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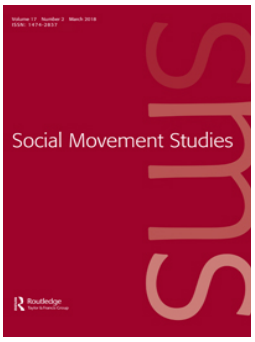

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Transactional activism without transactions: network perspective on anti-corruption activism in the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

In 2007, Petrova and Tarrow coined the term *transactional activism*, arguing that, despite weak individual-level political participation, civil societies in Central and Eastern Europe were surprisingly strong due to their capacity to establish transactional links. Yet the research which followed, relying mostly on quantitative data, has not uncovered much evidence of *how* transactional activism works. To make advances here, we take a more qualitative approach and focus on transactional ties among NGOs, developing a more fine-grained conceptualization. Specifically, we distinguish associative ties of loosely defined cooperation and interlocking ties based on the division of labour. We utilize this new conceptualization through a successful anti-corruption initiative known as 'Reconstruction of the State'. The initiative presented itself largely in transactional terms (plurality of participating actors) and was extremely successful in the run-up to the Parliamentary elections in 2013 in the Czech Republic, inspiring similar initiatives abroad. We use social network analysis and qualitative interviews to test our concept of interlocking transactional ties. In contrast to our expectations, we find limited division of labour in the initiative, with just one organization, in the main, shouldering most of the important tasks. We use our findings to question the previously claimed importance of transactional activism in Central and Eastern Europe. Specifically, we call for more robust evidence describing how cooperation among organizations empowers civil society.

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Transactional activism; anti-corruption; advocacy; social network analysis; reconstruction of the state; The Czech Republic; social movements

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, students of civil society and activism turned their attention to the transitioning countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Even though civil society played a prominent role in toppling the communist regimes in some countries, scholars soon started to conclude that political participation and activism were surprisingly weak in the region. Specifically, they demonstrated that, compared to established democracies, voter turnout was low (Nelson, 1996), organizational membership and trust in institutions was low (Howard, 2002) and, on the contrary, the perceived level of corruption was relatively higher in post-communist countries (Rose-Ackerman, 2001). Howard labelled post-communist civil society as weak. In his view, due to low levels of political participation in the CEE region, citizens are disengaged from the public sphere and hence badly represented in decision-making processes (2002, p. 165; also see Fagan, 2005).

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This part of the academic discourse, however, might not be telling the whole story. This was the argument presented by Petrova and Tarrow (2007) in their paper on what they labelled transactional activism. In their view, civil participation can be conceptualized in two dimensions: individual and relational. While countries in CEE do lag behind as far as individual participation goes, development of 'lateral ties among civil society groups and vertical ties between these groups and public officials' (p. 78) is surprisingly strong. The authors believe that decent capacity for transactional activism may suffice to serve as a relatively effective check on political elites despite weak mass participation.

In our paper, we review the understanding of transactional activism which followed Petrova's and Tarrow's paper, and raise concerns about the clarity of the concept and its empirical implications. We further propose our own, more fine-grained conceptualization of transactional activism, distinguishing associative ties of loosely defined cooperation and interlocking ties based on the division of labour among organizations. In addition, we conduct a case study of an anti-corruption campaign with especially high potential for strong transactional capacity to test our concept; in Gerring's (2008) taxonomy, we select a *crucial* case in the sense that it is most likely to exhibit the hypothesized phenomenon of division of labour.

To do so, we combine multiplex social network analysis (SNA) and qualitative interviews. Yet, in contrast to our expectations of the intensive division of labour, we find that, in the main, just one organization carried out the lion's share of the most important work tasks. We use our findings to question the relevance of transactional activism in CEE. Specifically, we conclude that there is a need for more robust evidence describing how exactly cooperation among organizations empowers civil society in order to make conclusions about the role of transactions in boosting civil society's capacity.

We proceed in the following order. First, we evaluate the concept of transactional activism and propose re-conceptualization. Second, we give a short descriptive account of the case of interest and summarize our research purpose. Third, we introduce our data. Fourth, we conduct an empirical analysis to test our concept against our case. Fifth, we discuss some alternative explanations of the initiative's success other than transactional capacity. Finally, we discuss our findings and their implications for social movement scholarship and the concept of transactional activism.

Re-conceptualizing transactional activism

Petrova and Tarrow (2007) define transactional activism in the following way: 'By transactional activism, we mean the ties – enduring and temporary – among organized nonstate actors and between them and political parties, power holders, and other institutions' (p. 79); they contrast this to participatory activism. Transactional activism draws its strength from relations and networks, participatory activism from numbers and volumes. The first builds on professionalization, the latter on large-scale involvement of the public.

The idea of professional activism disengaged from its constituency is not fundamentally new (see Putnam, 1995; Skocpol, 2003; Skocpol, 1999). Skocpol presented her critical account of the 'shift from membership to management' (2003) and the 'advocates without members' (1999) in the U.S. context. Yet in her take on the issue, Skocpol describes development from a civil society marked with mass mobilization towards proliferation of professional advocacy organizations. Her view of the development is rather pessimistic. On the contrary, the concept of transactional activism appears as a reaction to decrying the passivity of civil society and offers a moderately optimistic account of civil society in CEE (Petrova & Tarrow, 2007, p. 80).

The specific features of civil society in CEE are usually attributed to the influx of foreign patrons and donors after 1989 (Fagan, 2004; Waller, 2010). The foreign influence focused NGOs towards professionalization and made them independent of mass participation (Bruszt & Vedres, 2013, 2005; Císař, 2010, 2013; Císař & Navrátil, 2014; Císař & Vráblíková, 2013; Fagan, 2004; Guenther, 2011; Mcmahon, 2001; Mendelson & Glenn, 2002; Narozhna, 2004).

There are two interpretations of these processes. Some scholars (e.g. Fagan, 2004, 2005) criticize the fact that foreign transfers have prevented NGOs from engaging with the grassroots, and led instead to their co-optation. Other scholars invoke the concept of transactions and cooperation and see NGOs as generally empowered with the foreign sponsorship, and not de-radicalized or co-opted (e.g. Císař, 2010, 2013; Petrova & Tarrow, 2007).

The most recent decade of research into civil society in CEE has indeed brought a lot of focus on transactions and relations among NGOs, as opposed to just participatory activities of individuals. For example, Stark, Vedres, and Bruszt (2006) conceptualize the rootedness of civic organizations in three dimensions: participation, embeddedness and associativeness. The latter two concern relations to organizational actors, hence they are inter-organizational. In another example, Císař and Navrátil (2014) first invoke transactional activism explicitly but give preference to 'the concept of (inter-organizational) cooperation to its transactional synonym' (p. 4). They define cooperation capacity as 'the capacity of an organization to enter into and maintain horizontal exchanges with other subjects' (p. 9). Císař (2013) goes as far as to use the term transactional activism as an umbrella term for all environmental and human/minority rights organizations in the Czech Republic in order to contrast them to participatory organizations (trade unions, agrarian and religious organizations). As a final example, Korolczuk and Saxonberg (2015) analyse differences between women's movements in Poland and the Czech Republic with the result that, whilst the Czech movement is almost exclusively shaped by transactional activities, the Polish movement engages in both transactional and participatory forms of activism.

However, none of these examples, nor any other empirical study of civil society in CEE we are aware of, conceptualizes horizontal transactions beyond the un-nuanced notion of any relations or exchanges. To measure embeddedness, Stark et al. (2006) ask organizations if they consider other organizations' opinion, and only work with binary responses. Císař and Navrátil (2014) use social network analysis to analyse cooperation capacity, but their operationalization of a tie is very general and broad: '… name groups, organizations or networks that your group cooperates, consults, or communicates with' (p. 9). That approach produces interesting correlational results, for example, NGOs' foreign ties do not force organizations to give up on domestic integration (Stark et al., 2006) or that the greater the dependency on EU funding, the greater the cooperation capacity of advocacy organizations (Císař & Navrátil, 2014).

Nonetheless, there is very little insight into the nature of horizontal transactions. The current conceptualization of the term transactional activism lends itself too easily to almost any operationalization which involves some relations. Yet, just as clicking a 'like' button needs to be differentiated from a costly sit-in for studying individual participation (Gladwell, 2010), the nature of relations matters, and a simple exchange of information with another organization or a courtesy sharing of content on social network sites is different from a more engaged cooperation. It is only when we theorize transactional activism more specifically that the concept can provide insight beyond frequency counts and correlational studies. With this in mind, we propose the following distinct conceptualizations of the horizontal dimension of transactional activism:

- **Associative transactional ties**: any form of cooperation or positive exchange among organizations, including mutual communication, consideration of each other's opinion, sharing of each other's content on social networks and so on.
- **Interlocking transactional ties**: strong or important ties based on the division of labour among organizations so that organizations rely on each other's work. In other words, under conditions of interlocking transactional activism, cooperation enables the distribution of different tasks to different actors so that individual organizations can capitalize on each other's work.

Drawing on our conceptualization, we have conducted a case study of a high-profile Czech anti-corruption initiative called Reconstruction of the State (in Czech 'Rekonstrukce státu', referred to below only as 'RS'). On the occasion of its launch, the initiative described itself as 'a common project of twenty anti-corruption organizations, MPs from left and right, a range of renowned experts, businessmen, employers' unions and regional supporters' (Rekonstrukce státu, 2013a). We learned from activists that anti-corruption NGOs played the key role in the initiative, both in its initiation and its operation. The fact that the NGOs formed a clearly delineated network with a clearly specified goal made the case a very good laboratory for testing our concept of interlocking transactional ties.

Reconstruction of the state: the story in brief

Reconstruction of the State (RS) is a Czech joint initiative of anti-corruption and good-governance NGOs supported by some public figures, including celebrities, businesspeople and academics. First, the NGOs identified nine laws to be implemented into the Czech legislation in order to reduce corruption. Prior to the parliamentary elections in October 2013, they launched an advocacy campaign targeting political candidates who ran in the elections. They convinced more than 1500 of the almost 6000 candidates to sign a pledge to support anticorruption laws, should they get elected (Rekonstrukce státu, 2013b).

When the votes were counted, it turned out that 157 of the 200 newly elected deputies had pledged to support at least six of the laws. Moreover, none of the laws had support of fewer than 148 signatures, a number comfortably sufficient for the law to pass, should the deputies keep their pledge. Today, more than three-and-a-half years after the elections, five of the nine laws have been passed (Rekonstrukce státu, 2017). The initiative directly inspired similar projects abroad.[1]

According to Pavel Franc, director at Frank Bold, one of the leading organizations in the initiative, the motivation for the project stemmed from the activists' own experience with corruption and clientelism hindering their everyday work. 'I said that we cannot change this on our own, because it was a system-level problem', explained Franc. Robert Basch, director at Open Society Fund and a long-term proponent of coalescing in the civil sector, gave a similar account: 'On their own, they are weak [individual NGOs in general], but if they ally up and create a platform, their power is much greater'.

The initiative is based on four types of organizational elements. First, an expert working group consisting of people from different organizations was established for each of the nine law proposals depending on the experience and focus of individual organizations. Second, apart from the working groups, there was an executive team based at Frank Bold, which was responsible for coordination and communication on the outside (PR) and on the inside. Third, three of the organizations involved were so-called guarantor organizations and their directors formed a decision-making organ with responsibility for strategic choices.[2] Fourth, there was also a plenum consisting of representatives of all organizations involved. Indeed, the structure was quite complex, providing opportunities for the direct involvement of multiple organizations.

Research purpose summarized

While literature credits transactional activism with empowering civil societies in CEE, it defines transactions extremely broadly and is vague on how (or via which mechanisms) the transactions are supposed to bring about change. The purpose of our research is to propose first steps towards understanding these mechanisms. To do so, we hypothesize what seems to us a natural first step: if transactions are important, the mechanism at work could be the division of labour, which enables organizations to rely on each other, share resources, and hence aim for a bigger target. This is synergy. Respectively, we define transactional ties based on the division of labour and designate them 'interlocking' in order to express the idea that they establish interdependence among organizations. Further, we select an empirical case with 19 organizations that teamed up in pursuit of a common goal and presented themselves in transactional terms. If the hypothesized mechanism worked, we expected to see *a high level of division of labour, with multiple organizations taking an important role in performing different tasks.*

Data and methods

Our analysis responds to a recent call to complement traditional quantitative SNA with qualitative methods (cf. e.g. Bellotti, 2014; Domínguez & Hollstein, 2014; Krinsky & Crossley, 2014). Hence, we combine two data sources: semi-structured interviews with representatives of NGOs active in the Reconstruction of the State and relational data about horizontal transactional ties obtained by means of an electronic questionnaire distributed among the 19 participating organizations.

Semi-structured interviews

We conducted ten semi-structured qualitative interviews with representatives of selected NGOs involved in the project between 3 April and 11 June 2014, more than a year after the public launch of the campaign on 12 March 2013, and about half a year after the project reached its peak during the election campaign, culminating in parliamentary elections in October 2013. Each interview lasted between 70 and 128 min. We used information gathered from these interviews to design our questionnaire and obtain relevant relational data about the transactional ties among organizations. We further used the interviews to supplement our SNA with valid interpretation.

Social network analysis

One of the most influential definitions of social movements comes from Diani (1992, p. 13): 'Social movement is a network of informal interactions among a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity'. In fact, the network perspective is also inherently present in the most influential social movement theories. Resource mobilization theory and political process theory emphasize the importance of organizational networks for resource mobilization, goal negotiation as well as the production and circulation of information (Krinsky & Crossley, 2014; Osa, 2003). By now, the idea of a network has moved from a mere metaphor to something very clearly defined (Wellman, 1988) – the core analytical concept of a method called social network analysis (SNA; e.g. Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013; Mrvar, de Nooy, & Batagelj, 2005), today frequently applied to the study of social movements (Císař & Navrátil, 2014; Edwards, 2014; Krinsky & Crossley, 2014; Tremayne, 2014; Vicari, 2014; Wada, 2014).

In conducting social network analysis for our case, we proceeded in the following way: On 9 June 2014, about eight months after the culmination of the election campaign, we distributed an online questionnaire, created and managed in LimeSurvey, to a selected representative of each of the 19 organizations involved at that time.

The relational questions, which form the basis for our analysis in this paper, were of two kinds: First, we asked each organization to determine, for every other organization, the intensity of mutual cooperation both prior to the RS project and within the project. We further designate the networks based on these measures *cooperation networks* and they express the *associative transactional ties* among the NGOs. The fact that we ask about cooperation both prior to and within the project enables us to analyse path dependency in the cooperation pattern to see if the pre-existing ties are an important factor for coalition building as argued in literature (Van Dyke & McCammon, 2010). Even though this is not the core of our analysis, we decided to include this analysis to provide a more complex picture of our case.

Second, drawing on qualitative interviews, we identified five key activities conducted within the project. These activities were (a) legislation analysis and expert comments on legislative proposals; (b) coordination of individual organizations and working groups as well as coordination of external cooperation; (c) public relations (PR) and 'marketing' of the project; (d) fundraising and (e) 'door opening' (i.e. mediating contacts and providing social capital, particularly from previous activities). We asked each organization to indicate one or more organizations (including themselves to prevent forced selections) which were most important for each of these activities. We further designate these networks *task-related networks* and they express *interlocking transactional ties* among NGOs. This data is binary and directed so that we can trace who is nominated by whom. In terms of SNA, these five task-related networks create a multiplex, or multidimensional network, in which the same set of actors is intertwined in multiple relations simultaneously (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). This allows us to gain a more fine-grained picture of relations among analysed organizations, as shown in other studies (Baldassarri & Diani, 2007; Heaney, 2014; Simpson, 2015). In our case, we are going to use the multiplex scheme to test the concept of interlocking transactional activism based on division of labour.

Out of the 19 organizations, and after three rounds of reminders, 18 eventually completed the questionnaire. We only failed to gain answers from one organization, which was, however, a rather marginal one in the initiative. In order to avoid a missing node, and reflecting the fact that cooperation is by definition mutual, we decided to symmetrize the data with the maximum value in the cooperation networks. Before symmetrizing, we checked for organizations with extremely frequent disagreement with others. Reflecting on this check, we were forced to make some minor adjustments to avoid undue influence of discrepant reporting.[3] The resulting cooperation networks are, in the language of SNA, symmetric and valued.

Empirical analyses

Associative horizontal ties

In this sub-section, we analyse the cooperation networks, which are a common means of operationalizing activist networks. This approach corresponds with the broad conceptualization of transactional activism, which we designate associative transactional activism.

Figure 1 shows the cooperation network prior to the constitution of the coalition. The network is based on the following question: 'For each organization, please mark how intensively your and the respective organization cooperated before the RS project? Understand the preparation phase of the RS project as a part of the project itself, so do not consider it while answering this question'. Respondents were offered the following set of answers to indicate how much they cooperated: 'a lot = repeatedly or once but intensively' (indicated with a thick line in the figure), 'a little = just once on a not particularly

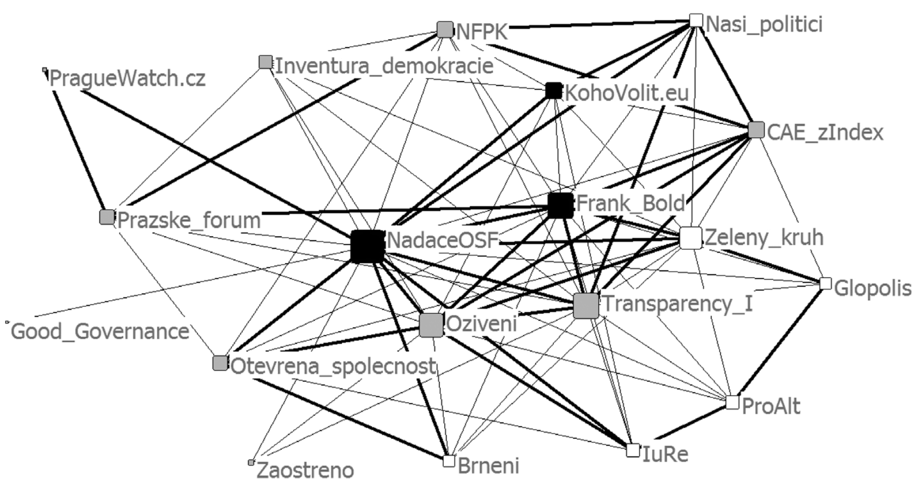

Figure 1. Cooperation network prior to the project.
Notes: Node size indicates degree. Node colours indicate the importance of the RS for self-determination of the organization: black = 'RS is among our most important activities'; grey = 'we do things which are more important for our self-determination, but the RS is fairly important too'; white = 'the RS plays a marginal role for our self-determination'. Layout: spring-embedding with only minor manual adjustments made in order to make ties or nodes better visible.

important matter' (indicated with a thin line in the figure), 'not at all = we have never cooperated' and 'I am not able to say'.

The pre-Reconstruction cooperation network had multiple central actors, with the Open Society Fund (OSF, labelled as 'NadaceOSF' in the figure) having the leading position with both the highest degree (i.e. most connections to others) and by far the highest betweenness (i.e. it was the most important organization in bridging the indirect connections among other organizations, hence having the most potential to mediate cooperation). This is not too surprising as a key goal of the OSF is to support the civil sector by encouraging cooperation and networking, and the organization claims to have financially supported over 9400 projects in the Czech Republic (OSF, 2016). All of the three guarantor organizations (Frank Bold, Oziveni and Transparency International) also had a high level of cooperation with other organizations prior to the RS, which put them into a good position to become project's leaders.

Figure 2 shows the situation at the time of data collection (June/July 2014). We measured cooperation by asking the following question: 'For each organization, please mark how intensively your and the respective organization have cooperated within the RS project? By cooperation, we mean direct communication/interaction between the two organizations'. Respondents were asked to differentiate among intensive cooperation, less intensive cooperation and no cooperation. The forth option was 'I am not able to say'.

On the macro-level, both networks are very similar, or in other words, strongly associated with the Goodman–Kruskal Gamma coefficient of 0.75 ($p < 0.005$). This suggests that the ties among actors remain similar across the networks. As such, the structure of prior cooperation among organizations translates into a similar structure of cooperation within the project.

Looking at the two cooperation networks, we see that both are fairly dense. Specifically, the network density reaches 0.47 in the pre-coalition network and 0.50 in the post-coalition network, which means that respectively 47 and 50% of all possible ties were actually connecting nodes in these networks.[4] This demonstrates that the sector had already had solid experience with cooperation prior to the RS, validating the notion of strong associative transactional capacity of the non-governmental sector in the Czech Republic.

We further look at some of the individual organizations in Figure 2 in more detail. Frank Bold, the organization which engendered the initiative, is depicted as the most central actor in the cooperation network. The other two guarantor organizations increased their relative centrality compared to the previous network, and occupy second and third positions. OSF remains an important actor, but is

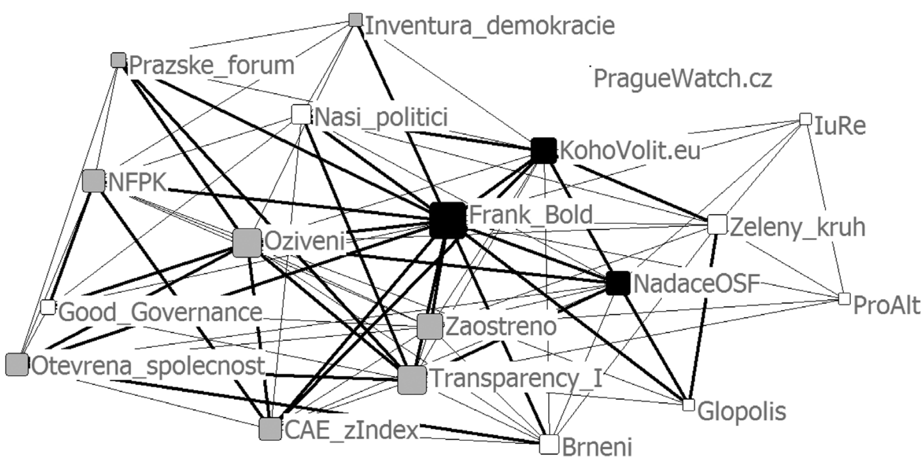

Figure 2. Cooperation network of the project.
Note: See the text in the note under Figure 1 which also applies here.

far less central than before. However, among the guarantor organizations, only one of them (Frank Bold) said that the RS was among their most important activities (indicated in black in the figure).

The interviews show that the dominant role of Frank Bold was present from the beginning. The initiative was conceived within this organization and the executive team was also based at Frank Bold. A long-time coordinator of the project, who had been part of the project since before its launch, describes the initial steps towards cooperation in the following way: 'The Reconstruction of the State is largely being pushed forward by Frank Bold. The other organizations were hesitant at the beginning. Experience from larger platforms is often such that it takes a lot of time and … nothing comes of it.' (Jiří Boudal, coordinator at Frank Bold)

The hesitation concerned especially the larger organizations, such as Transparency International. Its director, David Ondráčka, said that he also had to weigh the potential risk of joining an initiative with many partners, some of whom were unknown to them. In his assessment, Frank Bold director, Pavel France, stated: 'The biggest weakness of the RS now is that the ownership by the other organizations is not sufficient'.

This relates well to the fact that only three organizations stated that the RS was among their most important activities. Pavel Franc also self-critically admitted that Frank Bold was not successful enough in involving the other organizations in the decision-making process. For example, while the plenum was originally expected to generate ideational input for the initiative, it really functioned more as a platform for the dissemination of information. Or as Pavel Franc puts it, 'The biggest weakness of the plenum is that the executive team's approach was to inform others about what is happening instead of involving others in decision-making'.

In fact, analyses of cooperation network and the interviews give partially different views of the nature of the initiative. While the cooperation networks show a dense tangle of associative horizontal ties with only limited tendency to centralization, the interviews indicate hierarchies, centralization and an overall leading role of one organization. This mismatch supports our theoretical argument that the broad concept of associative transactional ties is not very revealing and may blur some inner dynamics, rather than uncover them. The associative ties tell us very little about the actual importance of transactions to the functioning of the project.

To put the density of associative transactions in a different perspective, we cite one interviewee who explained that, '[t]he Czech non-profit sector is not so big. We had known the people. It is not like we meet on everyday basis, but we know of each other' (Jiří Skuhrovec, Center of Applied Economics, labelled as 'CAE_zIndex' in the chart). Could it be that the density of broadly defined associative ties is more a function of the overall size of the sector than the relevance of transactions and cooperation for its mode of operation? In order to be able to say better what the transactions really *do* in the project, we next draw on our conceptualization of interlocking transactional activism and operationalize it in terms of division of labour.

Interlocking horizontal ties

We have introduced the concept of interlocking transactional ties to compensate for the very broad conceptualization of transactions in the literature on transactional activism. The concept of interlocking transactional ties is based on the assumption that the nature of the relations matter and that we need a tool to assess it. We propose that the division of labour is a useful perspective for assessing the importance of transactional ties because the functioning division of labour means that multiple organizations are strongly involved and that they are able to rely on each other's work. We first identified key work tasks (see 'Data and Methods' above) in the interviews and then we performed an analysis to determine if different organizations were dominant for different work-tasks. To make the orientation among the task-related networks simple, we adopted the visualization scheme from Kivelä et al. (2014), who suggest displaying multiplex networks on fixed coordinates for each node.[5]

First, we look at the task-related network based on 'legislation analysis and expert comments to law proposals' (Figure 3) as one of the key work tasks identified in qualitative interviews. Clearly, the three guarantor organizations assume a central role, with Frank Bold dominating the network. We learned from the interviews that, while coordination and PR are largely done by the executive team based at Frank Bold, working groups, which prepare legislation proposals, consist of people from across organizations. The figure does not contradict such a description, but it suggests that the lion's share of the expert work on legislation is done by only a few organizations.

Second, and in agreement with our expectations from the interviews, the network based on coordination (Figure 4) is extremely centralized around Frank Bold. This is well in line with the fact that the executive team responsible for project coordination was based at Frank Bold. The same is true

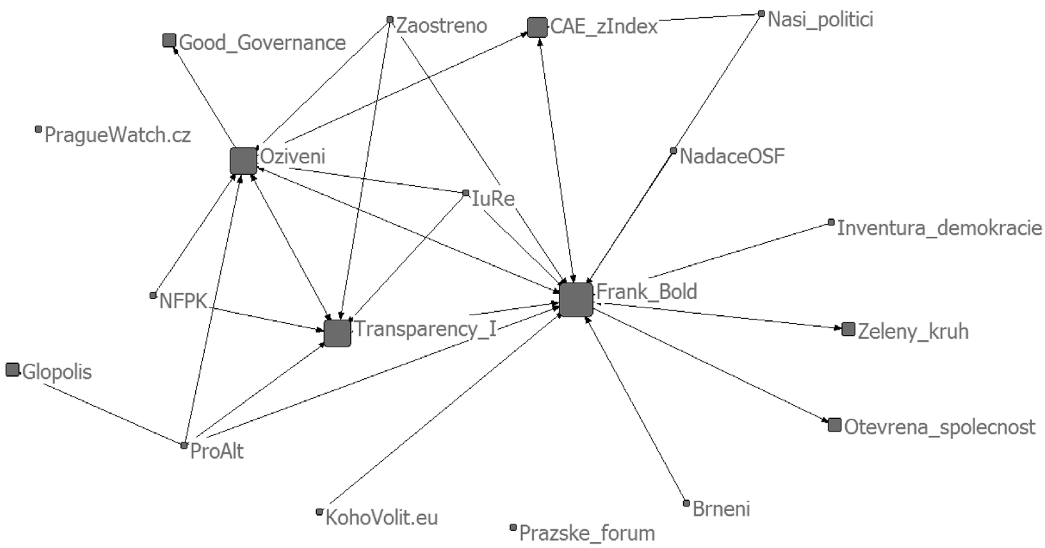

Figure 3. Task-related network: legislation.

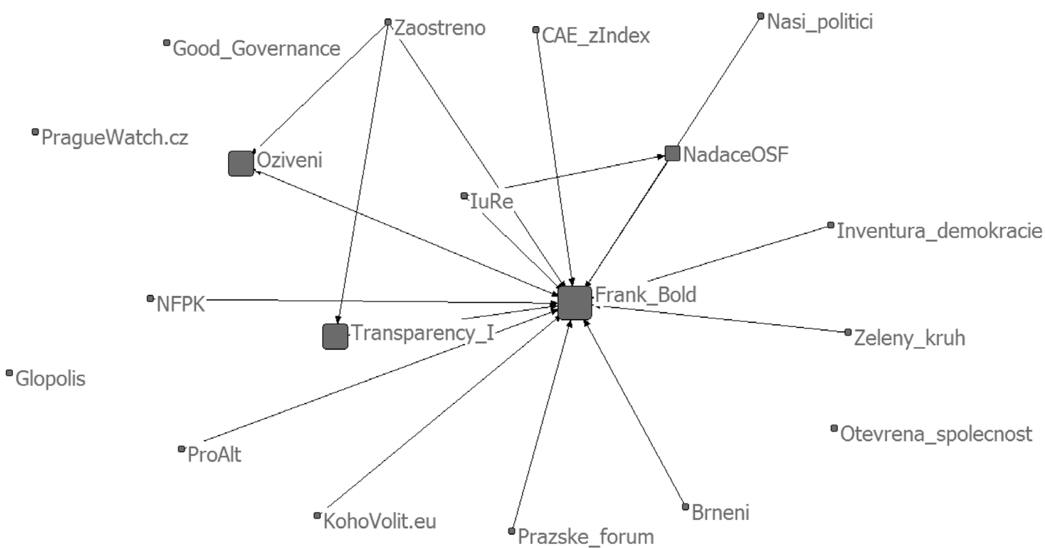

Figure 4. Task-related network: coordination.

for the network based on the project's PR. In fact, the PR network is so similar to Figure 4 that we haven't reproduced it.

Centralization may enable fast operation and decision-making, but it probably lies at the root of insufficient ownership of the initiative by most organizations, and may also generate conflict. A lawyer from one organization remembers her frustration when she, as a member of a working group, had limited influence on how the results of her work were communicated to the public:

> Our group created something. The executive team in Frank Bold transformed it into a proposal, but they omitted the most important parts. I then spent four hours commenting on their proposal, but they decided, without consulting us, that some goals cannot be achieved, and therefore will be left out from the proposal. Instead, they included what was important to them. From my perspective, these were four hours of my time wasted. (a lawyer at Oživení)

The analysis of interviews uncovers certain tension between effective and responsive operation on the one hand and a broad quasi-democratic platform of organizations on the other. People at Frank Bold were aware of this but found it difficult to consolidate the initiative. Especially, amid the process of pushing the laws, negotiating with politicians and focusing on consistent external communication, they were less able to do things which would bear fruit only later, such as fostering ownership by the other organizations. The resulting focus on external activities may have disengaged the less central organizations even more, as some interviewees acknowledged: 'The communication [on the inside] did not work very well. I was angry because I felt that I am not managed well. They [the executive team] were angry because they thought I was not delivering on my promises.' (Kamil Gregor, analyst at KohoVolit.eu)

Third, we look at the fundraising activities shown on Figure 5. Again, we see Frank Bold strongly dominating this activity. The interviews confirmed that almost all project money was raised and spent by Frank Bold, while little of the money was redistributed to the other organizations. The extreme level of centralization of fundraising was a subject of certain dispute and dissatisfaction. David Ondráčka, the director at Transparency International, comments on this with some irony, while simultaneously expressing support to the initiative nonetheless:

> We did not have anything out of it. Economically, it is madness. If you looked at me as a director who is responsible for finding financial resources for the functioning of an organization, I would be a fool. (…) They [Frank Bold] effectively got us in a situation where we volunteer on a project, which is, from the financial perspective, theirs. But we do it with pleasure. I don't know what else to say about it. (David Ondráčka, director at Transparency International)

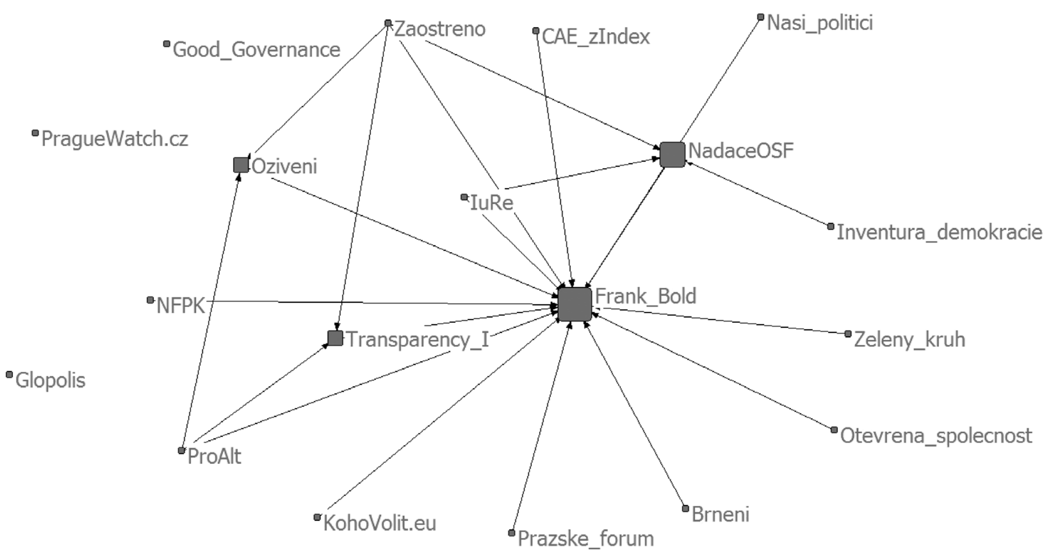

Figure 5. Task-related network: fundraising.

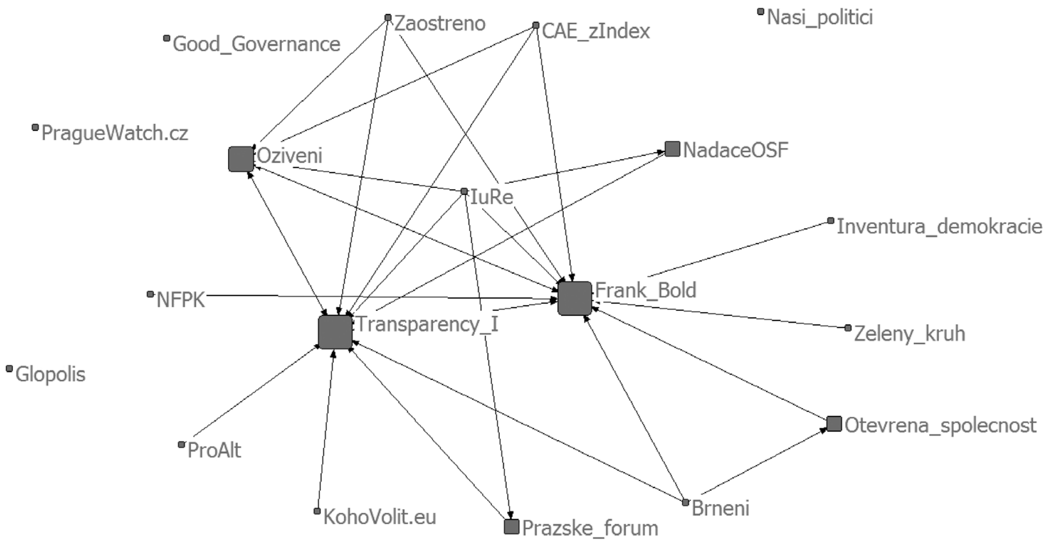

Figure 6. Task-related network: door-opening.

The financial inequality among organizations further prevented the stronger engagement of more organizations and contributed to the dominant role of Frank Bold in almost all key work tasks. Other organizations, often involved in other projects as well, and paying projects, tended to give priority to those other projects. This reluctance of other organizations, illustrated by the following quotation, further reinforced the vicious circle of the centralization of all work tasks in just one organization.

> The cooperation works in such way that when something is needed, we get a request and we either do it or not, depending on our capacity. As a matter of fact, we are not employees, we are not bound by a contract. (Kamil Gregor, analyst at KohoVolit.eu)

Finally, the 'door opening' network is distinct. It shows the importance of individual organizations in mobilizing social capital or organization's credit for the good of the initiative. Frank Bold and Transparency International form a two-node core: their indegree is of the same value. Oživení comes third as a less frequently nominated, but also not insignificant 'door-opener'. This is not too surprising as Transparency International entered the project as the most esteemed member, and especially at the beginning, this was important for the project's take-off:

> Of course, we also work as the door-opener. Now, the situation may be different, but we had a big number of meetings and negotiations where they wrote 'Transparency International and their colleagues would like to meet you.' (David Ondráčka, director at Transparency International)

Overall, our analysis shows strong support for the usefulness of the finer conceptualization of transactions in professionalized activism. While measuring broadly defined cooperation (associative ties) leads to finding dense cooperation networks, our concept of interlocking ties provides a different and valuable insight that is more in line with the qualitative interviews. Most of the key work tasks in the campaign (coordination, PR and fundraising) were dominated by just one organization, Frank Bold. A certain division of labour took place in the work task 'legislation analysis and expert comments to law proposals', where Oživení and Transparency International contributed strongly as well. In the work task of mediating contacts and mobilizing social capital, Transparency International and, again, Frank Bold were perceived as most worthwhile contributors by the other organizations.

Considering the nature of the initiative (one-off project with clearly specified goals and member organizations), the justification for its creation (the necessity to join forces to change the system) and its public self-presentation (a broad platform of NGOs and other actors), we selected this case as one most likely to exhibit strong interlocking ties. In other words, we expected multiple organizations to take a central position in different work tasks and thus contribute to the overall capacity of the initiative. Yet our analysis did not quite fulfil these expectations. The finding of a very limited division of labour suggests that this was not the key mechanism of empowerment for the initiative. This case study helps us see the limits of the concept of transactional activism as it has been used in literature: we often just assume strong transactional capacity among small professional organizations which claim to cooperate, but rarely analyse the nature of cooperation, or in other words, the mechanisms which should make cooperation effective. If little division of labour was found in the case of the RS, chances are that the nature of cooperation among other professional organizations, which are not bound together via a shared project, will be even more banal and not run very deep. In our case, most participating organizations were only capable of establishing relatively weak associative ties, and the leaders of the initiative were not able, or did not wish, to distribute different work-tasks among everybody and rely on each other very much in their execution. As a result, we suggest that the transactional capacity of NGOs mostly takes the form of only weak associative ties. Such ties can also be important, but more work needs to be done to demonstrate their effect.

Alternative explanations of success

In our case, challenging the relevance of transactions leaves us with one important question to answer. If not strong transactional capacity based on division of labour among a number of organizations, what then caused the initiative's unprecedented success in the pre-election campaign? There are two potential explanations.

First, the political opportunities were quite favourable. Indeed, there was a window of political opportunities caused by turbulence in party politics. In 2010, two new political parties entered the Parliament, while the two largest traditional Czech parties (ODS on the right and ČSSD on the left) both lost substantially. Suddenly, there were many new MPs in the Parliament. It is very likely that this extensive exchange of politicians, both in terms of parties and individual politicians, led to the general recognition by them that they could be removed from power quite easily. In 2013, two new parties were knocking on the door of the Parliament (both succeeded in entering it after the elections). It was under these circumstances of political volatility and uncertainty that activists from the RS started to urge candidates to pledge themselves as individuals to support the anti-corruption laws and potentially gain credit with the corruption-sensitive public. David Ondráčka from Transparency International explains it as follows:

> Of course, we took advantage of the fact that the politicians were new. In the past Chamber of Deputies [2010–2013], there were about 130 new deputies out of 200. And in the present one, there are another 100 new deputies. So, there are only some 40 or 50 veterans, but the rest are newcomers. (…) They are just learning to work with lobbyists and interest groups. We have managed that many have jumped on that wave of the RS perhaps a little more than they wanted, and now some of them will logically try to get out.

Second, the initiative encouraged people to become so-called ambassadors of the RS and to contact their political representatives in the regions. Some interviewees stressed the positive role of engaging the public. Interviews indicated a strong positive effect of recruiting ambassadors from the broader public:

> We had agreement with the political parties that they would send our appeal [to sign the pledge] centrally. It did not work very well. What did work was the (…) whirlwind of emails and phone calls. We would not have been able to do that without the ambassadors. (Jiří Boudal, coordinator at Frank Bold)

> The involvement of ambassadors is what I consider the most important element of the whole Reconstruction. (…) The work which was done before the elections was not done by people here in Prague. It was done by some 400 nameless people in the regions. (…) It was something that the MPs were not at all used to. (Robert Basch, director at Open Society Fund)

To sum up, our analysis did not provide strong evidence for the key importance of transactional capacity as expressed by the substantial contribution of multiple NGOs to different work tasks. Instead, we identified other potential explanations for the initiative's success: It could be that the successful campaign was rather caused by a window of political opportunities and mobilization of supporters from among the public who were willing to contact politicians.

It is also possible that transactions of cooperation were, indeed, important, but we simply tested for a wrong mechanism. Transactions may have been important for their signalling role rather than their capacity-increasing effect. While the contribution of most participating organizations was minimal, and just one organization shouldered the bulk of the work, signalling the unity of almost 20 organizations may have helped to attract media attention or recruit more ambassadors. But it would seem far-fetched to elevate transactions as the one defining feature of the initiative's success.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have criticized the underdeveloped conceptualization of the term transactional activism. Specifically, we have argued that the existing literature has turned a blind eye to the nature of transactions, disregarding how exactly they could contribute to the success of social movements. In response, we proposed a more fine-grained conceptualization of horizontal transactional ties among organizations. We distinguished between associative transactional ties for any broadly defined cooperation as it appears in existing literature on transactional activism, and the term interlocking transactional ties for cooperation based on division of labour. By division of labour, we mean the allocation of different work tasks or different contributions to a shared goal by different organizations, whereby individual organizations can rely on each other's output. This way, the overall real capacity of a coalition increases. These interlocking ties represent a much stronger transactional scheme than the mere notion of some cooperation or exchange. The underlying idea behind this concept is that if transactional capacity is to be the defining feature of activism in CEE, then its importance should be very clear and empirically substantiated, with a specific mechanism showing why transactions are important.

We conducted an empirical study of the initiative entitled the Reconstruction of the State, which was very likely to display interlocking ties and division of labour. We have shown that the measurement of standard associative transactional ties results in a dense cooperation network within the initiative. However, the measurement of interlocking ties based on division of labour showed high level of centralization of most activities around just one organization and a very limited division of labour. This second picture was verified with interviews which often reflected upon this centralization, as well as the lack of ownership by most organizations. This has implications for the concept of transactional activism. Provided that the transactions among organizations tend to be merely weak associations, the importance of transactional activism in literature may be exaggerated; or the transactions that matter most are not those among organizations, but those between them and the political elites, which we did not directly address in this study. It could also be that the reason why horizontal transactions among organizations matter is different to the division of labour that we tested for. Either way, we believe that our conceptualization of interlocking transactional ties can help to either show more persuasive evidence of activism relying strongly on horizontal transactions or it will, as in our case, reveal that transactions might not be the key factor, while other more traditional explanations, such as structure of political opportunities or successful mobilization, may be more valid explanation of success, even if some inter-organizational sharing can contribute as well.

To reiterate, this paper does not intend to reject the concept of transactional activism. Rather, it is a call for more focus on explaining why transactions are important and exactly what role they play in civil society in CEE.

Notes

1. See Štrngám za zmenu.sk (n.d.) and Ez a minimum (n.d.) (http://ezaminimum.hu/). We contacted Merényi Miklós from K-Monitor, one of the organizations behind the Hungarian initiative 'ez a minimum' and asked whether they were inspired by the Reconstruction of the State. We got the following answer: 'Yep, when we launched the Minimum programme, we studied profoundly the rec. of the state project. We also contacted Kamil Gregor and Martin Fadrny for briefing about the project'.
2. These guarantor organizations were Frank Bold, Oziveni and Transparency International. In March 2015, when Transparency International left the Reconstruction of the State, three other organizations were 'promoted' to guarantor organizations raising the overall number of guarantors to five.
3. This means that, every time two actors reported a different value of their cooperation, we used the greater value to represent their cooperation. This procedure was favourable to symmetrizing on a mean value, because this way we avoided increasing the number of cooperation intensity levels, hence keeping the overall picture simple. Some discrepancies in reporting of cooperation where interviewees appeared to over-report cooperation were re-coded to minimize the undue influence of a small number of individuals. Full details of the in-degree and out-degree counts for pre-RS Cooperation and RS Cooperation networks are available from the authors.
4. We disregarded the strength of ties for the calculation of densities.
5. Specifically, coordinates of nodes in all the task-related network visualizations are based on their coordinates in a network created by aggregating them all.

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