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THE IMPACT OF 'RELATIONAL STRUCTURES' UPON COLLECTIVE ACTION: A COMPARISON OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND ASYLUM IN NEW LABOUR BRITAIN¹

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The Impact of 'Relational Structures' upon Collective Action: A Comparison of Unemployment and Asylum in New Labour Britain¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives an original twist to main theories of mobilisation and collective action through the use of conceptual and methodological tools of network analysis in order to explore the notion of 'relational structures'. It emphasises that inter-organisational exchanges specific to the political or sub-political issue field within which collective actors mobilise and interact have an important impact upon collective action. This paper focuses on the study of this specific impact. In particular, it constructs a conceptual space of relational structures, which leads to the formulation of a series of hypotheses about the development of collective action across different fields. Relevant patterns of collective action are then matched with empirical findings on relational structures in the two fields of asylum and unemployment in Britain, providing an initial positive assessment of the overall framework, and hence, opening space for further empirical testing and theoretical refinement.

INTRODUCTION

In Britain, the unemployed have almost disappeared from the national public space during the last three New Labour governments. Their interests and position have mainly been represented by a number of NGOs, charities, and other independent organisations, which have continued to be active on behalf of the unemployed but have made no recourse to unified mobilisation and direct action. Independent organisations, charities, and NGOs also play an important pro-beneficiary role in the formulation and mobilisation of asylum seekers' demands. In this case, however, lobbying and other conventional forms of action have at times been mixed with the use of direct actions and large-scale collective mobilisations. How, then, to account for the lack of direct action in the field of unemployment? What, by contrast, is behind the potential recourse to large mobilisations and a richer variety of action forms in the field of asylum? In addressing these questions, this paper begins by introducing the issues of asylum and unemployment in Britain, providing a summary of the extant literature on mobilisation and collective action that is relevant for their analysis. Having set out the main criteria underpinning this comparison, an approach is proposed - namely, 'relational structure' - to integrate theories of mobilisation and collective action through systematic analysis of network patterns. The main argument is that explanations of processes of mobilisation and collective action need to take a closer look at patterns of inter-organisational exchanges specific to the political or sub-political issue field, within which collective actors mobilise and interact. In particular, I construct a conceptual space for gauging relational structures, so as to control whether their variable configurations play a distinctive role in shaping collective action across different political or issue fields. I then match patterns of collective action with my findings about relational structures in the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment. The paper ends up with a discussion of main results of my research, opening space for further empirical testing and theoretical refinement.

SETTING UP THE COMPARISON: THE THEORETICAL DEBATE

There are three potential justifications for considering and comparing the issue-fields of unemployment and asylum. First, unemployment and asylum have both been at the core of many New Labour efforts and legislative provisions since the early days of its first mandate. Intense public debates (in, for example, the press) and various government initiatives (usually, restrictive reforms)² have brought together a large and diverse number of institutional, political and social actors. Such a rich diversity of actors points towards a second important justification for comparing these two issue-fields, namely the role of an altruistic relationship between pro-beneficiaries and constituency groups.³ In both issue-fields, a wide range of actors intervene in the public domain on behalf of asylum seekers and the unemployed who themselves have only a marginal part within the constituency group that mobilises. Finally, a third justification stems from the fact that altruism itself is built upon shared features of asylum seekers and the unemployed. Both groups have a relatively small size, marginal political position, and ownership of very few resources for collective action.⁴ They also meet high resentment in the public discourse, especially with regard to 'bogus' and 'welfare scroungers'.⁵ Put simply, asylum seekers and the unemployed can both be taken as relatively passive protagonists within multi-organisational spaces of contention to which they contribute only marginally.⁶

The input of independent organisations, charities, NGOs, and civil society thus emerges as the main focus of research when studying contention over asylum and unemployment in contemporary Britain. A first goal of this paper consists in providing extensive insights into the role of pro-beneficiary actors and the dynamics of their intervention in the two issue-fields under investigation. In so doing, I fill in a vacuum in the literature on pro-beneficiary action which has relied thus far on no more than a small number of empirical accounts informed by original comparative data.⁷ A second and more ambitious objective of this paper, however, is to intervene in the vibrant scholarly debate on mobilisation and collective action. In particular, my comparison aims to control some key factors that are usually taken as the explanans by main scholarly approaches, such as Political Opportunity Structure (Eisinger 1973; Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1998), Resource Mobilisation Theory (Obershall 1973, McCarthy and Zald 1977, Zald and McCarthy, 1987) and the broader 'cultural approach' tackling the relationship between culture and collective action.

Starting from the latter, I am using the synthetic expression of 'cultural approach' to refer to a federation of different perspectives that have focused in particular on 'new' systems of values or the role of frames for processes of interpretation and social construction.⁸ Scholars of New Social Movements (NSM) have emphasised that collective action follows the consolidation of new systems of values, that is, mobilisation is the product of social re-integration rather than the effect of disintegration (Touraine 1981; Offe 1985; Melucci 1989).⁹ Other scholars have provided very influential treatments of the concept of 'frame' (Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000; Gamson 1992), studying how meaning is attributed to events and situations are interpreted within broader processes of public social constructions (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, Eder 1993, Klandermans 1992). By contrast, scholars of Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) have emphasised that the potential for mobilisation is transformed into collective action at the condition that actors manage to use successfully available resource and selective incentives for action. Taking the analysis of organisations at the core of their research agenda, they have highlighted the rationality of collective action. Organisational structures provide the means through which social actors may reasonably pursue their demands, with individuals joining them only after a rational appraisal of costs and benefits. It should also be emphasised that RMT is the oldest of the three approaches but it continues to provide valuable concepts and insights for the study of most recent instances of collective action (Della Porta 2003, Marks and McAdam 1996 and 1999).

As regards Political Opportunity Structure (POS), scholarship has focused on exogenous and stable political variables impacting on the possibility that

groups, organisations and movements of different kinds have for collective action. In particular, it has mostly tackled 'institutional opportunities', rooting its first steps into the analysis of formation of the modern nation-state (Tilly 1978). Among the most addressed POS dimensions, one finds the relative openness or closure of the institutionalised political system, the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically characterises a polity, the presence or absence of elite allies, and the state's capacity and propensity for repression (McAdam 1996: 27). However, scholars within the POS framework have also worked at syntheses encompassing the other two scholarly perspectives so as to grasp the role of politics, society and culture respectively (Della Porta and Diani 2006, McAdam et al. 1996). Suffice to say, they have integrated the framing approach within the POS perspective, assessing how certain definitions and positions are made to appear more feasible and legitimate than competitive definitions and positions within the political system (Koopmans 1996, Koopmans and Statham 2000, Statham 1998).

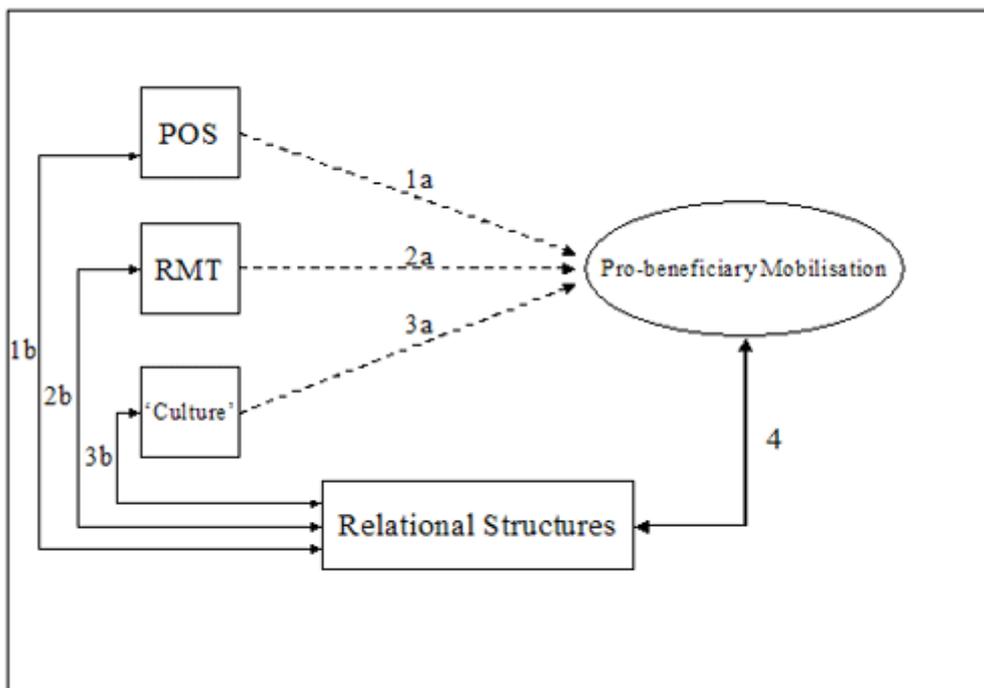
POS, RMT and 'culture' certainly justify the importance of altruism in the two issue-fields under investigation. As I have said, asylum seekers and the unemployed have a marginal political position, rely on very few resources for collective action, and face significant processes of disintegration and stigmatisation: they are somewhat obliged to hand over the initiative to a broad range of pro-beneficiary actors.¹⁰ Yet, it is more problematic to relate POS, RMT and 'culture' to specific variations of pro-beneficiary contention over asylum and unemployment. When distinguishing, for example, between different legal provisions, policy arrangements and specific parties' alignments, no substantial difference can be noticed in 'opportunities' across the two issue-fields. Pro-beneficiary actors have also gone through similar processes of formalisation of their own organisational structures in both issue-fields, while at the same time relying on the availability of a large volume of similar government funding schemes as incentive to act as 'stakeholders'. At the same time, widespread acknowledgement for pro-beneficiary engagement has expanded in the public discourse, alongside with the influence of frames of 'social justice', 'inclusion' and 'solidarity'.

Hence, my examination of pro-beneficiary mobilisation in Britain follows most recent efforts to bridge the distance between political opportunities, mobilising structures, and the cultural dimension of collective action, aiming at lending greater specificity to these theoretical approaches.¹¹ Drawing on network analysis (Knoke and Kuklinsky 1982, Scott 2000, Wasserman and Faust 1994) and the recent rediscovery of 'relational attributes' across the social sciences,¹² I examine core dynamics intermediating between mobilisation and main independent factors identified within scholarship of mobilisation and collective action. Of course, the study of relational characteristics of collective action is at least three decades old (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Granovetter, 1978; Pickvance 1975), and it was in fact integrated within the first seminal works that brought about the anti-Behaviorist revolution in the study of contentious politics (Obershall 1973; Tilly 1978). Nevertheless, only a few scholars have put the analysis of networks at the core of their research so as to tackle a number of questions about collective action, such as inter-organisational ties and overlapping memberships (Diani 1992, 1995 and 2003), processes of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation (Franzosi 1997 and 1999), influence of individuals' relational contexts on their decision to mobilise (Klandermans 1990; McAdam 1986), impact of whole communities' network structures on the development of their collective action (Gould 1991, 1993 and 1995), as well as protest across cleavages in deeply divided societies (Cinalli 2003 and 2005). These efforts have indeed reinforced the interactionist strand within the research agenda of the 'dynamics of contention' program (McAdam et al. 2001, Tilly and Tarrow 2007).

In particular, this paper operationalises the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment in terms of networks of ties amongst units, that is, a set of nodes which are entrusted to actors who, through their reciprocal interactions, contribute to shape the overall set of constraints and opportunities incumbent upon them, access specific resources, and produce part of their own orientations. There are two main implications following from this approach. First, I suggest that networks may allow for capitalising on opportunities from agents who play a critical role in decision-making, may facilitate flows of

information about choices otherwise not available, may reinforce internal identity and values, as well as recognition, support, public acknowledgment, and legitimisation. The second implication follows the first: I argue that different patterns of interactions amongst actors can indeed be taken as an additional key factor to account for variations of collective action across the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment. This is the most complex step of my research: it is graphically represented in fig. 1, which shows the interdependence of different factors, gauging the impact of 'relational structures' upon pro-beneficiary mobilisation.

Figure 1: Relational structures in the two fields of unemployment and asylum



In particular, the ticker arrow 4 follows the specific role of relational structures through which part of 'opportunities', 'resources', and 'culture' become available for mobilisation. Relational structures can be useful to specify an important part of the intermediating processes behind the translation of distant political structures into sizeable opportunities for mobilisation. For example, they may reveal whether pro-beneficiaries enter processes of decision-making alongside policy elites and institutions, as well as specific renegotiations of boundaries across the public and the policy domain (arrow 1b). As regards resources, a large volume of them can be assessed in terms of 'control' rather than 'ownership'. Organisational strength in each field is not only based on depletory assets which distinct and isolated actors possess for themselves, but rather, on many resources that groups can better control through mutual sharing and interaction. For example, strength can be achieved through purposeful inter-organisational linkages that pro-beneficiaries forge with their allies within civil society, as well as with policy-makers and elites (arrow 2b). Lastly, values, frames, and identities are shared, questioned, and modified through relations. In this case, the argument is that the redefinition of orientations within which the two issues of asylum and unemployment have been built passes through the specific network patterns that pro-beneficiary organisations forge to forward their demands, access the public domain, and achieve full acknowledgement of their beneficiaries' claims (arrow 3b). Of course, figure 1 can also be put in motion by considering reverse processes of network readjustments throughout and after mobilisation. Instances of collective action stand as most relevant

occasions for testing stability of relational structures. Old interactions could simply fail the real test of collective action, while new ties suddenly become available and desirable, thus bringing about again change of resources, culture, and opportunities.

To sum up, the study of networks encompasses RMT, since ties provide channels for sharing valuable resources that rational actors need so as to balance their scarce control of other resources. In line with cultural approaches, networks are crucial for sharing common interpretations of issues, as well as building mutual trust, common values and cohesive identities. In addition, the analysis of networks allows for gauging the channels through which distant exogenous opportunities become available for actors, thus fitting in with the POS approach. What is more, network analysis allows for overcoming too crude a representation of contentious domains, which are often taken as if they were entirely disconnected from (and permanently in conflict with) elites, institutions, and a large part of civil society. While the dramatisation of a 'challengers/insiders' cleavage has well served the purpose of building up high levels of sophistication in the analysis of collective action, some scholars have increasingly grown unsatisfied with growing simplifications (Fillieule 2005; Hayes 2005). My argument here is that scholarship of collective action can deal better with new challenges facing contemporary examinations of political mobilisation if it is equipped with appropriate network tools.

RELATIONAL STRUCTURES VS. COLLECTIVE ACTION

My empirical research aims to analyse differences in 'relational structures' between the two fields of asylum and unemployment as these differences are expected to be linked to variations of pro-beneficiary mobilisation. I do not claim that any variation of collective action across asylum and unemployment should be traced back to differences in relational structures. Figure 1 has already acknowledged that not everything passes necessarily through networks (even if the main argument of this paper is that this is often the case). Opportunities may be, or suddenly become, available regardless of any established relation (arrow 1a); some resources are indeed consumed on a stand-alone basis (arrow 2a), while frames and processes of construction could develop independently of inter-organisational relationships (arrow 3a). I have already argued, however, that a systematic examination of networks is essential for tackling my analysis of pro-beneficiary mobilisation in Britain. The specific design of my comparison aims indeed at capturing relational structures in a situation where their performance is particularly important to channel impact of different types of factors upon mobilisation.

I assess these 'relational structures' in terms of their intensity along a 'horizontal' and a 'vertical' dimension of analysis, so as to unpack each issue-field into two main continuous domains, namely, the public domain and the policy domain. While the policy domain contains institutions, elites and policy-makers, the public domain refers to actors from civil society, such as political parties, churches, pressure groups, charities, unions, social movements, grassroots campaigns and other independent organisations. There are two main analytical reasons for distinguishing between a horizontal and a vertical dimension. First, I can appraise empirically whether similar actors in the public domain do tend to intensify their relations so as to build common interpretations, improve strategies, and balance their scarce control of resources. Second, I can assess the importance of vertical networks as bridges between the public and policy domains for strengthening influence and facilitating flow of information.¹³ I have already talked about the need to reconsider the dramatisation of the 'challengers/insiders' cleavage. Indeed, the root of preferring different combinations of networks lies in actors' motions and concerns. It is thus empirically more viable to analyse for what outcomes and under what conditions different combinations of horizontal and vertical networks are preferred, rather than assuming that more extensive horizontal networks are the normative expectation.

It follows that the notion of relational structure can be appraised through 1) its horizontal dimension of exchanges within the public domain, and 2) its vertical dimension of exchanges across the public and the policy domain. I define these

exchanges as sets of ties of co-operation and disagreement respectively. Each actor is a focus from which lines radiate to other nodes of the public and policy domains, that is, the other actors with which ties of co-operation and/or disagreement are shared. I can thus proceed to evaluate 'intensity', both horizontally and vertically, across the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment. In general, the notion of intensity may be referred to the 'cohesive force' that characterises different fields. More concretely, I consider intensity to be function of 1) prevalence of co-operation, 2) nature of interactions, and 3) salience of cleavages within the network. Let me precise in detail this function with reference to main research outputs and tools of analysis.

The first factor in my function of intensity requires a quantitative analysis that evaluates the respective occurrence of ties of co-operation and disagreement along both the horizontal and vertical dimensions. In particular, I can rely on an established measure of network analysis, namely, the 'average degree' of all actors. This measure consists of the average number of exchanges that actors share. It can therefore be computed for each issue-field (unemployment vs. asylum), each type of relationship (co-operation vs. disagreement) and each dimension (horizontal vs. vertical) by simply dividing the total number of ties by total number of actors. Put simply, the average degree shows how many links each actor has in average within a given network. Obviously, combinations of average degrees showing prevalence of co-operation on disagreement stand as a first indication of higher cohesive force in the network. In this case, actors more often than not work together, more often than not overcome points of distance, and more often than not share resources.¹⁴

The second factor in my function of intensity focuses on 'nature of interactions'. Measures of average degree need to be integrated with the examination of specific contents of each relationship, so as to broaden the narrow limits of a binary analysis which focuses exclusively on the simple occurrence of ties. For example, low quantitative prevalence of co-operation is still an ambiguous figure, since the field could be characterised by few but very deep exchanges. In sum, it is empirically more viable to explore all facets of intensity, rather than deducing one from the other, relying on a qualitative investigation that evaluates exchanges without the use of numbers.¹⁵ I thus examine the specific contents of ties of co-operation and disagreement, and then combine them to specify the different nature of interactions. A further reason for treating data qualitatively is the very fact that co-operation and disagreement cannot be taken as if they were inter-changeable items of different sign in a zero-sum computation. Put simply, interactions that are characterised by high coexistence of co-operation and disagreement are not the same as interactions where these two types of relationships combine only at marginal levels or are absent altogether.

In table 1, I have codified qualitative information about co-operation and disagreement along two scales of their content. Proceeding from the deepest to the most superficial content of co-operative ties, actors can promote overlapping memberships or the construction of common organisational structures; they can co-operate in common initiatives and long-term projects; they can co-operate through more limited *ad hoc* exchanges of information; or they can neglect any form of cooperation altogether. As regards disagreement, actors may be engaged in a mutual defiance along an irreconcilable line of conflict; they can dislike each other keeping this hostility unexpressed; they can have ad hoc disputes as a result of their different approaches to particular questions; or they can avoid any form of disagreement altogether.

**Table 1: Combining Co-operation and Disagreement:
Nature of Interactions**

		Disagreement			
		No Tie	Ad hoc disputes	Dislike	Open Conflict
Co-operation	Overlap. struct./members	4	4	X	X
	Common work/particip.	4	3	3	X
	Information Exchange	2	3	3	1
	No Tie	2	2	1	1

Type 4: Consensual Interaction

Type 3: Pragmatism

Type 2: Indifference

Type 1: Contentious Interaction

Type X: *Not applicable*

In particular, table 1 combines these variations of co-operation and disagreement in a typology of 'nature of interactions' so as to provide a second indication of intensity. Intensity is obviously high when deep contents of co-operation combine with superficial contents of disagreement. 'Consensual interaction' is thus the most intense type (type 4), since it combines deep co-operation with superficial disagreement or no disagreement at all. Intensity decreases in type 3. In this case, deepening of disagreement brings about higher competition within the field, without affecting deep co-operation. Interactions are 'pragmatic': actors do not split along a friends/opponents divide, but privilege some combinations of both co-operation and disagreement so as to work together on common concerns and objectives. Intensity keeps falling in type 2. Exchanges in the field are in this case rare and anaemic, indicating the prevalence of 'indifference'. Lastly, combinations of deep disagreement and superficial co-operation (or no co-operation at all) result in the most 'contentious' type of interaction (type 1). Intensity is now at its lowest level, with actors communicating only to strengthen their uniqueness and distinct positions.¹⁶

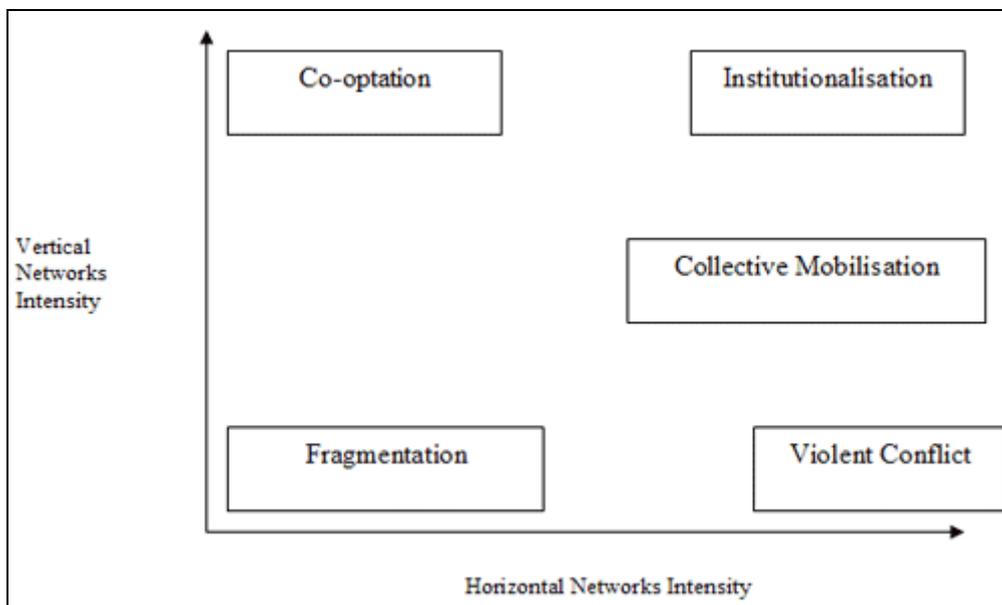
Combinations of co-operation and disagreement are also at the core of my third factor of intensity, that is, salience of cleavages. Qualitative analysis of interactions in the field conveys some crucial information, but this information may be further unpacked. In particular, the study of combinations of co-operation and disagreement needs to explore entrenched divisions in the field, as for example when networks are made of unconnected blocs (with actors co-operating especially with friends' friends and disagreeing especially with friends' opponents). Drawing on established techniques of 'cliques analysis', I thus detect and analyse portions of networks where each actor is directly connected to every other actor. I then appraise the extent to which these portions form overlapping or unconnected blocs. Clearly, the presence of unconnected blocs reveals deep divisions, and hence, a lower intensity in the field.

So analysed, the three factors can be put together to have an overall measure of intensity. Intensity is high in the public domain when horizontal networks are characterised by prevalence of co-operation, consensual interactions and low salience of cleavages. This situation is indeed ideal for fostering the exchange of resources and the development of a common culture. Vertical intensity is high when co-operation, consensus, and weak divisions characterise networks across the public and the policy domain. In this case, crucial political opportunities can most likely benefit actors in the public domain. By contrast, prevalence of disagreement, contentious interactions and salience of deep cleavages stand for very low intensity, which, again, can be evaluated both horizontally and vertically. In between, there are different variations of intensity at the horizontal and vertical

levels, which need to be tackled so as to further systematic comparison across different issue and political fields.

In particular, my three factors of networks intensity (prevalence of co-operation, nature of interactions, and salience of cleavages) can be assessed in the broader frame of a conceptual space of relational structures, which extends according to low/high intensity along both the horizontal and vertical dimensions. Figure 2 shows the space resulting from varying combinations of horizontal and vertical intensity. I have divided it into four main areas representing the coupling of 1) a particular type of network patterns (on the continuum lowly/highly intense) which organisations in the public domain forge through mutual linkages, and 2) a particular type of network patterns (on the same continuum lowly/highly intense) which the same actors forge through their ties with policy actors, elites and institutions.

Figure 2: Collective Action across different Relational Structures



This division enables me to identify four ideal-typical configurations of relational structures that arise from the combination of the horizontal and vertical axes, thus articulating my main hypothesis in a way to increase scope for falsifying the supposed impact which network patterns play upon collective action. The top-right corner of the area refers to relational structures that combine high levels of intensity, both horizontally and vertically. This structure is expected to characterise fields where collective action 'institutionalises'. In this case, actors in the public domain obtain full political acknowledgement and full integration of their demands in the policy process decisions. Relational structures are vertically stretched in the top-left corner of the area (combination of high vertical intensity and low horizontal intensity). In this case, the public domain resembles a market where actors compete for accessing policy-makers in order to satisfy their own interests. Processes of 'cooptation' are the likely outcome, with elites and institutions strategically pre-empting most of the demands formulated in the public domain before unified collective mobilisation may become a feasible option. Violent conflict can more easily occur when intensity of relational structures is horizontally stretched, that is, in the bottom-right corner. This is the only space where 'challengers' and 'insiders' are split along a deep hierarchical cleavage. Lastly, the bottom-left corner of the area refers to relational structures which combine low levels of intensity, both horizontally and vertically. This situation is expected to be conducive to forms of fragmentation and counter-cultural dissent. Actors in the public domain may act as 'sects', rejecting altogether extensive inter-organisational ties and concentrating only inwardly on themselves.

I am focusing here on these four main areas at the corners for heuristic reasons, as they are closer to some ideal-types than to others while offering a system of conceptual co-ordinates for easier orientation. Yet, I lay no claim that they stand as self-contained and exhaustive types of a well-defined typology. Areas in-between corners can clearly emerge as more relevant spaces for analysis of collective action across issue and political fields. For example, processes of social movements' formation and unified collective mobilisation are expected to match a relational structure which is very intense horizontally and somewhat intense vertically. In this case, actors in the public domain are well connected amongst themselves, but they are also sufficiently close to policy actors for seizing crucial opportunities for mobilisation (but not close enough to 'institutionalise'). What is more, I have already emphasised that relational structures are at the crossroads of reversal processes of network readjustments. Processes of mobilisation put old ties under constraints and constant trials, while opening space for the building of new ones. The combination of the two continuous dimensions in an open conceptual space, rather than in a closed typology, allows for following transformations of relational structures across time, thus putting in motion a framework otherwise too static to follow the changing dynamics of contention.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Scholarly research has already provided some valuable analysis of different forms and degrees of collective action in the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment in New Labour Britain.¹⁷ In the asylum issue-field, collective action is mostly of conventional kind. It includes advocacy activity, promotion of solidarity with asylum seekers, production and dissemination of information and scientific knowledge, as well as discussion of measures which can deal with their vulnerability and protect their interests (Statham and Cinalli 2004). Yet, there is also widespread campaigning on specific issues, which can sometimes lead to the development of unified collective mobilisations. In particular, the campaign to 'scrap the vouchers' has been the most visible episode of protest on behalf of asylum seekers, showing that pro-asylum organisations can successfully unite their efforts to promote political change. In the unemployment issue-field, actors have lessened their recourse to direct campaigning and have specialized in a few specific techniques. There is an increasing recourse to an action repertoire for targeting policy-makers either directly (lobbying politicians and co-operating with public officials) or indirectly (relying on media-strategies and providing research for consultation), with no effort to unite in direct action and mobilise the general public. Political contention over unemployment in New Labour Britain is very low and increasingly pacified. Instead, many actors in the public domain prefer to compete amongst themselves for better visibility and better access to the policy domain (Cinalli and Statham 2005). Put simply, while in the unemployment issue-field the competition of organised interests is stronger than collective convergence in common direct action, the asylum issue-field is inhabited by many organisations which also engage in campaigning and occasional recourse to widespread collective mobilisations. These differences open space for immediate application of my research framework. Are there different relational structures at work in the two issue-fields?

1. Average Degree to evaluate Intensity

I start here with a graphical representation of networks of co-operation and disagreement, as they have been built in each issue-field by policy-makers, political parties, pressure groups, independent organisations and a wide range of pro-beneficiaries (figure 2 and figure 3).

Figure 3: Ties of Co-operation within the Asylum Issue-Field

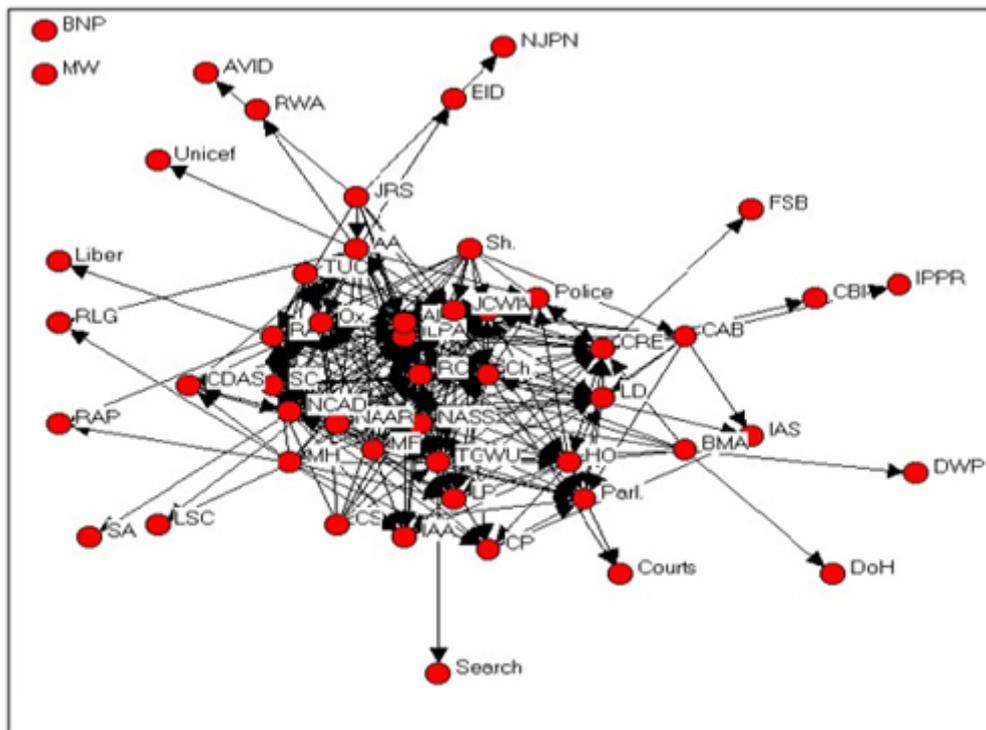
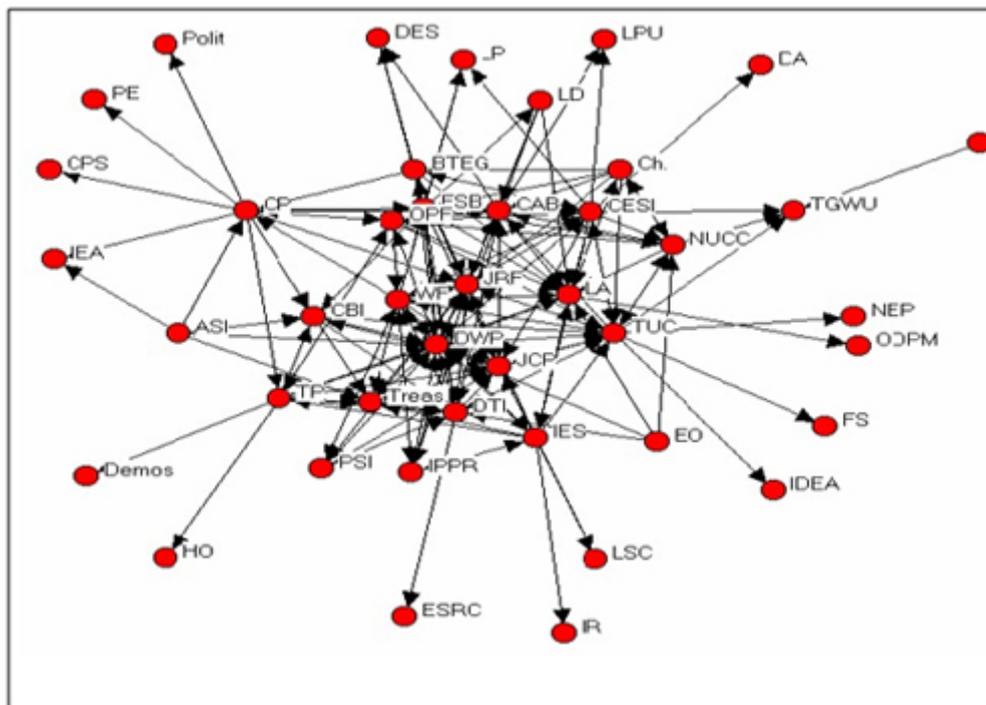


Figure 4: Ties of Co-operation within the Unemployment Issue-Field



Similar snapshots can also be taken to represent the shape of networks of disagreement.¹⁸ These graphical representations can be only a very first step

of the analysis, since they display no more than some evident differences. For example, it is noticeable that actors have built more extensive ties of co-operation in the issue-field of asylum than in the issue-field of unemployment, but this information can hardly be used for systematic comparison.

I have already argued that measures of average degree can be calculated horizontally and vertically in order to assess the quantitative prevalence of co-operation on disagreement. Table 2 provides measures of average degree for both co-operation and disagreement in each issue-field and along both the horizontal and the vertical dimension.

Table 2: Average Degree across dimensions, relationships, and issue-fields

<i>Unemployment Average Degree</i>			<i>Asylum Average Degree</i>		
	Co-operation	Disagreement		Co-operation	Disagreement
Horizontal	2.87	2.23	Horizontal	5.55	1.80
Vertical	2.07	1.50	Vertical	1.47	1.92

The asylum issue-field stands out for its high prevalence of horizontal co-operation within the public domain. I am here using the actual range of variation between my two issue-fields as the standard of comparison. The prevalence of horizontal co-operation in the asylum field is surely remarkable when it is compared to the prevalence of horizontal co-operation in the unemployment field.

However, prevalence of co-operation changes dramatically when it is measured vertically across the public and policy domains. In contrast with previous horizontal findings, the prevalence of vertical co-operation in the unemployment field is indeed remarkable compared to the prevalence of vertical co-operation in the asylum issue-field. Put simply, my first factor of intensity pinpoints to a first crucial difference between the two issue-fields in terms of their relational structures. *Ceteris paribus*, intensity is horizontally stretched in the issue-field of asylum, while it is more vertically stretched in the issue-field of unemployment. However, I have already suggested that measures of average degree, and their combinations, can hardly be enough to reach a comprehensive appraisal of intensity. I thus move to a qualitative investigation of interactions.

2. Nature of Interactions to evaluate Intensity

My qualitative investigation of interactions is two-fold. First, I need to unveil the contents of co-operation and disagreement so as to distinguish main variations. For example, overlapping membership is a deeper kind of co-operation than *ad hoc* information exchange. Substantial variations need also to be spelled out for relationships of disagreement. Second, I combine these variations horizontally and vertically so as to analyse my second indicator of intensity, that is, the nature of interactions in the field. As I have argued, interactions can be placed on a continuum ranging from contentious interaction to consensual interaction. *Ceteris paribus*, consensual interaction stands for higher intensity whereas contentious interaction stands for lower intensity.

In the asylum issue-field, information exchange is widespread throughout the public domain. Many actors are regularly in contact through the work of the Asylum Rights Campaign, that is, an information-sharing umbrella organisation supporting the campaigning work of members. Horizontal ties also contain shared engagements in a plethora of projects and campaigns that are carried out simultaneously by many pro-beneficiary organisations and their allies in civil society. To mention only some examples, the

Refugee Council (RC) has developed its links through partnerships with civil society organisations that are not directly active on refugee issues. Asylum Aid (AA) has worked alongside other voluntary organisations on questions of unemployment, education, and access to the National Asylum Support Service. Amnesty International (AI) has set up many working groups and projects with other national and international organisations engaged in legal protection and human rights. While playing a crucial role within a national multi-agency partnership, the Refugee Action (RA) has built hundreds of ties with different organisations at the local level, such as refugee support groups, refugee community organisations, education suppliers, and local voluntary actions. Indeed, exchanges at the local level have been promoted by almost all pro-beneficiaries in the issue-field.

Extensive exchanges in the public domain are matched by a certain number of disputes. The widespread co-operation on a wide range of projects and activities multiplies potential instances for discussion, and hence, for disagreement. Yet, the content of ties of disagreements is in most cases only superficial, never referring to 'open hostility' or even general 'dislike'. By contrast, horizontal ties of co-operation can at times be characterised by a very deep content. For example, Oxfam has promoted overlapping memberships as a way to reinforce a common agenda within the wider pro-asylum voluntary sector. This aspiration is shared by other actors in the public domain, which encourage their supporters to be active in more than one organisation at the same time. In addition, many pro-beneficiary organisations share a sense of common belongingness and a commitment of principle for redressing abuses of fundamental rights and the lack of social justice.

In the unemployment issue-field, the nature of horizontal interactions is clearly different. The content of co-operative ties is usually confined to information exchanges, with some minor occurrences of co-participation in common activities. While instances of 'open conflict' cannot be found, disagreement can at times be characterised by deep content such as general 'dislike'. In this issue-field, however, the attention needs to be focused especially across the public and policy domains, so as to assess the extent to which qualitative data confirms my previous findings about average degree. In fact, pro-beneficiary actors and their allies in civil society play a crucial role through extensive ties of co-operation that bring them closer to influential policy-makers and institutions. Co-operation is hardly affected by disagreement. Indeed, qualitative data confirm the superficiality of the few vertical ties of disagreement, which usually refer to specific points of debate within common co-operative activities.

Mentioning some examples, the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI) has been active in the implementation of different measures which aim to increase the employability of the unemployed, such as the transitional programme STEP-UP, the New Deal for young people, and the New Deal for long term unemployed. The National Council for One Parent Families (OPF) has worked closely with the Employment Service on the New Deal for Lone Parents, and it has been responsible for training New Deal advisers. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) has worked in close contact with the Department of Work and Pension (DWP) and the Jobcentre-Plus (JCP), providing research expertise on unemployment and labour market issues. Crucially, IES has been involved in the direct elaboration of the New Deal, giving evidence to select committees, briefing ministers and politicians, circulating most of its work throughout government departments. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has also played a role in relevant phases of policy elaboration. It has organised and co-hosted seminars with DWP, bringing together senior policy-makers and researchers to discuss unemployment. It has also launched many reports at day conferences, which have been attended by ministers and keynote policy-makers.

In the asylum issue-field, actors in the public domain have also developed some crucial exchanges with policy elites and institutions through co-operation in common projects and activities. Mentioning three main examples, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) has built an extensive web of vertical ties owing to the special acknowledgement of its functions under the terms of law. In particular, CRE has worked with public bodies to promote rules, policies, and practices which take full account of the 1976 Race Relations Act and the protection it gives against discrimination. Save the Children (SC) has played a key role in the Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers

stakeholders group,¹⁹ while participating at the same time in other stakeholders groups where the groundwork for legislation is made and policy is affected. SC has also worked with the Children and Families from Overseas Network, that is, a forum which guarantees a regular contact between voluntary organisations and local authorities across London. Lastly, RC is one of the assistant agencies set up in the aftermath of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. It works together with government and local authorities throughout Britain so as to provide a service of home-hostels and many other welfare services for asylum seekers. Although these vertical co-operative exchanges have developed in a context of multiple disputes and objections to government policies, there is no evidence of very deep content of disagreement.

Put simply, my qualitative examination of ties can be summarized as follows. As regards the asylum issue-field, a consensual type of interaction (type 4 in Tab. 1) is prevalent in the public domain. While focus on single dyads reveals a variety of specific interactions, horizontal ties are overall characterised by deep co-operation and superficial disagreement, that is, consensual interactions. Vertically, I have detected some extensive exchanges across the public and the policy domain. Yet, interactions are in this case overall pragmatic (type 3 in Tab. 1) owing to the crucial weight of a wide range of disputes. As regards the unemployment issue-field, pragmatism prevails in the public domain, since horizontal interactions are mainly the result of combinations of information exchanges and *ad hoc* disputes. The public domain thus stands as a competitive environment where pro-beneficiaries race for better access to the policy domain. Vertically, deep co-operation and superficial disagreement combine in consensual interactions. Policy elites are interested in the support which pro-unemployed organisations and their allies in civil society can provide in terms of welfare services, production of knowledge, sharing of expertise and public legitimisation. Actors in the public domain aim to obtain a closer access to financial resources and more influence in the policy process so as to strengthen their organisational capacities and public acknowledgement.

3. 'Cleavage Salience' to evaluate Intensity

I now move to analyse cliques, that is, portions of networks where each actor is directly connected to every other actor. The investigation of cliques is at the core of my third indicator of intensity, that is, the salience of deep divisions. My analysis is two-fold. First, I identify all cliques of co-operation and disagreement, that is, all instances in which two actors are directly tied within a same clique. Obviously, actors are closer when they reiterate their ties of co-operation in a multitude of cliques. Second, I match cliques of co-operation with cliques of disagreement so as to assess the extent to which they form overlapping blocs. I can thus appraise the extent to which networks are shaped according to the logic of 'my friend's friend is my friend' and 'my opponent's friend is my opponent', that is, whether actors confine or not their relationships of co-operation and their relationships of disagreement within different and unconnected blocs. In so doing, I can assess whether the issue-field is divided along some hidden cleavages, which may be ideological or otherwise grounded in a specific division of work between actors. Here, it is sufficient to argue that, *ceteris paribus*, intensity of networks is inversely related to cleavage salience, that is, the intensity is higher when cleavages are not salient, and vice-versa, lower when cleavages are salient. Again, cleavages need to be examined along both the horizontal and the vertical dimension.

CONCLUSION

This paper has given an original twist to main theories of social movements and collective action through the use of concepts and tools of network analysis, so as to explore the notion of relational structure and its potential to account for variations of collective action across different issue and political fields. I have specified the main hypothesis of my research in a conceptual space of ideal-typical relational structures based on a combination of horizontal and vertical network intensity. Specific attention has been focused on prevalence of co-operation, nature of interactions and salience of cleavages so as to gauge the concept of intensity. I have then focused on main empirical findings about different relational structures in the two British issue-fields of asylum and unemployment, analysing combinations of horizontal and vertical networks intensity. These findings have confirmed that different dynamics of collective action in each issue-field are in fact matched by different relational structures, which, in the broader research framework, in turn intermediate with main sets of causal conditions as identified in main scholarships of collective action.

In particular, my analysis has identified two different relational structures. On the one hand, I have suggested that the issue-field of asylum is overall characterised by a relational structure which is highly intense horizontally and somewhat intense vertically. On the other hand, I have suggested that the issue-field of unemployment is overall characterised by a relational structure which is vertically stretched, that is, with high network intensity across the public and policy domains and low horizontal intensity. These two different relational structures match variations of collective action over asylum and unemployment, consisting in social movements' formation and processes of co-optation respectively. Indeed, pro-asylum organisations have demonstrated that, if necessary, they are capable of merging their own efforts within a unified front, drawing at the same time on the support of grassroots groups of beneficiaries and a wide spectrum of civil society allies. By contrast, in the unemployment issue-field, elites and institutions can strategically pre-empt most of the demands formulated in the public domain before unified mobilisation can become a feasible option.

Overall, this paper has attempted to offer a more effective representation of real dynamics of collective action. It has shown that relational structures are just as important as the actors that they connect, since networks are at the crossroads between their mobilisation and main causal factors impacting upon them. A systematic focus on networks, it is claimed, might shed further light on specific processes for channelling opportunities, sharing control of strategic assets, and producing identities and orientations. Although it has mentioned reversal processes of network readjustments, this paper was not concerned with the question of how relational structures came into being in the first instance, nor have I claimed that my research framework has been verified once for all. In fact, I have focused on networks with the intention to detect precise mechanisms for reliable, repeatable, and continuous falsification. I have also treated a large volume of my information in terms of relational snapshots of static network patterns in order to increase data elaboration and replication of similar studies for further systematic comparison.

My empirical findings on relational structures in the two fields of asylum and unemployment in Britain provide for the moment only an initial positive assessment of the overall framework, rather than an ultimate test inferring some universal patterns at the level of whole structures. While examinations of relational structures attend further empirical testing and theoretical refinement, the central argument of my paper holds that networks perform a valuable role in transforming more general conditions into specific types of collective action. As such, they show that limitations and boundaries of traditional scholarships still lay unexplored: through the analysis of networks, the study of authority systems against which collective action is mobilised, the study of resources that are used with this aim, and that of cultural constructions through which mobilisation becomes imagined as possible, come much closer to the study of collective action itself.

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ANNEXES

Annexe 1: Notes on interviews and lists of actors

This article is based on analysis which is both qualitative and quantitative. 54 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with core policy-makers, political party representatives, pro-beneficiaries and civil society organizations across the two issue-fields. The interview schedule for each category of actors was strictly comparative, and specifically designed to analyse where they locate themselves in relations to other actors in the same issue-field. Interviews included sets of standardised questions so as to investigate presence and contents of ties amongst actors. At the same time, many secondary sources - such as existing literature, organisations' publications, press articles and official documents from political and institutional authorities - have been used to broaden the analysis. The selection of actors started with the examination of large newspapers' data sets. However, since this information was still insufficient to detect all national organizations in the two issue-fields, the selection has been completed through analysis of practitioners' publications, access to online primary sources and, in particular, indications coming from interviewees themselves (snowballing). Interviews were conducted with all actors accepting to be interviewed. In total, a set of 43 actors has been identified in the unemployment issue-field, while a set of 49 actors has been identified in the asylum issue-field. Collected data were considered to be adequate for running the kind of explorative network analysis of this article. Since in both issue-fields many interviewees have indicated the local government as a crucial actor at the national level, I have decided to include the local authorities of Bradford and Barnsley in my two sets of interviews. Bradford has been particularly concerned with the arrival of asylum seekers. Barnsley has been a major centre for unemployment mobilisation following the extensive closure of the British coal mining industry.

List of interviewed actors with abbreviations / realization of interviews (Yes/No)

Asylum Issue-Field

AA=Asylum Aid (Y)
 AI=Amnesty International (Y)
 AVID=Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (N)
 BID=Bail for Immigration Detainees (N)
 BMA=British Medical Association (Y)
 CAB=National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (Y)
 CBI=Confederation British Industry (N)
 Ch.=Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (Y)
 CDAS=Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers (Y)
 Courts=Courts (N)
 CP=Conservative Party (Y)
 CRE=Commission for Racial Equality (Y)
 CS=Children's Society (Y)
 DoH=Department of Health (N)
 DWP=Department for Work and Pension (N)
 FSB=Federation of Small Businesses (N)
 HO=Home Office (N)
 IAA=Immigration Appellate Authority (N)
 IAS=Immigration Advisory Service (N)
 ILPA=Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (Y)
 IPPR= Institute Public Policy Research (N)
 JCWI=Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (Y)
 JRS=Jesuit Refugee Service (Y)
 LD=Liberal Democrats (Y)
 LA= Local Authority (Y)
 Liber=Liberty (N)
 LP=Labour Party (Y)

LSC=Legal Services Commission (N)
 MF= Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (Y)
 MH=Migrant Helpline (Y)
 NAAR=National Assembly Against Racism (Y)
 NASS=National Asylum Support Service (Y)
 NCAD=National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (Y)
 NJPN=National Justice and Peace Network (N)
 Ox.=Oxfam (Y)
 Parl.=Parliament (N)
 Police=Police (N)
 RA=Refugee Action (Y)
 RAP=Refugee Arrivals Project (N)
 RC=Refugee Council (Y)
 RLG=Refugee Legal Group (N)
 RWA=Refugee Women's Association (N)
 SA=Socialist Alliance (N)
 Search=Searchlight (N)
 SC=Save the Children (Y)
 Sh.=Shelter (Y)
 TGWU=Transport and General Workers Union (Y)
 Unicef=Unicef (N)

Unemployment Issue-Field

ASI=Adam Smith Institute (Y)
 BTEG=Black Training and Enterprise Group (Y)
 CAB=National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (Y)
 CBI=Confederation British Industry (Y)
 CESI=Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Y)
 Ch=Church of England (Y)
 CP=Conservative Party (Y)
 CPS=Centre for Policy Studies (N)
 DA=Disability Alliance (N)
 Demos=Demos (N)
 DES=Department for Education and Skills (N)
 DTI=Department for Trade and Industry (Y)
 DWP=Department for Work and Pension (Y)
 EO=Employment Opportunities (Y)
 ESRC=Economic and Social Research Council (N)
 FS=Fabian Society (Y)
 HO=Home Office (N)
 Idea=Improvement and Development Agency (Y)
 IEA=Institute of Economic Affairs (Y)
 IES=Institute of Employment Studies (Y)
 IPPR=Institute Public Policy Research (N)
 IR=Inland Revenue (N)
 JCP=Jobcentre Plus (Y)
 JRF=Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Y)
 LA=Local Authority (Y)
 LD=Liberal Democrats (Y)
 LP=Labour Party (Y)
 LPC=Low Pay Commission (N)
 LSC=Learning and Skills Council (N)
 NEP=National Employment Panel (N)
 NPI=New Policy Institute (Y)
 NUCC=Network of Unemployed Centres Combine (Y)
 ODPM=Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (N)

OPF=National Council for One Parent Families (Y)

PE=Policy Exchange (N)

Polit =Politeia (N)

PSI=Policy Studies Institute (Y)

TGWU=Transport and General Workers Union (N)

TP=Tomorrow's People (Y)

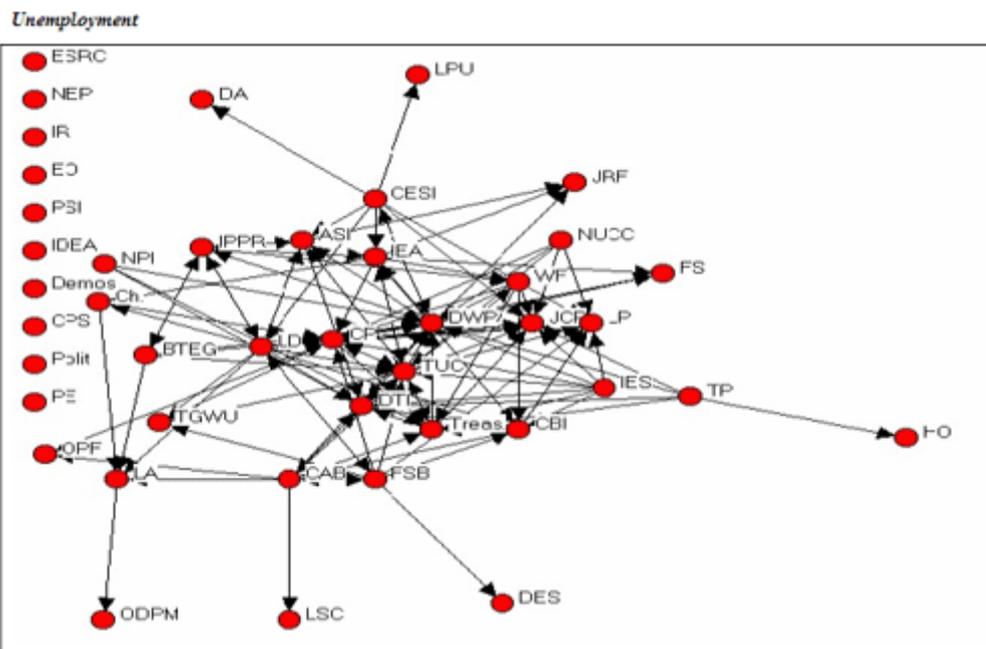
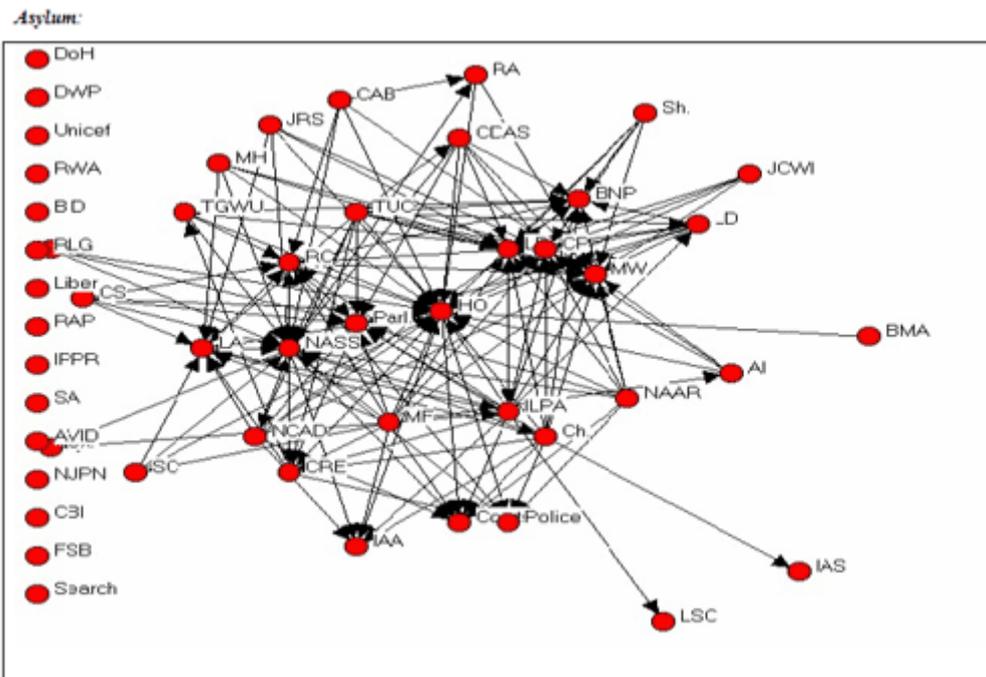
TR=Together for Regeneration (Y)

Treas=Treasury (Y)

TUC=Trade Unions Congress (Y)

WF=Work Foundation (Y)

Annex 2: Ties of disagreement in the two issue-fields



Notes

¹ The ESRC award R000239221 and the EU award HPSE-CT-2001-00053 are gratefully acknowledged, as are the insightful feedback and intellectual support of Mario Diani, Olivier Fillieule, Patrick Le Galès, and Paul Statham at various stages of the research.

² In the unemployment issue-field, the New Labour government has promoted the introduction of significant reforms to the labour market, as well as new measures for moving more people from welfare to work. These include the working families' tax credit, changes to the system of national contribution, a national minimum wage, and the New Deal, which started as a specific policy directed at young people, but was soon extended to older people, single parents and the disabled. As regards asylum, three main pieces of legislation have come into force with New Labour in power, namely, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, and the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004, which have extended penalties on carriers, introduced (and then changed) the voucher scheme as a main instrument of welfare support, extended policies preventing arrivals at British ports, and made provision for a new system of compulsory dispersal to reduce asylum seekers' presence in London and the South-East of England. In particular, the 2002 and 2004 Acts have followed on the footsteps of the 1999 Act, extending the application of non-suspensive appeals and establishing the withdrawal of welfare supports for in-country applicants.

³ For a discussion of political altruism and applications of this concept see Giugni and Passy (2001).

⁴ Throughout this paper I use the term 'collective action' to mean 'collective mutual claim-making in the public space'. Collective action refers not only to initiatives of 'challengers' against 'insiders', but to a wide range of forms of collective strategic interventions in the public space, made by a broad spectrum of social, political and institutional actors. From this point of view, NGO altruism, social movements, nationalisms, and even violent rebellions, can be part of a unifying research investigation.

⁵ National press, official documents and web material of different kind offer countless instances of verbal attacks against asylum seekers and the unemployed. See for example the articles *Bombers are all Spongeing Asylum Seekers*, in the Daily Express, 27 July 2005; and *A waste in a manger*, in the Sun, 21 November 2005.

⁶ With the only exception of few expressive protests (for example, see the article *Kurdish poet finds his voice* in the Guardian, 31 May 2003), the asylum seekers have confined their involvement within grassroots and community groups. Similarly, many groups of unemployed have demobilised in the wake of their long-lasting protest against government of the 1980s and first half of the 1990s. Since then, they have been unable to voice their claims at the national level, resorting to occasional instances of protest only as result of specific local industrial disputes (Cinalli and Statham 2004).

⁷ Some exceptions is available in the 'francophone' literature (Passy 1998; Simeant 1998a and 1998b).

⁸ Some scholars have also rediscovered the key role of emotions to transform the potential for mobilisation into broader processes of collective action (Jasper 1998; Goodwin *et al.* 2001; Holst-Warhaft 2000).

⁹ See also the contribution of theorists of New Politics, who have associated the New Political Movements developed from the 1960s onwards with broader changes of values (Inglehart 1977).

¹⁰ For example, see the application of a cultural approach to discuss the stigmatising and negative consequences of unemployment at the individual level (Lazarsfeld *et al.*; Schnapper 1981; Demazière and Pignoni 1998).

¹¹ In particular, scholars have worked to specify the concept of POS (Berclaz and Giugni 2005, Giugni and Berclaz 2003), defending it from the most fervent critiques against its alleged 'structuralist', 'transhistorical', and 'all-encompassing' nature (Fillieule 2005, Goodwin and Jasper 1999, Lichbach 1997).

¹² For example, scholars of social capital have emphasised the importance of embedded resources, focusing on how actors access and make use of these resources through their ties, both at the individual (Lin 1999 and 2001) and at the group level (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993).

¹³ In the literature these bridges have also been defined as 'weak ties' or 'structural holes' (Burt 1992, Granovetter 1982, Lin *et al.* 1981). While the definition of weak ties is based on identification or lack of intimacy (rather than grasp and extent of networks), my notion of vertical ties is based on the fact that they crosscut different levels of political space and power.

¹⁴ Network analysis provides a more popular measure for evaluating overall concentration of ties, namely, 'density'. This is a simple computation expressing the ratio of the total possible links to the total actual links in the network. Resulting values of density range between 0 and 1, with '1' indicating an ideal field where each actor is tied to any other actor and '0' an ideal field with no ties at all. Yet, density can be problematic in terms of its application, particularly when comparing networks of different size. For example, larger networks are necessarily characterized by decreasing density, since there are only a certain number of ties that a single organisation can

build and manage. Put simply, the 'average degree' is taken here as a valuable substitute of density so as to allow for comparative treatment of different networks.

¹⁵ Alternative, quantitative operationalisations could be based on coding ties with numerical values to distinguish between 'superficial' and 'deep' linkages. Overlapping membership, for example, is given a higher number-value than, say, information exchange. Values could thus be combined to 'weight' algebraically overall content of ties.

¹⁶ Some actors may refuse to forge inter-organisational contacts as an important step of self-affirmation in the field. Yet, a strategy of total refusal is never generalized within a broader political or issue field. The comparison of issue fields in this paper is thus based on their characterisation as complex spaces with multiple actors and their ties.

¹⁷ See the empirical findings of two main European comparative projects which have focused on the contentious politics of asylum and unemployment. Research reports and selected publications are available online at :

http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/eurpolcom/research_projects_asypol.cfm

http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/eurpolcom/research_projects_unempol.cfm.

¹⁸ Cf. Annex 2.

¹⁹ This is a Home Office working group which brings together SC, the Refugee Council, the National Children's Bureau, representatives from the Home Office and the Department of Health, as well as many local authorities.

²⁰ That is, the Work Foundation (WF), the Institute of Employment Studies (IES), and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

²¹ That is, JCP, DWP, the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

²² That is, CESI, OPF, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB).

²³ That is, the Network of Unemployed Centres Combine (NUCC).