



***The welfare state we're in.
Organisations of the unemployed
in action in Paris and Berlin***

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Abstract

The following thesis looks at the contentious action of the unemployed in Paris and Berlin. The thesis investigates the role of local organisations of the unemployed in contentious activities. More specifically, it looks at the forms of collective action these local organisations are engaged in, and asks about which conditions lead to the disruptive activities considered crucial for poor people's actors. This is done by analysing different empirical sources: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, surveys, and expert interviews. In order to describe the forms of contentious engagement seen and the role of local organisations, the second part employs an analytical descriptive approach. In an attempt to explain the tactical choices of organisations of the unemployed I link four different conditions (access to resources, access to the field of institutionalised actors, belonging to a counter-cultural network and movement experience) to the use of disruptive activities. Combining all four conditions I then carry out a Comparative Qualitative Analysis (QCA).

One important insight of the thesis is that contentious action by the poor can be stabilised over time. Further, the thesis also shows that the two fields of local organisations are characterised by different features. Some features, for example the existence of certain types of organisations – as defined by their preferred activities - can be explained by the political system and, more particularly, by the institutions of contention present in each country. However, there are also many similarities between the fields, showing that national opportunity structures explain only some aspects of contentious action. In looking at the conditions leading to the use of disruptive action, the thesis shows that political opportunities are just one of several other factors that explain types of contentious engagement. The thesis disconfirms the assumption of the central role of exclusion from centres of political and discursive power and the lack of resources in accounting for disruptive action. It is more important that organisations of the unemployed belong to a counter-cultural network, defined as a necessary, albeit not a sufficient condition for disruptive action.



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Bio

Annika Zorn holds a PhD from the European University Institute, Department of Social and Political Science (EUI/Florence, Italy). She holds also a Master of Research (M.Res.) from the European University Institute, Department of Social and Political Science (EUI/Florence, Italy). Annika holds a diploma degree of the Humboldt University of Berlin in Social Sciences. She worked as a student researcher at the Social Science Research Centre and as a Research assistant at the EUI. Currently she coordinates the activities of the Florence School of Regulation at the Robert Schuman Centre at the EUI. Her research interests include: Social movements, participative democracy, social and political marginalization, and the welfare state. On this topics she has presented papers at numerous international conferences and published book chapters in a book edited by Strath and Magnussen on European Solidarities and in a book edited by Chabanet and Royall on protest of marginalized people in Europe.