

Transnational Solidarity Organisations and their main features, before and since 2008: Adaptive and/or Autonomous? ⁱ

Maria Kousis, Maria Paschou, Angelos Loukakis
University of Crete

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Abstract

This paper highlights the importance of crisis-related transformations experienced during the 2008-16 period by transnationally oriented, citizen-led solidarity organisations, a topic that has received scant scholarly attention. It offers an exploratory, comparative analysis of the main features of these Transnational Solidarity Organisations (TSOs) which rests on a comprehensive conceptual framework of 'alternative forms of resilience', referring to the ability to bounce back from hardship and meet human needs in challenging times. We apply a new methodology, Action Organisation Analysis, which is based on information coded from organisational websites of solidarity organisations retrieved from online directories. Using a sample of 1,753 TSOs, we examine two types of approaches: *adaptive* (philanthropic, formal or reformist) and *autonomous* (mutual-help, informal or contentious) ones. We document differential transformations for adaptive and autonomous TSOs, as reflected in their major characteristics, i.e. their value frames, partners, routes to achieve their goals and supplementary actions, across time and in three different issue fields: migration, disabilities and unemployment. Notable are the increasing shifts towards social change and protests, especially for unemployment TSOs, and less so for migration ones. The findings contribute to debates on the impact of crises on activist solidarity organisations by documenting the dialectics of autonomy and adaptation across contemporary social issues, as well as by highlighting the importance of TSOs' hybrid features. The present analysis will also be useful for future work on transnational solidarity organisations and their transitions in a rapidly evolving global society.

Key words: solidarity organisations, transnational, Europe, civic society, economic crisis, 'refugee crisis', unemployment, disability, migration, autonomous organisations

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Introduction

The double crisis context following the financial crisis of 2008 and the so-called “refugee crisis” of 2015-16ⁱ led to multiple humanitarian crises and intense mobilisation by informal citizens’ groups, as well as formal solidarity organisations. These have occurred in an era of neoliberal austerity policies, welfare state retrenchment, increasing unemployment and precarity, dwindling social rights and large migrant moves/flows/movements and xenophobic politics in Europe. New activist organisations have emerged to address subsequent rising needs and propose alternatives, while already established ones have reactivated or expanded their repertoires and organised direct action initiatives (Castells et al., 2012; Forno and Graziano, 2014; Zamponi and Bosi, 2018; Kousis et al., 2018; della Porta 2018; Loukakis, Kiess, Kousis and Lahusen, 2018; Kanellopoulos et al., 2020; Agustín and Jørgensen, 2018). In this context, citizen-led solidarity organisations have become increasingly important, given rapid and continuous transnational challenges. Nevertheless, despite their long standing importance (Davies, 2016), there is a lack of works addressing the shifts in the characteristics of transnational activist organisations during this period (Fernandez et al 2020, Kousis et al., 2020, Loukakis, 2018). How has the dual crisis impacted on the different organizational types of TSOs? Has it led to more or less radical, adaptive or hybrid paths?

This paper offers a systematic comparative analysis of the impact of the above crises on the main features of transnationally oriented, citizen-led solidarity organisations operating in the fields of migration, disabilities and unemployment. More specifically, based on recent cross-national research (H2020 TransSOL Project), it traces changes in the organisational forms, partner types, value frames, strategies and supplementary actions of Transnational Solidarity Organisations (TSOs) (Kousis et al., 2018). Drawing from previous work (Authors et al., 2020; Fernandez-GG et al., 2020; Loukakis and Maggini, 2020; Kanellopoulos et al., 2020) we define TSOs as formal or informal citizen groups or organisations which are explicitly solidarity-oriented and are transnational in terms of at least one of the following: organisers, actions, beneficiaries/participants, partners, sponsors, frames, volunteers and spatial scope. As in these previous works, TSOs adopt at least one of the following solidarity orientations: a) mutual-help, bottom-up, solidarity exchange within group, b) support or assistance between groups, c) help or support to others, and d) distribution of goods and services to others (top-down solidarity). Examples in our sample include the NoBorders group providing help to refugees and raising awareness in Athens, the National Confederations of People with Disabilities, operating in European countries to support persons with disabilities and protect their rights, or the Attac network of political activists against neoliberal globalisation and for international solidarity policies in Germany and beyond.

Even though sociological works on collective action and solidarity organizations have shed light on their major characteristics, they mostly centre at the subnational or national level (e.g. Baglioni, 2001; Smith, 2002). Such studies have focused on the ways in which formal or informal solidarity initiatives offer citizens alternative means of dealing with the impacts of the global financial crisis including increases in unemployment and precarity, cuts in social provisions, decreases in credit access, changes in consuming practices and gloomy prospects for the future of their children (Norman and Uba, 2015; Zamponi and Bosi, 2018; Cruz et al., 2017; Zschache, Theiss and Paschou, 2020; Giugni and Grasso, 2018). Furthermore, there is rare scholarly attention on the manner in which ordinary people have been affected by both the financial and ‘refugee crisis’ at the European level and across specific solidarity fields (e.g. Lahusen et al., 2018; Fernandez et al., 2020; Author et al., 2020).

In an age of multiple crises, increasing globalization and expanding disparities fostering citizen collective action across borders, the paper aims to fill this gap and contribute to sociological works on the transformations in transnationally oriented solidarity organizations, through a new approach to the study of activist organisations and their transition in times of crises. It does so through systematic and situated empirical findings on the changes experienced by two main organisational types of TSOs (the adaptive and the autonomous) which have survived and/or emerged in Europe following the 2008 global financial crisis, and the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015-16, in the fields of migration, disability and unemployment. Using a random sample of 1,753 TSOsⁱⁱⁱ in eight European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, and the UK) our analysis unravels and discusses their major organisational characteristics and the ways they have changed during the 2008-16 period.

For instance, our analysis illustrates important radicalisation shifts in in the unemployment and migration fields, but also trends towards hybrid traits. Furthermore, by documenting the extent to which they are autonomous/grassroots or reformist/adaptive in times crises it contributes to our understanding of how they will transform in an age of perpetual crises (e.g. climate change, financial, so-called 'refugee crisis', democracy, Covid-19). Finally, it offers a methodological roadmap for analysing the way in which globally oriented civil society organisations respond to crisis contexts.

Therefore, we analyse how, under crises conditions, TSOs in Europe have transformed. Specifically, we explore the extent to which challenges from the financial and subsequent socio-political crisis and the 'refugee crisis', have affected the way in which autonomous and adaptive TSOs respond to them. Have they maintained the same features, or did the double crisis conditions lead them to extend their features and address challenges in a hybrid manner, through a broader array of means? The answer, we argue through primary research on data drawn from TSO's websites, weighs towards the latter. Our examination surfaces the ways in which TSOs have responded to the crises in terms of their organisational forms, value frames, partners, routes, and supplementary actions. The sections below provide a presentation of related works, the findings of our analysis as well as the related discussion and conclusions in reference to the challenges posed to TSOs and their responses.

Differential responses of citizens' solidarity organisations in times of crisis

The economic, social and political multidimensionality of the 2008 crisis have been considered to be both a constraint and an opportunity for civic engagement, broadly transforming the repertoires of political action and opening up spaces for new forms of participation, such as political consumerism, solidarity networking and direct democracy initiatives (Giugni and Grasso, 2018; Lekakis and Forno, 2019). Such research demonstrates that the economic crisis has prompted direct actions of solidarity, moving beyond protest and witnessing various actors and organisational types aiming to transform a specific aspect of society (Bosi and Zamponi 2020, Author et al., 2018).

Acting as a constraint, economic retrenchment has weakened organisational activity and third sector development due to limited funding opportunities, the weakening of state support, unstable volunteering and increased competition (Salamon et al., 2009; Hanfstaengl, 2010; Morreale, 2011; Powell et al. 2016), confirming the prediction of the resource mobilisation approach (Loukakis, 2018; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Acting as an opportunity, the crisis has fostered informal solidarity organising in the form of grassroots activism and new social alliances in response to local urgencies and in connection with the new global social movements (D'Alisa, Forno and Maurano, 2015; Della Porta and O'Connor, 2017).

Influenced by the debate on the radical and reformist/adaptive nature of civic organisations (e.g. Giugni and Grasso, 2018a; D'Alisa et al., 2015; Flesher Fominaya, 2007), the analysis draws on the typology of "Alternative Forms of Resilience" (AFR) which encompasses a wide range of nonmainstream/non-capitalist solidarity activities through which citizens groups and organisations build community resilience (i.e. sustained and reflexive, collective practices of addressing daily/human needs), when confronting difficult times and when rights are threatened (Kousis and Paschou, 2017). These activities are alternative in terms of their nonmarket structures of social organisation, or unconventional ways of economic exchange and/or engaging forms of political participation. The concept of resilience used here is connected to citizen empowerment and the collective ability (or "social resilience") to resist and bounce back from economic hardship and the resulting deterioration of social rights in order to meet human needs. The analysis builds on this typology to distinguish more clearly between adaptive and autonomous TSOs. *Adaptive TSOs* are supportive, corrective or remedial to established institutions, legislation and welfare structures, based on humanitarian and civic rights values, whereas *autonomous TSOs* are mutual help focused, more contentious, suggest radical alternatives, and are based on communitarian and emancipatory values (Authors 1 and 2, 2017, 2019). This typology reflects the importance of organisational forms highlighted by works on different social movements (e.g. Diani and Donati, 1999; Diani, 1992; Tilly, 1994), and more recently on solidarity organisations (e.g. Loukakis et al., 2018; Fernandez et al., 2020).

Intensified by the economic and governance challenges of the past decade, scholarly interest in these two distinct types of resilient solidarity practices (reformist vs. radical), has underlined the need to recognise the political orientation of AFR as a critical factor in the formulation of research questions for their study. This need is reflected in the Social Innovation Approach (Moulaert et al., 2013; Cruz, Martinez and Blanco, 2017), as well as in the Alternative Economy, Sustainable Community Movement Organisations, Degrowth, Postgrowth, Post-capitalist and Anarchist approaches (e.g. Castells et al., 2012; Forno and Graziano, 2014; D'Alisa et al., 2015; D'Alisa, Andretta and Giudi, 2017; Loukakis, 2018). While the former highlights issues of empowerment and governance, the latter approaches are especially attentive to links with social movements and action strategies. Based mostly on qualitative studies, works on the political and economic context within which these citizens' collective responses arise are limited and point to a new research agenda for scholars in the field. However, works providing systematic quantitative organisational data at the national and cross-national level and aiming to illustrate major changes across sectors and time periods are missing. Our analysis, which draws from extensive sampling, aims and moves beyond selective cases to document major trends.

Although most works focus on solidarity practices within national borders, recent work on transnational activism highlights its increasing importance (Ataç et al., 2016). Comparative findings on German and Greek TSOs show that such activism can develop at the local and national level on the basis of a transnational organisational field that is not necessarily dependent on organisational linkages to the supra- and intergovernmental field of European governance (Lahusen et al., 2018). Yet, rarely do works focus on the impact of the crisis on the features of transnational activist organisations. One such work based on qualitative analysis of unemployment TSOs in Greece, the UK and Poland finds a shift towards the development of new organisations and grassroots movements challenging traditional forms of representation (Karakioulafi et al., 2020). Furthermore, work on transnational unemployment/labour solidarity focuses on the global dimension, beyond the European context (McCallum, 2013; Scipes, 2016), but also within Europe (Lahusen, 2013; Baglioni and Giugni, 2014, Lahusen et al., 2018, Kousis et al., 2020). However, a comparative quantitative analysis of random samples of TSOs, which combines the cross-national and cross-sectoral perspective, is missing. Such an analysis offers more representative insights than those of non-random samples.

Is there a radicalisation trend? The propensity of the grassroots activism espousing the values of the autonomous movement, such as self-organisation and direct action (Flesher Fominaya, 2007: 336), indicates that the economic crisis acted as an opportunity for collective actors of solidarity following autonomous (rather than adaptive) paths. Further support of the radicalisation trend is provided by findings that post-2010 activism, as reflected in the global anti-austerity and pro-democracy movements, distances itself from institutional politics and institutional actors including non-governmental organisations, trade unions, and political parties (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Ishkanian, Glasius and Ali, 2013). South European countries in particular have witnessed a 'proliferation of autonomous political/economic spaces [...] linked to [...] extra-institutional politics, and the growing appeal of a new global paradigm of radical activism (Simiti, 2017: 365). The radicalisation trend of social action in times of crisis has been subject to empirical investigation. Based on qualitative findings, a set of indicators of autonomous AFR illustrate fluid organisational structures, innovative practice, bottom-up participatory action, eroded relations with the state, and the aspiration for social change (Paschou and Kousis, 2020). This has not been studied with quantitative, cross-national and cross-field data which would allow for more analytical insights into the impact of crises for specific sectors and types of solidarity organisations.

While reformism and radicalisation prescribe different organisational aims and trajectories, the richness of the organisational field is reflected in the emergence of mixed-featured initiatives as to the traits, principles and practices of organisations. Bridges have been built between social movements and civil society, and processes such as hybridisation are accelerated, leading to transformations in action repertoires, organisational structures and collective framing (della Porta 2020). The combination of service provision and political action as an indication of organisational hybridity has been theorised in the past (Minkoff, 2002), with increased scholarly interest over the last decade. In the field of migration, De Jong and Ataç's (2017) analysis of newly established refugee support organisations point out the combination of service delivery and the demand for radical change, while Vandevordt and

Fleischmann (2020) study how grassroots initiatives supporting migrants navigate different temporalities. Beaton, MacIndoe and Wang (2020) study charitable nonprofits working to combine advocacy and services, focusing on the organisational structures, the former treating beneficiaries as clients, and the latter as constituents. Community-based hybrid nonprofits working in the health field are studied by Wells and Anasti (2019) who observe the nonconformity to conventional organisational forms through the combination of advocacy and service mission. In the field of employment, Gates (2014) demonstrates the synergy between services and action towards social change by analysing new types of worker centres.

As presented above, scholarly interest in the poles of reformist and critical/radical resilience, which particularly intensified during the dual crisis period, only rarely offers systematic empirical evidence at the European level and across different fields. This paper provides new evidence on important shifts in TSOs in Europe since 2008, by addressing the following questions: To what extent does the dual crisis affect the TSOs' autonomous and adaptive organisational paths? Do they demonstrate hybrid features? Can shifts be documented across the migration, disability and unemployment/labour fields in TSOs', a) main organisational forms (autonomous/adaptive), b) value-frames and partners, c) routes and supplementary actions to achieve their goals?

Method and Data

Our analysis of the aggregate dataset of 1,753 TSOs is based on the innovative content analysis approach towards organisational websites, Action Organisation Analysis (AOA) (Kousis et al 2018, Giugni and Grasso 2018).^{iv} This follows protest event analysis (e.g. Tilly, 2002) and highlights the increasing importance of online organisations and activities (Earl and Kimport, 2011; Bennett and Segerberg, 2012)^v. Furthermore, AOA offers up-to-date and non-mediated data from the organisational websites themselves, following retrieval based on online directories ('hubs')¹. Using information offered by the organisations themselves avoids the limitations of mediated sources (e.g. public registers and official reports, or news coverage by conventional mass media). It is simultaneously more inclusive, compared to mediated sources, of informal organisations and variables such as value frames or supplementary actions, even though resource-rich organisations may have more developed and updated websites (Kousis et al., 2018). Last but not least, our approach offers a very large number of organisational websites and the best possible coverage of the main categories of (non-protest) action types at the transnational, national, regional and local level, related to urgent needs, economy, energy and environment, civic media and communications, alternative consumption/lifestyles, self-organised spaces, as well as art and culture (TransSOL, 2016).

Following AOA, a) hubs/subhubs (online directories) of solidarity organisations were identified for each country via search engines, b) an aggregate set of 29,277 solidarity organisations were located based on the extraction of organisational websites, c) 300 TSOs (100 per field) were cleaned and randomly selected for each country. Criteria for selection included their transnational, solidarity and innovative features, as well as activity any time between 2007 and 2016, d) each TSO website was coded by the team in each participating country using an analytic coding scheme on their: organisational profiles; proposed routes/strategy of action; supplementary actions to reach their aims; partners; and value frames. The codified data have been statistically analysed in light of the distinction between the adaptive and the autonomous path, across the fields of unemployment, migration and disabilities, as well as between the periods before and since 2008 (and up to 2016).

The aggregate dataset is drawn from Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Switzerland, and the UK in the fields of unemployment, disability and migration. The selection of countries and issue sectors follows a most dissimilar case approach aiming to diversity in terms of socio-economic contexts, their exposure to the Eurozone and refugee crises, as well as their traditions in organisational solidarity.

¹ All the related identified online directories are available in [link XX Annex of project report]. The report provides detailed information on related procedures of identification and retrieval by country. Examples include: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>, <https://www.migdev.org/qui-somme-nous/partenaires/>, <https://assolavoro.eu/agenzie-associate>

The countries were chosen based on three criteria: different exposure to societal grievances in the wake of economic and financial crises since 2008; different levels and forms of institutionalised solidarity in the form of welfare state policies; and different levels of citizen participation as a measure of differing levels of the likelihood of citizens to engage in solidarity actions towards target groups. The three issue fields were chosen to grasp what previous research had been identified as conditional support of different social groups in terms of “deservingness” based on public opinion surveys (Lahusen 2020; Lahusen et al., forthcoming, Kousis et al., 2020, Loukakis and Maggini, 2020). Because the data have been collected in a uniform manner across the eight countries, the analysis is at the aggregate, and not the cross-national, level. Simultaneously, we offer a cross-sectoral analysis on the aggregate dataset, since the unemployment, disability and migration fields have been differentially affected by the two crises.

The unit of analysis is the Transnational Solidarity Organisation, “*a collective body/unit which organises solidarity events with visible beneficiaries and claims on their economic and social wellbeing – including basic needs, health, and work, as depicted through the TSO website/online sources*”, which moves beyond the national level in at least one of the following: *organisers, actions, constituency groups (beneficiaries or participants), volunteers or supporters, partners or collaborating groups, sponsors, and value frames* (Kousis et al., 2018).

Based on the AFR typology (Kousis and Paschou, 2017) and influenced by Diani and Donati (1999), the analysis focuses on the trends and features of adaptive and autonomous TSOs. Adaptive TSOs are typically formal professional associations, unions, charities and foundations, with local or regional municipality collaborators, researchers and academics, church or religious organisations and political parties. They adhere to reformist orientations and are supportive, corrective or remedial to established institutions, as well as legislation and welfare structures. Autonomous TSOs embrace informal and critical alternative groups and organisations, social protest groups and neighbourhood assemblies (e.g. Indignados, occupy protests, movement of the squares), informal citizens/grassroots solidarity initiatives and networks, information platforms and networks, social economy groups (such as mutual companies, Cooperatives, Time Banks, etc.), as well as cultural and sports groups. They are more contentious and self-contained.

In addition to their organisational types, the analysis focuses on value frames, partners, routes and supplementary actions, as four key organisational features^{vi} of the autonomous and adaptive TSOs before and since 2008, for each field. Taking into account the AFR literature and typology on the two major approaches to solidarity organising, but also aforementioned related works pointing to a hybrid, middle space between formal/NGO and informal/social movement organisations, we examine the trends of the preceding features as follows:

Value-frames: a) *adaptive:* humanitarian/philanthropic (civic virtues I); rights-based ethics (civic virtues II); economic virtues (materialist I); community and order (materialist II), b) *autonomous:* empowerment and participation (post-materialist I), diversity and sustainability (post-materialist II), c) *hybrid:* at least one of the adaptive and one of the autonomous sets of values.

Partners: a) *adaptive:* NGOs, Unions, professional associations, churches and charities, state (local, regional, national levels) and supra-state agencies, b) *autonomous:* protest groups/ Indignados/Occupy, informal citizens/grassroots solidarity initiatives and networks of solidarity, social economy, social justice and reclaim activities, time banks, Information platforms and networks, cultural groups, c) *hybrid:* at least one of the adaptive and one of the autonomous partners (*hybrid*).

Routes/strategies to reach their aims: a) *adaptive:* lobbying, policy reform/change/creation, legal route and change government, b) *autonomous:* collective-protest action, change the system/establishment, c) *hybrid:* at least one of the adaptive and one of the autonomous routes.

Supplementary actions: a) *adaptive:* media declarations, debates, promotional actions, public reports, noncontentious, parliamentary debate/intervention/political pressure other than lobbying and court actions, b) *autonomous:* protest oriented such as conventional protests, demonstrative protest,

boycotts, strikes and occupations, c) *hybrid*: at least one of the adaptive and one of the autonomous supplementary actions.

Findings & Analysis: Transformations in TSO characteristics before and since 2008, by field

The following analysis offers a diachronic portrayal of the two major types of TSOs, by illustrating the shifts that marked the value frames, partners, routes, and supplementary actions of autonomous and adaptive TSOs across the migration, disabilities and unemployment fields from 2008 to 2016. It thereby highlights increasing and decreasing trends in their organisational features across the three fields. The analysis unveils new findings on the extent to which these main features are hybrid and discusses these in relation to previous works.

Shifts in the organisational forms of Adaptive and Autonomous TSOs

The growth of TSOs in the eight European countries went in step with societal developments (Figure 1). Looking back at the time of the TSOs' establishment, our study demonstrates their origin in the beginning of the 20th century, with noticeable increasing waves immediately after WWII and in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the unemployment and disability fields. Confirming previous work, labour-related organisations have had the longest history among our TSOs, since they are related to trade unionism of the 19th century, whereas migration related organisations (identified through AOA as active anytime during the period 2007-2016)^{vii} have flourished mostly since the 1980s (Baglioni and Giugni, 2014; Scipes, 2016; Ataç et al., 2016; Soldatic and Grech, 2014).

Figure 1: TSOs' founding year by field and organisational type (ratio)^{viii}

These data confirm the importance of major circumstances in the political history and socio-economic life, which trigger the emergence of less institutionalised solidarity organisations, as is visible in the timelines of adaptive and autonomous TSOs - the former following a smooth line, while the later occurring at acute peaks. It is also reflected in the sharper peaks of autonomous TSOs across the three fields following the 2008 financial crisis. Overall, the three fields witnessed higher peaks in innovative autonomous TSOs, in comparison to adaptive ones, especially for the migration and unemployment fields.

More specifically, Table 1 shows that although the number of adaptive TSOs outweigh autonomous ones, notable increases in autonomous TSOs (from 14.4 to 44.4%), but important decreases in adaptive TSOs (from 85.6 to 55.6%) have occurred since 2008. These trends support studies pointing to crisis as an opportunity for autonomous/social movement oriented solidarity organisations (della Porta and O'Connor, 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2007, Giugni and Grasso, 2018), as well as research pointing to crisis as a constraint for formal, third sector organisations due to decreasing state support and the subsequent weakening of the sector (Powell et al 2016; Salamon et al., 2009; Morreale, 2011).

The cross-field comparison shows that the predominance of the adaptive TSOs is stronger in disability-related TSOs, with unemployment following. In migration-related TSOs, the pattern reverses when the period changes, with the presence of more autonomous, rather than adaptive, TSOs since 2008, which can be understood in the context of nationalist reactions in European countries due to high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers from Asia, the Middle East and Africa, particularly in 2015 and 2016.

Table 1 - Organisational forms of Adaptive and Autonomous TSOs, per field and period

<i>TSO Field</i>	<i>Organisational forms (by activist orientation)</i>	<i>Pre 2008 % (n)</i>	<i>Since 2008* % (n)</i>	<i>Chi Square test</i>	<i>Total % (n)</i>
<i>Migration</i>	Informal/Grassroots (Autonomous)	21.2 (75)	55.5 (96)	62.392, p=.000	32.4 (171)
	Formal/NGOs/Charity (Adaptive)	78.8 (279)	44.5 (77)		67.6 (356)
<i>Disabilities</i>	Informal/Grassroots (Autonomous)	5.5 (32)	18.4 (9)	12.472, p=.000	6.5 (41)
	Formal/NGOs/Charity (Adaptive)	94.5 (554)	81.6 (40)		93.5 (594)
<i>Unemployment</i>	Informal/Grassroots (Autonomous)	20.4 (97)	38.8 (45)	17.239, p=.000	24.0 (142)
	Formal/NGOs/Charity (Adaptive)	79.6 (378)	61.2 (71)		76.0 (449)
<i>Total</i>	Informal/Grassroots (Autonomous)	14.4 (204)	44.4 (150)	151.954, p=.000	20.2 (354)
	Formal/NGOs/Charity (Adaptive)	85.6 (1,211)	55.6 (188)		79.8 (1,399)
Total		1,399	354		1,753

*(2008-2016)

Source: Project

Autonomous, adaptive or hybrid? Shifts in the value frames, partner types, strategies and supplementary actions of TSOs

The changes that occurred in the main features of autonomous and adaptive TSOs, i.e. their value-frames and partners, as well as their political orientation (the routes and supplementary actions they adopt to achieve their goals) reveal a refined portrayal of the impact they experienced in the 2008-16 period.

Shifts took place in the value frames upon which TSOs base their solidarity actions in order to take their fundamental meaning (Figure 2). Empowerment, diversity and sustainability values, as well as hybrid values are strengthened (+4.4% and +7.6% difference respectively), while humanitarian, philanthropic and rights-based values are weakened (-12.9% difference) for *all TSOs*, since 2008. Confirming previous works, these findings reflect a low to mild tendency towards autonomy/radicalisation introduced by crisis related movements (Flesher Fominaya, 2015), but also towards more hybrid value frames by formal and informal TSOs (De Jong and Atac, 2017) when confronting the impact of crises. The high frequencies in hybrid values reflect strategies of survival during hard times, but also the challenges of categorising values that coexist. For example, humanitarian value frames include 'solidarity and altruism', while empowerment and participation ones include 'participatory democracy'^{ix}.

This tendency is visible for migration and unemployment, but not for disability TSOs, when focusing within the three fields for *all TSOs*. The double crisis context prioritised the politicisation and hybridisation of values in the two TSO fields most significantly affected: employment and migration. The humanitarian (i.e. service – oriented) mission of disability TSOs was strengthened (+12.6% difference), following the intense competition they faced over scarce resources due to impacts of crises

and the low levels of attention in the public domain compared with the fields more directly affected by austerity policies and welfare retrenchment.

Figure 2. Value Frames by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

These aggregate trends subside when examining low to mild changes in the three value frames of autonomous and adaptive TSOs. The divergence across the three fields is clearly shown, reflecting the specific conditions that each faced (Figure 2). Autonomous TSOs undergo positive changes in *empowerment values*, with unemployment TSOs scoring the highest difference (+9.0%), followed by migration ones (+4.8%); unemployment TSOs show a low decrease in humanitarian values (-6.3%), adaptive TSOs show moderate positive change in humanitarian values for disability TSOs (10.4%), but also in empowerment and hybrid values for migration TSOs (+7.6% and +4.6% respectively); they also show decreases in empowerment (-2.5%, -0.9%) and hybrid values for disability (-9.4%), as well as humanitarian ones for unemployment TSOs (-6.0%) and migration (-12.2%).

A different pattern of changes emerges on the partners of TSOs in Figure 3^x. Informal/grassroots partners, as well as hybrid partners (i.e. formal and informal organisations), are strengthened (+3.0% and +9.4% difference respectively), while formal organisation partners decrease (-17.0% difference) for *all TSOs* in the period since 2008. Thus a limited shift is found towards more autonomous partners, but an increase is seen towards hybrid partners when TSOs confront the socio-economic impact of the two crises. Focusing within the three fields for *all TSOs*, this trend is visible for migration (+1.8%) and unemployment (+4.3), but not for disability. The impact of the two crises is illustrated in the types of partners in the two fields most affected: employment and migration. The formal partners of disability TSOs decreased (-6.5% difference), most likely as a result of high competition over limited resources due to the crises.

Figure 3. Type of partner organisation by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

A more analytic comparative focus by organisation type reveals low to moderate changes in the type of partner organizations (Figure 3). The findings offer support to migration and unemployment related works highlighting how economic retrenchment and the so-called 'refugee crisis' have led primarily to extended collaborations towards both formal and informal partners, and secondarily to informal grassroots ones, in their efforts to respond to increasing needs - e.g. by sharing information, know-how and resources, or by co-organising solidarity actions (Karakioulafi et al., 2020; Vandevordt and Fleischmann, 2020; De Jong and Ataç, 2017; Wells and Anasti, 2019; MacIndoe and Wang, 2020). Specifically, autonomous unemployment TSOs have collaborated more with informal organisations compared to migration ones (+2.5%) since 2008. For the latter, increasing partnerships simultaneously occur with formal organisations (11.3%) as well as hybrid partners (6.1%). These shifts are due to the high demands they faced, leading them to collaborate with formal partners, such as the EU or the High Commission or with hybrid ones to address the needs of refugees. By contrast, autonomous disability TSOs show decreases in all partner types, while unemployment ones show decreases in formal and hybrid partners (-9.5% and -2.9% respectively). Changes in the types of partners adaptive TSOs engage with show important shifts for unemployment TSOs, i.e. increases in informal and hybrid partners (+4.3% and +16.0% respectively). Hybrid partners also rise for adaptive migration TSOs (+6.3%).

Moreover, significant decreases are found in the formal partners of adaptive unemployment, migration and disability TSOs (-25.9%, -6.2%, -4.6%, respectively), reflecting how economic retrenchment may also weaken networking, collaborating, or partner activities (Powell et al., 2016; Morreale, 2011). Major shifts, both increasing and decreasing, on the types of partners of adaptive unemployment TSOs, indicate important changes in their alliance networks since 2008.

Shifts in the more political aspects of TSOs, the routes they adopt and the supplementary actions they take to achieve their goals are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5. Since the primary mission of all TSOs in our sample is to carry out direct solidarity actions, Figure 4 presents only the remaining three routes^{xi}. Confirming works on solidarity organizing (Moulaert et al., 2013; Castells et al., 2012), TSO strategies centre primarily on solidarity activities, and to a lesser extent on political (protest and policy) activities. The examination of all TSOs, in the period since 2008, not only shows increases in contentious and

social change strategies, but also in hybrid ones (+11.8% and +5.4% difference respectively); by contrast, policy routes are weakened (-20.4% difference), reflecting a limited shift towards more autonomous routes, but especially towards more hybrid ones, when confronted with the socio-economic impact of crises. Focusing within the three fields for all TSOs, the shifting to contentious actions is visible for migration (+11.0%) and unemployment (+15.3), but less so for disability TSOs (+2.0). Hybrid strategies are found for unemployment (+8.7%) and disability TSOs (+3.1%). Thus, the impact of the double crisis is especially reflected in the types of strategies in unemployment and migration, the two most affected fields.

Figure 4. Routes/strategies to achieve aims by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

Moderate to high levels of change are noted in the types of routes that autonomous and adaptive TSOs chose before and since 2008, in each field. The enormous pressures in the field of unemployment, due to hard economic times, is illustrated in the highest increases of the hybrid routes of autonomous unemployment TSOs (+27.0% difference). Significant increases in contentious and social change routes are also documented for autonomous unemployment TSOs, followed by migration and disability ones (+19.2%, +13.3% and +11.1% difference respectively). The high increases in contentious and social change-oriented routes to achieve their aims are accompanied by significant decreases in policy routes, such as policy reforms, lobbying and legal actions by autonomous unemployment TSOs (-36.3%); autonomous migration and disability TSOs show lower decreases in these (-17% and -3.4% difference). These findings confirm related works on the significant impact of crises on labor related organizations (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005; Ould Ahmet, 2014; Baglioni and Giugni, 2014; Scipes, 2016; Karakioulafi et al., 2020; Gates, 2014).

The illustrated changes (Figure 4) in the types of routes taken by adaptive unemployment TSOs since 2008, offer support for the radicalisation thesis (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Ishkanian, Glasius and Ali, 2013). Specifically, significant increases are documented for contentious and social change-oriented routes (+10.5% difference) and negative shifts are illustrated in policy and legal routes (-16.1% difference). A similar negative change is noted for policy and legal routes of the adaptive disability and migration TSOs (-16.6% and -4.0% respectively). Insignificant changes are found for hybrid routes.

Furthermore, similar trends are documented for supplementary actions aiming to create, promote, support, or/and accompany their solidarity activities (protest, or media/noncontentious actions), in Figure 5.^{xii}. A notable increase (+12.4% difference) in supplementary autonomous protest oriented actions (e.g. conventional protests, demonstrative protest, boycotts, strikes and occupations) is visible for all TSOs, but simultaneous decreases are found in adaptive (media, debates, promotional actions, public reports, noncontentious, parliamentary debate/intervention/political pressure other than lobbying and court actions) and hybrid actions (-6.8% and -4.4% differences respectively). The impact of the dual crisis across the three fields, is stronger for the unemployment and migration TSOs. Supplementary protest actions show very significant increases for the unemployment field, and to a lesser extent, for migration (+25.3% and +6.5% difference respectively), but a mild decrease for disability TSOs (-5.4%). Hybrid strategies depict mild decreasing trends across the three fields. These findings therefore also document a radicalisation/autonomous shift towards more autonomous actions in addition to solidarity ones by TSOs, offering support for the radicalisation thesis (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Ishkanian, Glasius and Ali, 2013).

Figure 5. Supplementary Actions by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

Medium to high level changes are found in the types of supplementary actions taken by autonomous and adaptive TSOs, across the three fields, before and since 2008. Large increases in protest actions are documented for autonomous unemployment and migration TSOs, (+42.2%, +10.1% difference respectively). Mild increases are found in hybrid supplementary actions for autonomous disability and unemployment TSOs (+8.0% +3.6.0% difference). These high increases reflect the great pressures on the unemployment field due to economic retrenchment, compared to the other fields. The high increases in protest actions are in stark contrast to considerable decreases in media and noncontentious actions by autonomous unemployment TSOs (-17.2%), while autonomous migration and disability TSOs show lower decreases in these (-3.4% and -6.3% difference).

Of interest are the shifts in the types of supplementary actions taken also by adaptive TSOs, with notable increases in protest actions and moderate decreases in media/noncontentious actions by unemployment TSOs (+14.4% and -11.7% difference). By contrast, adaptive migration and disability TSOs show negative shifts in protest, media/noncontentious and hybrid actions since 2008. These clear positive and negative shifts offer further support for the radicalisation thesis, especially for the unemployment related adaptive TSOs.

Further Discussion and Conclusions

This exploratory paper has illustrated important shifts in the organisational form and the major features of TSOs in Europe in the 2008-2016 period, with considerable variation across the three fields, based on primary data created through Action Organisation Analysis, using organizational websites. It documented these shifts and their emergence during a period of increasing economic threats and governance challenges in the new millennium of growing interdependence, rising contention and thriving inequalities in a globalized world. In such contexts, transnationally oriented citizens' organizations will play an even more critical role than they did in the past.

The findings confirm the importance of organisational forms (Diani and Donati, 1999), and offer support to works on the increasing importance of transnational solidarity organisations (Baglioni, 2001; Soldatic and Grech, 2014; Davies, 2016; Zajak, 2017; Atac et al., 2016). Moving beyond these however, they illustrate divergent practices of collective resilience by documenting notable increases in autonomous, but also decreases in adaptive TSOs since the economic crisis of 2008 and the subsequent 'refugee crisis'. These findings offer support to works pointing at crisis as an opportunity for autonomous, innovative and social movement-oriented solidarity organisations (e.g. Moulaert et al.; Forno and Graziano, 2014; Castells et al., 2012; Cruz et al., 2017; Giugni and Grasso, 2018; Kousis and Paschou, 2017). In addition, they also reflect how crisis was also a constraint for formal, third sector organisations due to decreasing state support and the subsequent weakening of the sector (Powell et al., 2016; Morreale, 2011).

Our analysis highlights the emergence of two major patterns of change in TSO features, one showing minor shifts in value frames and partners and the other showing significant shifts in the political traits of the routes taken to achieve their goals and in their supplementary actions. The first pattern reveals low increases in empowerment value frames of autonomous migration and unemployment TSOs, and high frequencies in hybrid values, for both autonomous and adaptive TSOs. The latter reflects the pervasive impacts of the crises and subsequently a more comprehensive frame in how they are perceived. It also documents low to mild increases in informal partners but also in formal and hybrid partners for autonomous unemployment and migration TSOs, reflecting the high demands they faced, leading them to extending their collaborative networks in an attempt to respond to increasing needs (Karakioulafi et al., 2020; Vandevordt and Fleischmann, 2020; De Jong and Ataç, 2017; MacIndoe and Wang, 2020; Ould Ahmed, 2014; D'Alisa et al., 2015).

The second pattern traces mild to high shifts in TSO political traits. Important increases in contentious and social change routes are documented for autonomous unemployment, migration and disability TSOs, with high increases also found in hybrid routes of autonomous unemployment TSOs. Adaptive unemployment TSOs also show increases in contentious and social change-oriented routes, and negative shifts in policy and legally oriented routes reflecting transformation in labour issues confirming related works. Similarly, high increases in protests are found for autonomous unemployment and migration TSOs, while mild increases are seen in hybrid supplementary actions for autonomous disability and unemployment TSOs, and considerable decreases in media and noncontentious actions, by autonomous unemployment TSOs. These shifts offer support for the radicalisation thesis (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013; Ishkanian et al., 2013), especially for unemployment TSOs. Furthermore, the analysis also brought to the surface expansions in major TSO traits, visible in the hybrid value frames and types of partners of autonomous and adaptive TSOs.

Based on the above, our findings aim to contribute to future comparative works on the transitions triggered by more recent crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by pointing to the shifting patterns of

organisational types and their major features, especially political ones, in diverse fields of collective action.

Further research, could examine how and why such shifts were developed, following a mixed-methods approach. It could also shed more light on shifts in the organizational features of autonomous and adaptive TSOs across other fields of activism before and during times of crises.

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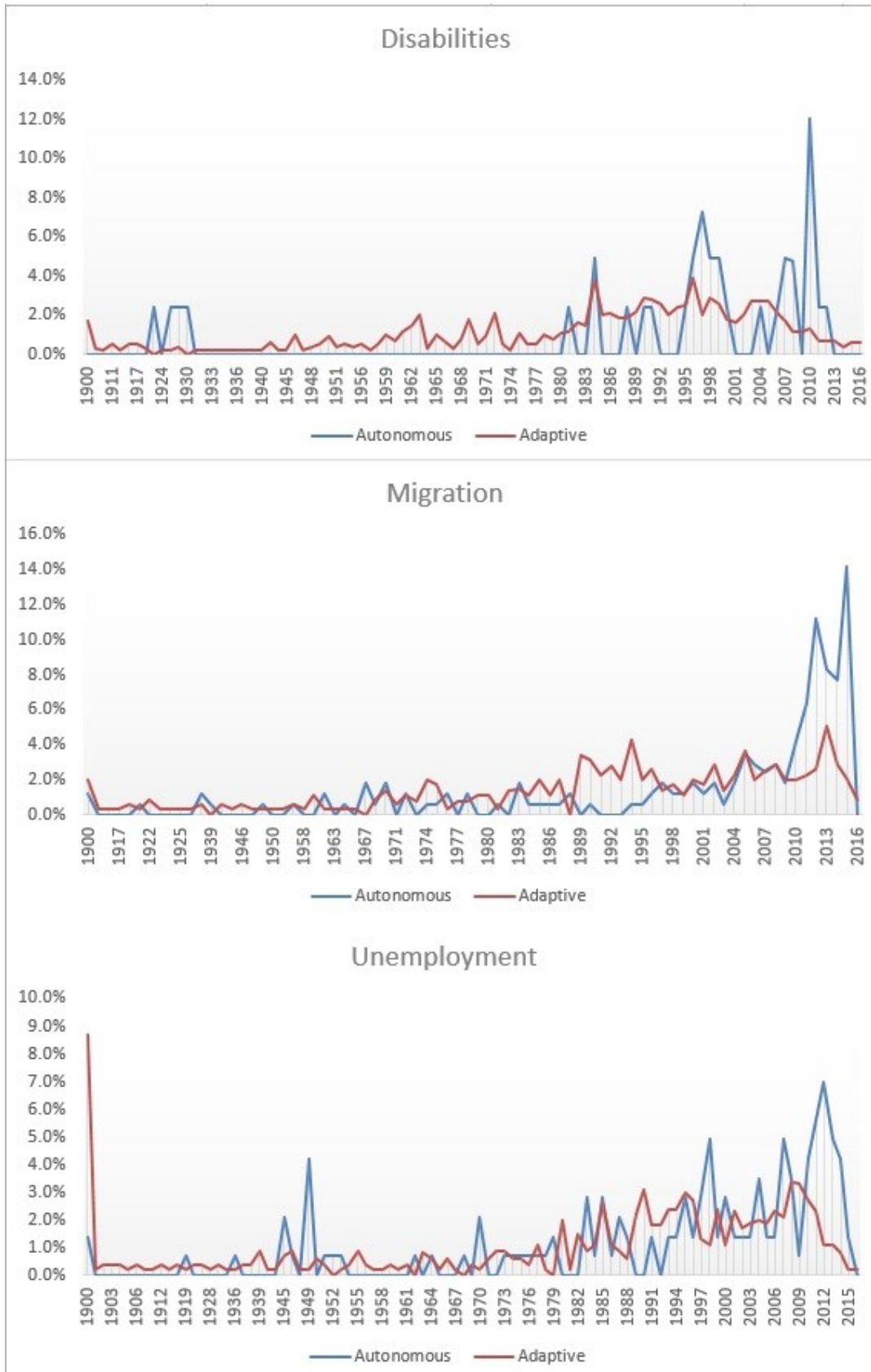


Figure 1. TSOs' founding year by field and organisational type (ratio)

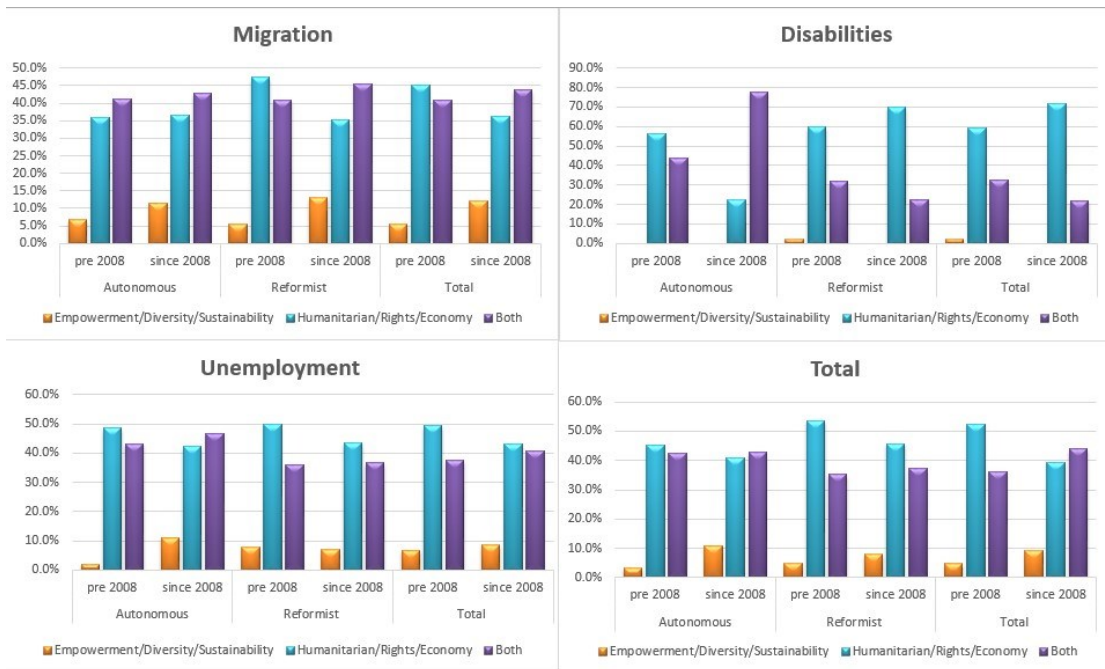


Figure 2. Value Frames by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

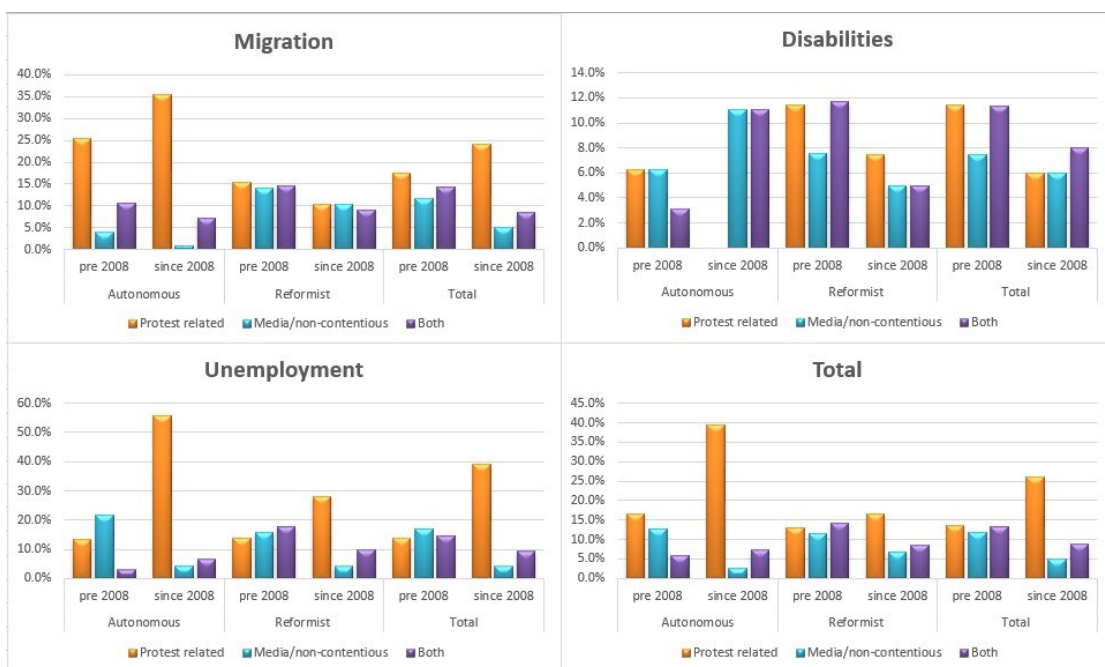


Figure 3. Type of partner organisation by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

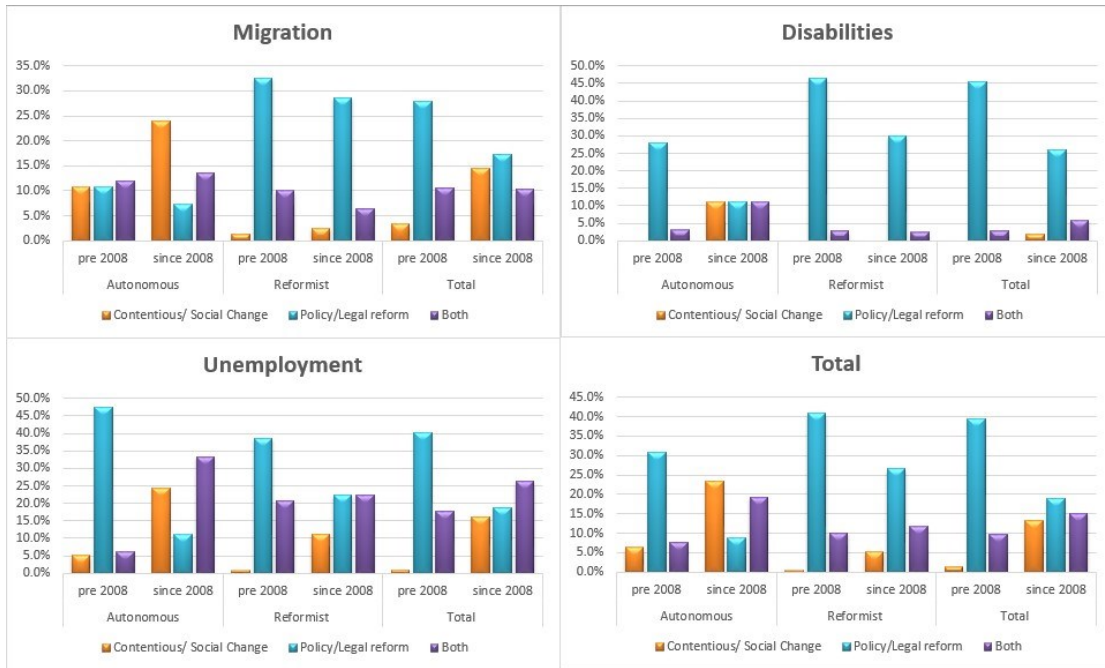


Figure 4. Routes/strategies to achieve aims by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

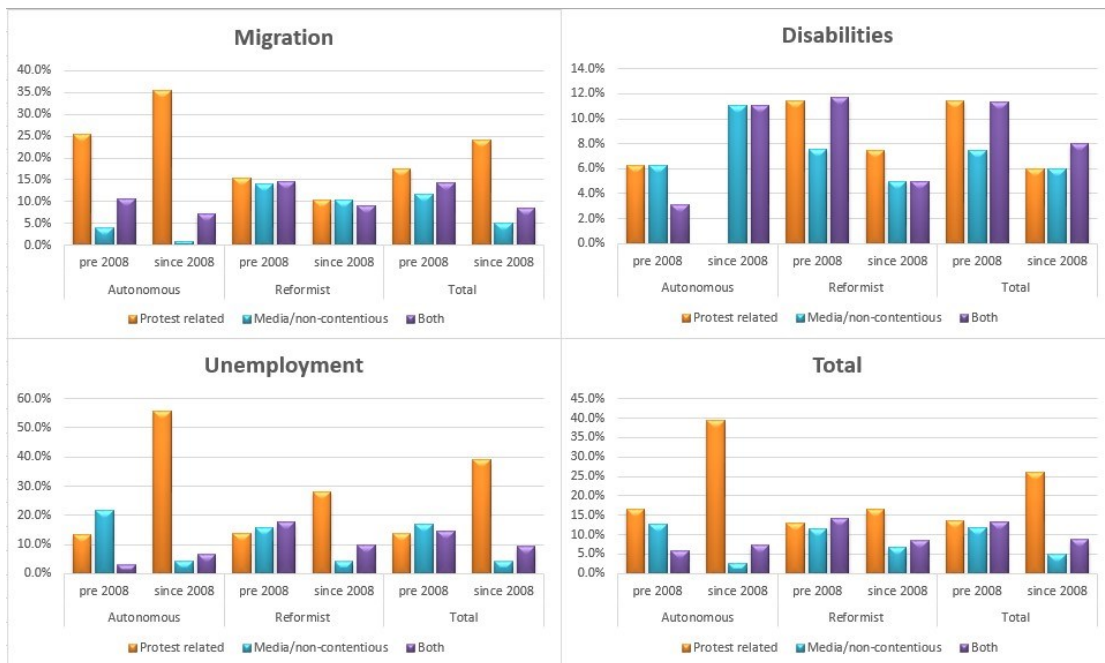


Figure 5. Supplementary Actions by Autonomous and Adaptive TSOs, per field and period

ⁱ The data presented in this paper have been obtained within the Horizon 2020 project “European Paths to Transnational Solidarity in times of Crisis” (TransSOL). The first version of this paper was presented at the international conference Villa Vigoni Conference: Solidarity as a contested terrain: Italo-German experiences in the European frame Centro Italo-Tedesco per l'Eccellenza Europea Deutsch-Italienisches Zentrum für Europäische Exzellenz, 27-29 November, 2017. We gratefully acknowledge very valuable and constructive comments made by the referees.

ⁱⁱ A debate on the use of the term ‘refugee crisis’ includes critical views (e.g. Krzyżanowski et al., 2018, della Porta 2018) emphasising its political dimensions.

ⁱⁱⁱ All those in our sample of 2,408 that mentioned the starting year of the organisation on their website.

^{iv} See analytic reports on how data was produced in the project website <https://transsol.eu/>. For a qualitative analysis of TSOs, see Lahusen et al, 2021.

^v See Codebook and sampling approach at project website <https://transsol.eu/outputs/reports/>

^{vi} See project report and Codebook (<https://transsol.eu/files/2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf?file=2016/12/Integrated-Report-on-Reflective-Forms-of-Transnational-Solidarity.pdf>)

^{vii} According to our sampling approach, our findings do not trace migration organisations which were only active up to 2007.

^{viii} Number of TSOs in a given year divided by the total number of TSOs.

^{ix} For an analytical presentation of all categories, see Codebook [link]

^x Information on partners was provided by the majority of the TSO websites, not mentioned only in 12.3% of TSOs in the pre-2008 period and 17.0% for the period since 2008.

^{xi} Therefore, it shows that these three routes exist in about half of the 1,753 TSO websites (49.4% of TSOs in the pre-2008 period and 52.6% for the period since 2008).

^{xii} As in the case of the routes they chose, direct (solidarity) actions have therefore not been included in Figure 5, which shows only the three types of supplementary actions. That is the main reason why such actions appear in about 60% of the 1,753 TSO websites (61.5% of TSOs in the pre-2008 period and 59.6% for the period since 2008).