered transnational coalitions in 2000, the crisis did not brought any change in its declining transnational imagination either. However, there are nevertheless some interesting processes of scale shift going on in both cases that seem to signal some impact of the crisis. First, while there is no clear impact of crisis on the relative importance of different framing levels of the radical left, there is a clear trend toward protesting against local targets. Second, while there is no significant change in the scale of targets on the part of the old left, there is a clear trend towards a relative reinforcing of the national framing of protest at the expense of the local one.

7. Two paths

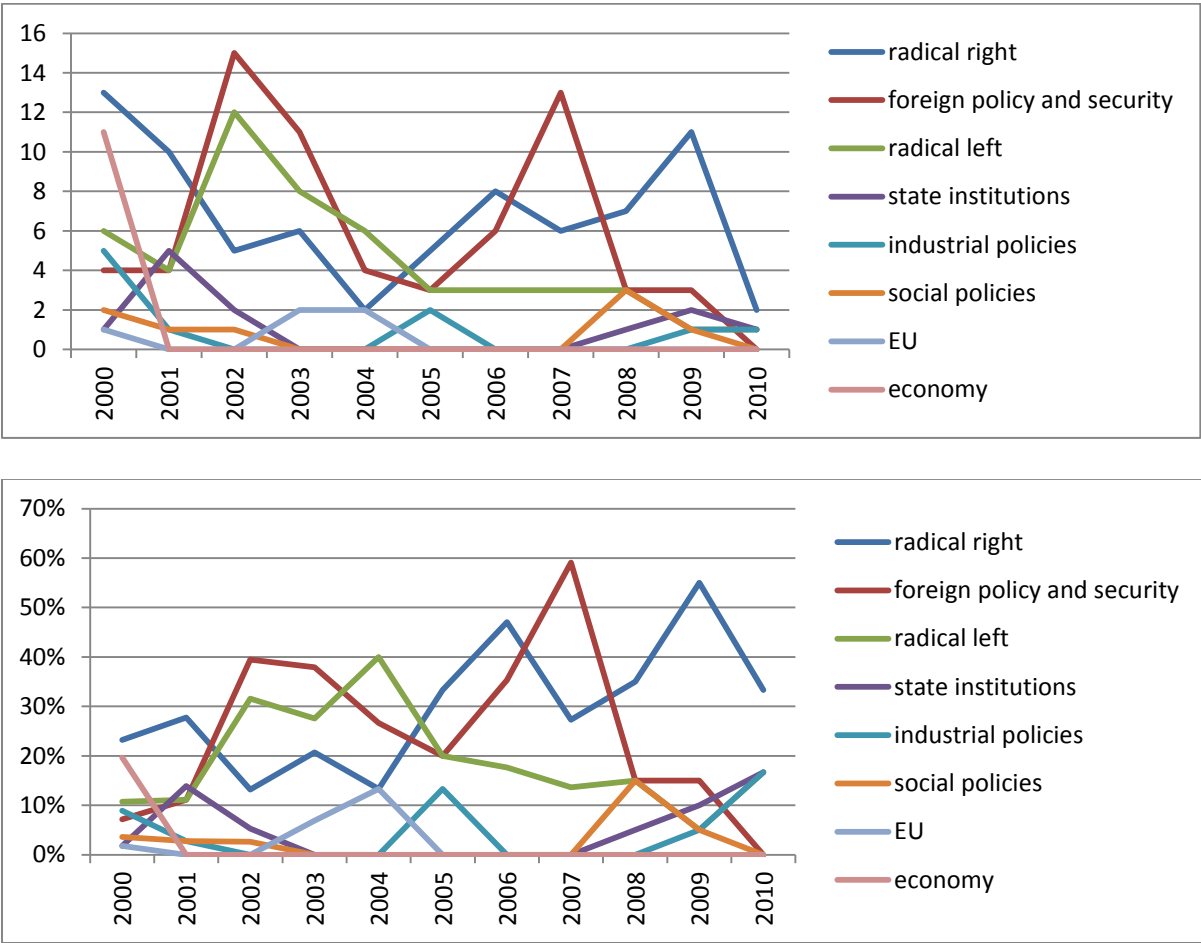
There are several ways how to get the picture of particular paths (or combination of factors) through which the coming of the global financial crisis shifted the scale of trade unions' framing upward from the local onto the national level, and radical left's framing downward from the transnational to the local level. We consider three factors to be particularly important; these are protest issues, movement coalition capacity and its embeddedness.

The content of protest may considerably limit the capacities of actors to frame it in global terms or to use it to target transnational institutions. Despite the fact that both modes – old and radical – of left-wing activism maintain their core protest agenda,

there is an interesting evolution of how frequently were their respective issues raised and accented.

Three key issues were targeted by the radical left SMOs: the radical right (following this issue typically means entering the confrontation with nationalist or racist movements), the radical left (pursuing ideological goals of the left - celebration of May Day, happenings promoting agenda of social justice, events targeting inequality or oppression etc.), and foreign policy and security (typically anti-war issues, critique of U.S. foreign policies). Despite many fluctuations, there are two major changes related to the coming of the financial crisis: first, the issue of foreign policy (associated namely with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with the location of the U.S. military base in the Czech Republic) have lost its importance after 2008. Second, fighting the radical right regained its relative strength with the rise of new nationalist and populist movements after the discourse on economic hardships and the first signs of economic downturn arrived.

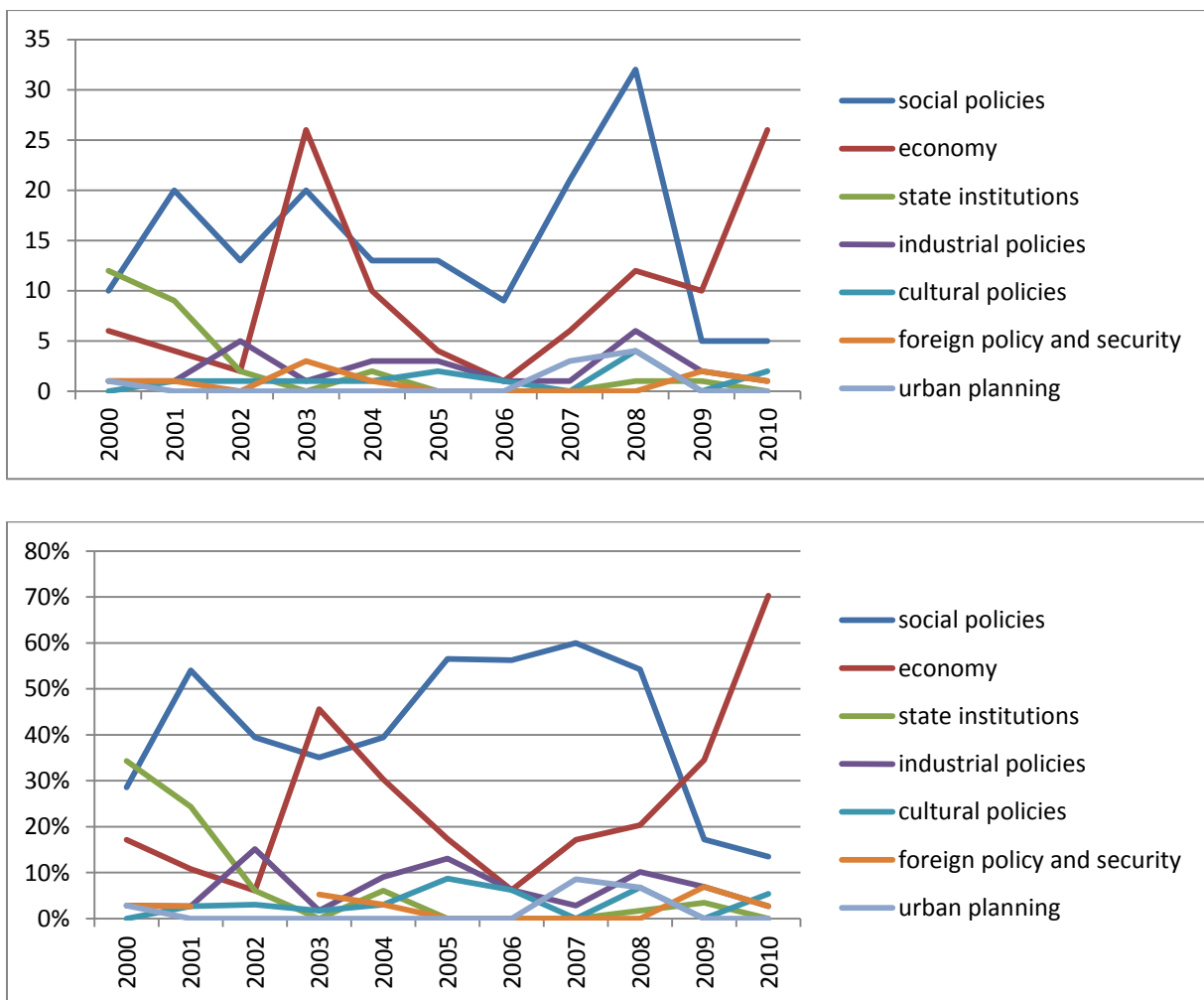
Figure 5: Evolution of protest issues of radical left (2000-2010, N=274)



Source: PEA Czech

For the last 10 years the protest strategies of Czech trade unions (as well as employees) have been constantly focusing on the issues of economy and social policies. However, there seems to be some joint mechanism connecting the employment of these two issues as they relative importance seem to be negatively correlated. While the “usual” trade union protest activities focused rather on the maintaining the status quo in social welfare and social entitlements, more radical and far-reaching austerity measures that came after the crisis (but also after economic reforms in 2003) made the unions switch their protest agenda: the economic system itself – and not only its outputs in form of social policies - became the subject of debate and contention.

Figure 6: Evolution of protest issues of old left (2000-2010, N=394)

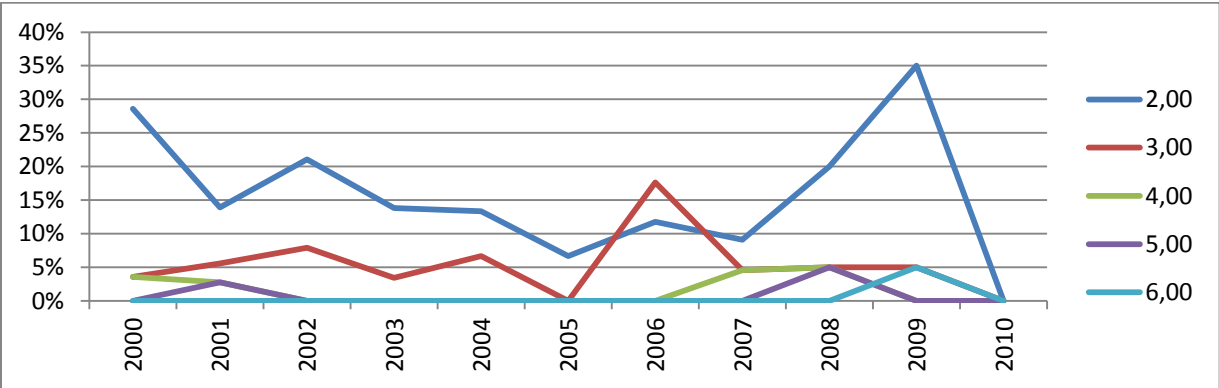


Source: PEA Czech

The second important factor is the coalition capacity of the movements on the domestic and local levels. The more the organizations are able to communicate with each other and coordinate their activities, the more they should be able to adapt to more universal goals, more inclusive strategies and broader framing of their goals.

The coalition capacities of the radical left SMOs are typically very low and even the large scale protests were typically organized by a low number of organizations. This is in line with the individualist ideology professed by the large part of the Czech radical left and due to their long-term ideological disputes. It is clear that the relative importance of the smallest possible protest coalitions - with two members only - has become by far the most usual one, with the exception of the first year of the anti-U.S. missile base protest in 2006. During the second year of the financial crisis in 2010, there was no event organized by the radical left that would be co-attended or co-organized by any other type of collective actor. Furthermore, while the radical left protest coalitions included foreign actors in 2000 (three events) and 2001 (one event), the last time Czech organizations formed an international alliance was in 2007 (one event).

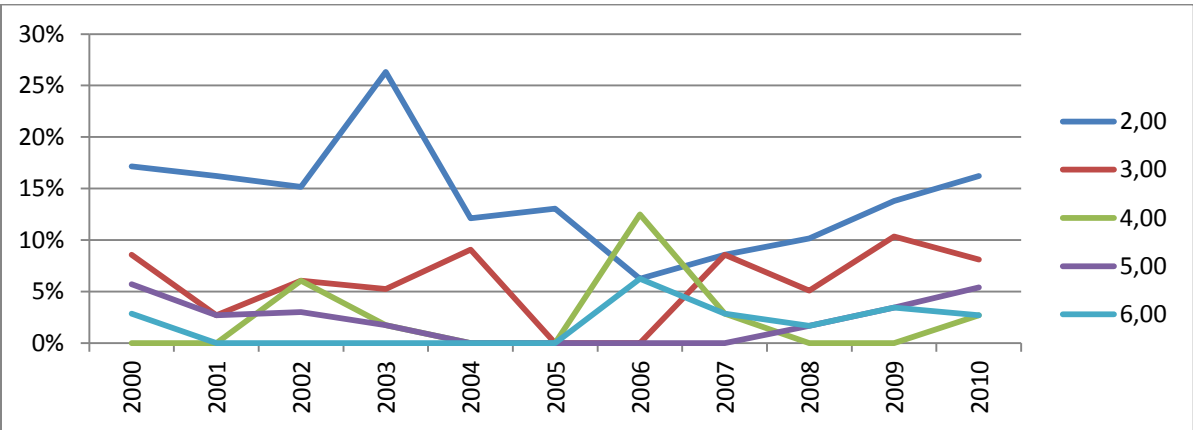
Figure 7: Evolution of coalition size during radical left protests (2000-2010, N=274)



Source: PEA Czech

The trends in the evolution of coalition capacities of the old left seem to have changed in 2006. While between 2000 and 2005 there was rather a declining trend in the size of protest coalitions, this has changed after the establishment of the centre-right government in 2006 when trade unions started to accentuate their protest cooperation. The impact of the crisis seems to have played no role. These trends correspond with the capacity of the old left to include foreign actors in their coalitions: these were included between 2001 and 2003 (one event per year), and then in 2008 (one event) and 2009 (two events).

Figure 8: Evolution of coalition size during old left protests (2000-2010, N=394)

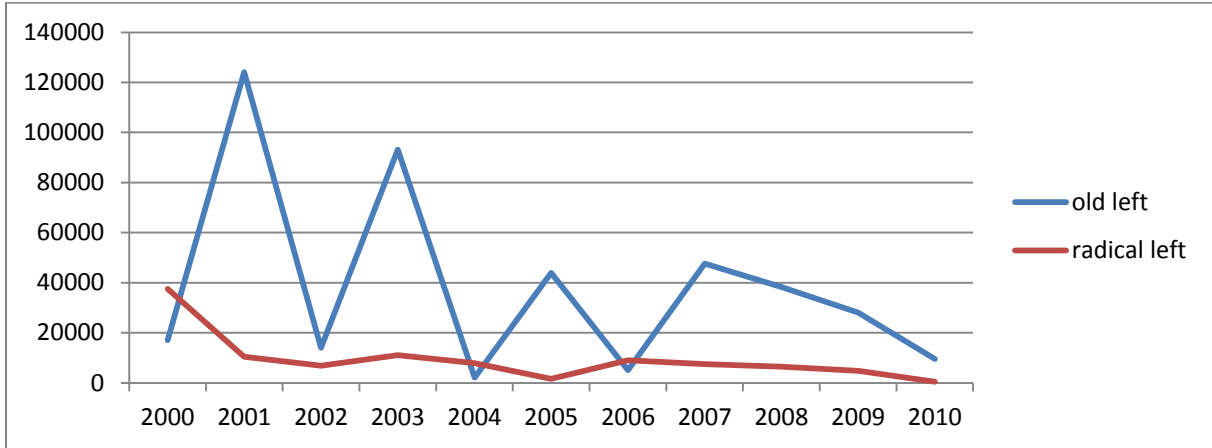


Source: PEA Czech

Finally, the social embeddedness or mobilization capacity shall be taken into account to understand more fully how the Czech left movements responded to the financial

crisis. This is one of the key characteristics that differentiates the radical from old left contention (not only) in the Czech Republic: because of the structural and cultural settings both discursive and political opportunities for the radical left have remained closed and its mobilizing capacities (and social embeddedness) stayed constantly low. One of its major mobilization successes (2000 Prague summit) was enabled by its capacity to form vertical transnational ties and to attract participants from abroad. Its mobilization capacity is based on rather small subcultural communities that are usually unwilling to cooperate together. The only exception is the communist part of the movement, which rely on a relatively high party membership.⁴

Figure 8: Evolution of protest event participation (2000-2010, N=668)



Source: PEA Czech

8. Discussion and conclusion

Our exploratory analysis of the evolution of the domestic indicators of transnational collective action suggested that the two key strands of the Czech left movements have reflected the coming of the financial crisis to the country in 2009 in a radically different fashion. While the Trotskyite, anarchist and communist groups have generally shifted to the local targets, focusing on local and national levels, trade unions performed differently. Here the scale shift took just the opposite direction: both the target's and framing's scale shifted upwards from the local to the national level. While the former parts of the successful transnational collective protests in 2000 scaled down from the transnational to the national and from the national to the local level, locally embedded trade unions scaled up to the nationwide scene. What are

⁴ The current estimate is 50.000 members.

the factors that might lead to different paths of these movements and different reflections of the financial crisis? We have tried to sketch some factors that might have contributed to this development: issues of protest, networking capacity and social embeddedness.

The radical left's strategies in the time of crisis seem to target other movement's reactions to the economic crisis and related social uncertainty and friction: the radical right. While this issue has always been strongly present in the Czech radical left programme, it has become far more preferred than other issues during the last few years. This narrowing of the issue scope is closely connected to the sparse horizontal networking with other groups and currents but especially with the decline in the scale of framing and claims-making: as the radical right parades and protests usually take place in particular locations and cities, the resistance against them is usually framed as a local issue - protect "our city and our neighbourhood" from fascism and racism. A relatively shallow social embeddedness of the radical left in the Czech society (with the only exception of the communist party) is changing the logic of its strategies. Non-existence of broad popular base of the movement on the national level (that would expect and reward particular gains and practical policies) made the employment of radical universalist framing and joining transnational mobilizations on global issues easy. The cosmopolitanism of the Czech radical left seems to have been heavily dependent on the initiatives from abroad, meanwhile it withdraw into its local communities.

After 2008 trade unionists have experienced a similar situation as during the economic reforms of 2003: the expectation of a rapid worsening of social conditions of their massive social base (including non-members that support trade-unionist activities) that was architected on the national level (2003) or transmitted from the transnational arena through the national level (2008) made the movement to re-scale its strategies and symbols. One of the reactions was the issue shift: while various social policies and their reforms were usually negotiated or contested among various parts of trade union movement and the ministries on the national or local (regional) levels, the sudden and far-reaching changes that aimed at changing the parameters of policies in all key areas launched a more dramatic reaction. The economy itself, its content, adjustment or meaning became the problem which enabled (or forced) the movement to rescale its framing from local advocacy and contesting particular

employers to a broader realm. Despite the fact that the Czech labour movement is rather self-contained, hierarchical and highly structured, it has also changed its orientation towards the cooperation with other non-state actors, even with some foreign ones. The shift of targets and frames of trade-unionist protest onto the national level was enabled also by the strategies of government: it explicitly connected itself with the crisis and framed it as a national problem. The government took two important steps: first, it claimed that the Czech economy would not be harmed by financial crisis, and later on declared itself as the responsible actor to prevent the economic downturn and to bring the solution (in form of the austerity measures). In other words, it became the visible target tied to the negative economic impact. This made the movement to shift up to the nationwide arena, but at the same time prevented it from linking the problem to the structures and processes of global capitalism.

To conclude, while the financial and following economic crisis represents a clear opportunity for the Left to point to the supra-national roots of national and local hardships, it has not been utilized (not only) in the Czech Republic. There is a strong path dependency in Czech social movements that influence the readiness and swiftness of their response to new challenges on different grounds they are used to. The process of “translation” of global economic changes into Czech environment was primarily mediated by the political elites and competing non-state actors.

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