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Horizontal Networks vs. Vertical Networks within Multi-Organisational Alliances: A Comparative Study of the Unemployment and Asylum Issue-Fields in Britain

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This paper draws on two large European comparative research projects on the contentious dimensions of asylum and unemployment politics in Europe. In Britain, these projects are carried out by the Centre for European Political Communications (EurPolCom) at the University of Leeds. I am grateful to Dr. Paul Statham for sharing his ideas and knowledge on the topic throughout the elaboration of this paper. I also wish to sincerely thank all the staff at the EurPolCom, and in particular, Ms Emma Dickens, Ms Vibha Mehta, and Ms Vicky Yagopolou for their remarkable contribution to the collection of empirical information.

1. Introduction

This paper engages in a comparative analysis of networks amongst social and political actors within two specific issue-fields of British politics, namely, asylum and unemployment. In so doing, the paper aims to develop a series of arguments which draw on and cut across several sociological paths of inquiry on collective action, social movements, networks, civil society, and policy process. My analysis will start with the discussion of the relationship between social actors (movements, non-governmental organisations and voluntary groups) that make demands for other constituencies rather than themselves on the one hand, and policy-makers, political parties, and civil society groups and organisations on the other hand. This debate has so far relied on relatively few empirical accounts that are informed by original comparative data [Statham, 2001], and has received limited attention by scholars of social movements and collective action, who have focused in general on instances of collective action where the beneficiary of the political goal does not differ from the constituency group that mobilises [Giugni and Passy, 2001; Passy, 1998]. Indeed, this specific ‘altruistic’ relationship between beneficiary and constituency groups within the two selected issue-fields of asylum and unemployment provides one of the main conceptual and methodological foundations for their comparison.

This paper applies a relational approach, focusing on the web of ties forged by pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors through their networks amongst themselves and with civil society allies in the public domain, as well as with state actors in the policy domain. The next section emphasises the potentialities of the relational approach in tackling a large volume of different research questions. In this introduction, however, I have to state immediately and distinctly my main investigative direction when engaging in the examination of social networks. This paper aims to investigate and compare the nature of ties and exchanges within the two political fields of asylum and unemployment in Britain, focusing on what these networks mean and how they work. While it also appraises the nature of activism promoted in different network patterns, this paper does not aim to test the causal relationship between social networks and pro-asylum/pro-unemployed collective action. Indeed, it is important to emphasise that 1) empirical data on social networks have been collected for social actors that have been selected due to their very active presence in the fields of asylum and unemployment, and 2) this type of data is not suitable for measuring the intensity of activism, but rather, can capture nature, forms and direction of actors’ activism.

The analysis and comparison of networks across the two political issue-fields is delivered along two main dimensions of investigation, namely, horizontal and vertical. The first dimension consists of horizontal ties linking pro-asylum/pro-unemployed actors amongst themselves and to other civil society organisations in the public domain. Is horizontal network density similar across the two fields of asylum and unemployment? What is the precise nature of horizontal ties in each of the two fields and how are differently sustained? Are these ties based on identity, regular exchange of information, short-lived issue coalition, or are they merely limited to loose contacts based on the simple cohabitation within the same issue-field? The vertical dimension consists of networks linking pro-asylum/pro-unemployed actors with policy-makers and institutional actors. What is the precise nature of these vertical ties in each of the two fields and how are differently sustained? In this case, it is also crucial to focus on the correlation between patterns of networks at the horizontal level and at the vertical level. Are the different density and nature of horizontal networks in the public domain related to different patterns of vertical ties with institutional actors in the policy domain?

In addition, the relationship between different patterns of social networks and available embedded resources will be considered in each of the two selected issue-fields. Since social networks provide opportunities and constraints for actors, it is crucial to investigate how these actors become differentially accessible to structurally embedded resources through different patterns of ties and exchanges, and in particular, the conditions under which vertical networks are preferred to horizontal networks and vice-versa. A further direction of analysis will thus aim to assess the extent to which the decision to build different network patterns is dependent upon the available resources which are accessible through different ties in different fields. The logical development of this argument will indeed have a key role in the progression of my paper, which, from then on, enters a second stage, where the two different network patterns built by pro-asylum and pro-unemployed organisations respectively, are taken as a dependent variable and explained by drawing on main theories of social movements and collective action. The bottom-up descriptive network analysis of the first part of the paper will thus be matched by the top-down consideration of explanatory frameworks accounting for actors' decision to shape differently their web of ties in each of the two issue-fields. In particular, the paper will make use of theories focusing on the structure of 'political opportunities' [Eisinger, 1973; Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1989] suggesting that contextual cross-issue-field differences are crucial determinants of cross-issue-field differences between networks forged by pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors with other organisations across the public and policy domains. At the same time, the paper will focus on

the relationship between actors' own action and their perception of working in an open or closed environment when interacting with each other.

As regards the method, the research is based on analysis which is both qualitative and quantitative. 80 in-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with a) core policy-makers (5 interviews in each issue-field: 3 at the national level and 2 at the local level), b) political party representatives (6 interviews in each issue-field: 3 at the national level and 3 at the local level), and c) civil society organisations, pro-beneficiary groups and movements (32 interviews in each issue-field: 25 at the national level and 7 at the local level).¹ The interview schedule for each category of actors has specifically been designed to analyse where they locate themselves in relations to other actors in the field. These interviews include not only qualitative in-depth questions (examining, for example, the framing of their political claims) but also sets of standardised questions, which aim to investigate action repertoires, mobilisation and communication strategies, institutions on which demands are made, as well as relationships of disagreement and co-operation with other actors in the field. In particular, the analysis of inter-organisational networks has been based on the elaboration of closed lists of actors engaged in the two issue-fields. In addition, a wide range of secondary sources, such as existing literature, organisations' publications, press articles and official documents from political and institutional authorities, has been used to deepen the analysis of key contextual dimensions in the two fields of asylum and unemployment.

Section 2 starts with a detailed examination of these two issue-fields in which pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors operate respectively, emphasising the specific relationship between beneficiary and constituency groups. After setting the scene, the section moves on to present the theoretical foundations on which my relational approach is based, discussing the continuum between structure, networks and action while at the same time systematically specifying the comparative criteria which shape my cross-issue-field analysis. The following two sections debate the main findings of my research, analysing in detail horizontal networks (section 3) and vertical networks (section 4) between pro-beneficiary groups, civil society organisations, political parties and core state policy-makers in each of the two issue-fields. In particular, I focus on the contrasting patterns of horizontal and vertical ties which have developed in the two different issue-fields through inter-organisational alliances. Finally, Section 5 takes these two different network patterns as a dependent variable, examining the

¹ This paper is based on the analysis of 74 interviews (38 with actors in the unemployment field and 36 with actors in the asylum field).

independent variables which explain the decision of pro-asylum and pro-unemployed organisations to build different webs of ties..

2. Asylum vs. Unemployment: A Relational Approach

During the last two New Labour governments, asylum and unemployment have stood out as two crucial and controversial issues. As regards unemployment, this has been one of the most prominent political issues throughout the first New Labour mandate between 1997 and 2001. The unemployed have borne much of the economic, political, and social costs undertaken by three previous New Right governments to restructure and re-launch the British economy according to neo-liberal models of free market. While a large number of (ex)unemployed have managed to re-engage themselves in the new economic boom of services of the 1990s, others - in particular, long term and unskilled unemployed - have been unable to do so, assisting powerlessly to the continuous erosion of their welfare entitlements, the downfall of trade unions' power, and the burgeoning deprivation in their own neighbourhoods. Indeed, long term, unskilled unemployed stand out as a group that suffers disproportionately high disadvantages according to a wide range of indicators, such as education, income and health. At the same time, direct mobilisation against unemployment has been generally unsuccessful, constantly declining, and merely confined to a few reactive protests against dismissals at the local level.

The New Labour government has promoted the introduction of new policies, consisting of significant reforms to the labour market in order to move 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 was launched in 1998 and became fully operational within a few years. It started as a specific policy directed at young people, but was soon extended to older people, to single parents and to the disabled. In particular, a new principle of conditionality can be seen at the core of New Labour's welfare to work agenda. Within the existing New Deal, failure to take up one of the four work/training options lead to punitive benefit cuts and suspensions, as it has been shown by sanctions imposed on 3,125 young people on the New Deal between January and March 2002 [CESI, 2002]. Clearly, this linking of certain benefit rights to behavioural conditions is an increasing aspect of UK social policy. Policies based on conditional entitlement are becoming so central to New Labour's vision that some scholars have argued that the very idea of 'welfare rights' is systematically undermined [Dwyer, 2002]. At the same time, pressures on the unemployed to take any available work or training have marked the final demise of their

organisational structures, mobilisation strategies, and ultimately, their disappearance from the same public discourse.

As regards asylum, since 1997 there have been substantial reforms to the legal system which have not gone in the direction favoured by pro-asylum organisations. Two main pieces of legislation have come into force, namely, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, emphasising the government negative agenda of deterring new arrivals rather than its positive will to provide full entitlements and protection for those who flee persecution. In particular, the 1999 Act has extended penalties on carriers, introduced the voucher scheme as main instrument of welfare support, extended policies preventing arrivals at UK ports, and made provision for a new system of compulsory dispersal to reduce asylum seekers' presence in London and the South-East of England. The 2002 Act has 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. This adamant introduction of restrictive measures has also been matched by an increasing politicisation of the issue, with MPs regularly throwing facts and figures at each other about arrivals, applications and deportations. This unprincipled argument about numbers has indeed reached the highest level of government, with the Prime Minister pledging in February 2003 to halve the number of applications by September of the same year.

In sum, asylum seekers and the unemployed have been the object of restrictive reforms implemented by the last two New Labour governments, as well as by previous New Right governments. They have also faced resentment in the general public discourse with disputes taking place with the regard to 'bogus' and 'welfare scroungers'. Nevertheless, collective action across these two issue-fields have been characterised by limited involvement of groups of asylum seekers and the unemployed themselves, and in particular, by rare episodes of their direct mobilisation. Although they have engaged in direct protests against government throughout the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, the unemployed have been unable to voice their claims beyond the local level during the last decade, mobilising only very occasionally and merely as result of specific industrial disputes. This weakness has also prevented the British unemployed from playing any active role during the recent and widespread mobilisations against unemployment across Europe [Chabanet, 2002]. As regards asylum seekers, they have rarely had the capability to mobilise visibly in the public domain. With the exception of a few symbolic protests, they have usually contained their (invisible) action within grassroots and community groups at the local level. Given their relatively small size, marginal political position, and ownership of very few resources for autonomous

mobilisation, asylum seekers and the unemployed have thus had to rely on the direct support of organisations willing to act on their behalf. Indeed, space for ‘altruistic’ intervention of pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors has widely broadened in recent years, due to the increasing expansion of the voluntary sector in the area of social exclusion and the general encouragement of government to enhance social and civil dialogue.

Hence, the main attention of this paper is focused on the web of ties forged by pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors through 1) their horizontal networks amongst themselves and with civil society organisations in the public domain, and 2) their vertical networks with state actors in the policy domain. This relational approach to the analysis of pro-asylum and pro-unemployed collective action builds upon and integrates the burgeoning scholarly literature on social networks and social capital [Diani, 2003; Lin 2001]. While scholarly interest in relational characteristics of collective action and social movements is at least three decades old [Curtis and Zurcher, 1973; Granovetter, 1973; Obershall, 1973; Pickvance, 1975] and it can indeed be traced well back in founding works of classic sociology [Simmel, 1908], it is only in more recent times that sociologists and political scientists have fully emphasised the potentialities of, and extensively engaged with a research approach which evaluates forms of collective action starting from the appraisal of their structural properties, thus broadening the range of their research topics and increasing the depth of their research results. Indeed, political scientists and sociologists working in different fields of social science have extensively demonstrated the far-reaching potentialities of the relational approach in tackling a large volume of different research questions.

On the one hand, scholars of social capital have unanimously emphasised the importance of resources embedded in social networks, which can be accessed by actors wishing to increase likelihood of success in a purposive action. Research has focused on how individuals, through their connections, access and make use of social resources embedded in social networks, in order to obtain gains in instrumental actions or to preserve gains in expressive actions. Indeed, social resources (that is, social capital accessible through direct or indirect ties) have better potential than personal resources (that is, resources in full possession of individual actors) in furthering and/or preserving individuals’ gains [Lin, 1982, 1999 and 2001]. These scholars have also focused their attention at the group level, arguing that networks of obligations and recognition are the basis on which members of a clear-cut (and privileged) group maintain and reinforce their social capital as a collective asset [Bourdieu, 1986]; that social networks not only sustain individuals within social structures but provide resources (that is, social capital) to the structures themselves [Coleman, 1990]; and that

participation, associations and exchanges are indicators of well-being in societies, since they promote collective norms and trust [Putnam, 1993 and 1995]. In sum, these scholars have overall proved that social networks enhance the outcomes of collective action. It is indeed through social ties that a wide range of embedded resources can be accessed, thus facilitating the flow of information about opportunities and choices otherwise not available, influencing the agents who play a critical role in decision-making, as well as reinforcing identity, recognition, public acknowledgment and support.

On the other hand, social network analysis has found extensive application in a wide range of research questions, focusing on the impact of urbanisation [Fisher, 1982], occupational mobility [Breiger, 1990], social support [Wellman and Wortley, 1990], centralisation of parties and elites [Padgett and Ansell, 1993], and in particular, on specific research questions of social movements analysis and contentious politics, such as the influence of individuals' relational contexts on their decision to mobilise [Klandermans, 1990; McAdam, 1986; Passy, 2001], the impact of whole communities' network structures on the development of their collective action [Gould 1991, 1993 and 1995], inter-organisational networks and overlapping memberships [Diani, 1992 and 1995], processes of mobilisation and counter-mobilisation [Franzosi 1997 and 1999], interaction between public domain and policy domain [Broadbent, 1998], mobilisation across traditional cleavages in deeply divided societies [Cinalli, 2002 and 2003], and broader reflections between structure and agency [Lin, 2001].

Given this extensive employment of the relational approach, it is crucial to provide a more explicit definition of its main tenets which will guide the specific investigation of this paper. In particular, four central principles distinguish this programme of research from 'standard' social science perspectives. First, actors are interdependent rather than independent units, and the relations amongst them are the most meaningful focus of analysis. Second, the analytically relevant characteristics which can be predicated for these actors can be understood out of their structural and/or relational features. Third, relational ties between these actors are the channels for the flow of both material and nonmaterial resources. Last, the complete web of actors, their position and their linkages, that is, network structure, provides opportunities for (and constraints upon) action.² Put simply, network analysis operationalises a social structure in terms of networks of linkages amongst units, that is, a set of nodes

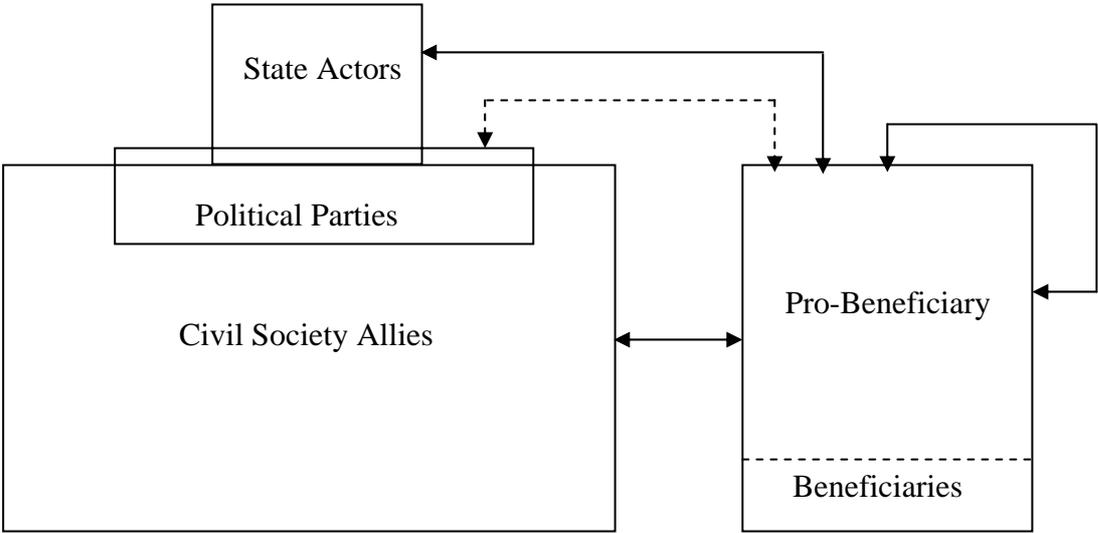
² For a detailed treatment of Social Network Analysis, see Wasserman and Faust [1994]. Some scholars have looked at network analysis with an emphasis on research methods [Knoke and Kuklinsky, 1982]. For an introductory text to social network analysis see Scott [2000].

hierarchically related according to the control of and access to embedded resources in their positions, which are entrusted to occupants (that is, agents) acting upon structural constraints and opportunities. Structure and its relational characteristics impact upon social agents, which aim to maintain and gain resources (both material and non-material) through their networks.

Throughout my paper I will therefore assume that each actor in the two issue-fields can be viewed as a focus from which lines radiate horizontally and vertically to other nodes (actors with which it is in contact), thus making reference to some main characteristics of a network and its actors. Although I will not express these characteristics with complex mathematical formulae, I have to give here some brief definitions for readers who are not acquainted with social network analysis. First, I define each of my networks as a set of co-operative ties linking a set of social actors (or nodes). In short, my networks depict actors (or nodes) linked by relations of close co-operation. Second, I will refer to a relation between any two actors as an 'edge'. If there is an edge joining two actors these actors are adjacent. A 'path' is a chain of edges which connect two actors. The number of actors adjacent to an actor expresses its 'degree' (or point-centrality), whose measure displays the importance of specific actors within the entire network. Third, the most important structural characteristic of a network, which I shall consider, is density. In particular, a network is relatively dense if a large number of actors are linked to each other. The density of a network (or portion of a network) may be calculated by a simple computation, which expresses the ratio of the total possible links to the total actual links in the network under consideration. Last, my analysis will focus especially on network clusters, that is, segments or compartments of networks which have relatively high density.

This paper will thus focus on the relationship between agency and network structure in the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment, standing somewhere in the middle of the debate between scholars who see structural constraints and opportunities as decisive and those who consider actors' action to be the crucial driving force. Fig. 1 in the following page shows that A) pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors (pro-beneficiary) have a similar structural position within their specific issue-field, and B) they are in contact through their linkages amongst themselves and to other clusters of nodes within the same field. Indeed, in empirical terms, both structural factors (positional and relational) are expected to operate at the same time in a social structure, with a range of different combinations and their relative effects. However, it is crucial to emphasise not only that two issue-fields have the same number of levels in the hierarchy, but also that they are comparable in terms of the same distribution of the occupants across the levels and valued resources across levels and among occupants.

Fig. 1 Positional and Relational Structures in the two Issue-Fields of Asylum and Unemployment



The comparability of the two issue-fields is also reinforced by the analysis of the most influential addressees. Table 1 in the following page presents this type of data, demonstrating that in both issue-fields A) national state actors still play the most crucial role, with the highest relevance of two particular national policy-makers followed by the Labour Party (all presenting similar scores across the two issue-fields), B) ad hoc administrative institutions, such as the National Asylum Support Service and Jobcentre Plus, hold a key position, C) local authorities provide relatively important nodes for exchanges between national and sub-national levels of intervention, and D) civil society actors are granted with a limited amount of resources, since only one organisation in each field is included amongst the most important targets, namely, the Commission for Racial Equality for asylum, and the Trades Union Congress for unemployment. Indeed, the major difference between the two issue-fields seems to be limited to the only position of political parties, which are generally less targeted (and presumably less influential) in the issue-field of unemployment.

In sum, my comparative study is based on the analysis of structurally-equivalent positions across the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment, thus strengthening the control of positional structures which do not depend upon agents' decision. This enables me to focus on network structures (and their effects), as they are purposively shaped by pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors respectively. In particular, as fig. 1 has clearly indicated, in each issue-field pro-beneficiary actors can decide to build different combinations of

horizontal and vertical relationships. Horizontally, they can forge ties with other pro-beneficiary actors, and/or look for alliances with other actors within civil society. Vertically, they can decide to work in close contact with state policy-makers, which may of course be willing to meet social challenges with co-optative and pre-emptive responses [Gamson, 1990]. At the same time, important links might be forged with political parties, which occupy a strategic intermediary position between civil society and policy-makers.

It is to the detailed analysis of these networks that the next two sections are dedicated. In particular, this crucial focus on meaning and function of networks will enable me to integrate the large volume of scholarly research that has considered dense or close networks to be the means by which cognitive frames can develop, collective action can be advanced, and organisational strengthening can be achieved. From this perspective, network density enhances trust, norms, and sanctions, thus guaranteeing that network resources can be mobilised. Yet, it is crucial to investigate, rather than assuming, this requirement about closure or density in social relations and social networks, paying attention to the fact that at least since the 1970s research in social networks has also stressed the importance of ‘bridges’, and in particular, their role in strengthening influence and facilitating flows of information. My analytical distinction between horizontal and vertical networks draws indeed on the scholarly treatment of these bridges, which have also been defined as ‘structural holes’ or ‘weak ties’ [Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973 and 1982; Lin *et al.*, 1981].³

Tab. 1 Common Addressees within the Two Issue-Fields

<i>Asylum</i>		<i>Unemployment</i>	
Home Affairs Committee	26	Department for Work and Pension	24
Home Office	25	Treasury	21
Labour Party	22	Labour Party	20
National Asylum Support Service	19	Jobcentre Plus	18
Local Authorities	19	Department for Trade and Industry	17
Conservative Party	17	Trade Union Congress	14
Liberal-Democrats	16	Local Authorities	13
Commission for Racial Equality	14	European Commission	13
European Commission	12	European Parliament	12
European Parliament	12	Liberal-Democrats	12

³ In the literature the main reference is to ‘weak ties’ rather than to vertical networks. The definition of ‘weak ties’ is based on role identification or lack of intimacy, rather than grasp and extent of networks. My definition of vertical (and horizontal) ties is based on the extent to which ties cut across different levels of power and authority.

3. Horizontal Networks in the Two Issue-Fields of Asylum and Unemployment: Co-operation amongst Pro-Beneficiary Actors and Their Relationships with Civil Society Allies

Having divided the two issue-fields in similar network clusters according to the different structural position of their nodes, it is reasonable to start with the comparison of inter-organisational relationships which pro-asylum and pro-unemployed actors build amongst themselves in their respective issue field. Table 2 is the matrix of edges between 16 main pro-asylum organisations, where each edge indicates the existence of a relationship of close co-operation between a pair of these actors. The first evident characteristic of this (portion of) network amongst pro-asylum organisations is its high density, due to the fact that a large number of actors are linked to each other. They have thus built an extensive web of linkages and exchanges with other pro-beneficiary groups in the same field. In particular, the majority of these organisations has successfully forged ties of co-operation with more than half of the actors in the network, and some of them (namely, the Joint Committee for the Welfare of Immigrants, Refugee Council, Amnesty International and Oxfam) stand out for their remarkable point-centrality.

Tab. 2 Inter-Organisational Networks within the Pro-Asylum Field

	AA	AI	CCC	CDA	CRE	CS	JCW	JRC	MFC	NAA	NCA	Ox.	RA	RC	SC	Sh.
AA	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
AI	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
CCC	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
CDA	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0
CRE	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
CS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
JCW	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
JRC	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
MFC	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
NAA	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
NCA	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Ox.	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
RA	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
RC	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
SC	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Sh.	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0

Density = 0.62

At the same time, all the organisations with lowest point-centrality (namely, the Children's Society, Jesuit Refugee Centre, Campaign for Closing Campsfield and the Commission for Racial Equality) interact directly with two or more organisations with the highest point-centrality, and hence, they are no more than one single edge away from any other organisation within the network. This particular shape combines together the main properties of a 'star' and a 'clique', thus promoting not only a fast and efficient flow of information amongst the different nodes but also the strengthening of reciprocal solidarity amongst the organisations, as well as a wider sense of belongingness within the overall network.

Clearly, pro-asylum organisations can access, exchange, and develop a wide range of material and non-material resources through their extensive web of inter-organisational links. Certainly, at the time writing, these ties seem to be particularly useful for increasing flow of information across the nodes, for facilitating allocation of responsibilities and flexibility of action, and hence, for their instrumental nature. Many of the organisations which are the object of my analysis have decided to engage actively in the Asylum Rights Campaign, which functions as an information sharing umbrella that informs the campaigning work of its members.⁴ At the same time, it is important to emphasise that the usefulness of networks has been evaluated at the level of individual organisations. For example, the Joint Committee for the Welfare of Immigrants has debated for years on its internal structure, emphasising the convenience of a network, rather than a membership organisation. In the words of one of its leaders:

Networks are much more flexible and much more responsive. There's a possibility of dividing the work up much more quickly so we've got people who are in a position to respond quickly [...] The whole asylum agenda has been based on the possibility of establishing, particularly as far as reception issues are concerned, basically a co-ordinated strategy which will strap important NGOs in the process right from the very beginning.

Nevertheless, due to their clique shape, inter-organisational exchanges have also sustained the strengthening of solidarity and promoted the belief of sharing similar purposes for action, thus encouraging the formation and reproduction of ties downward to the level of individual activists. For example, Oxfam has actively worked to promote and sustain a common agenda within the wider pro-asylum voluntary sector, building an extensive network which is based on inter-organizational links as well as overlapping memberships, with many supporters active in more than one organisation at the same time. In the words of one of its leaders:

An Oxfam supporter isn't just an Oxfam supporter. I know myself that I'm a member of Oxfam, a supporter of Oxfam, I support Amnesty, Christian Aid, a

⁴ ARC is also a forum for discussion with campaigning strategies in mind, in order to stand against legislative provisions which curtail rights and entitlements of asylum seekers.

variety of different groups but I'm the same person. And I really think that our supporters love it, and I would use that verb, they love it when we work with other people with a common agenda. And they hate it when we're standing up individually.

Likewise, the Refugee Council has also developed links with other organisations which are not directly active on refugee issues, in order to make them discovering that refugees is an issue for them.⁵ Furthermore, reciprocal solidarity and sense of common belongingness have at times been mobilised explicitly through these dense networks. In occasion of the voucher campaign, for example, a wide number of pro-asylum organisations have stood together to boycott the implementation of the voucher scheme, voicing fervently their moral outrage.⁶ Not only has this campaign proved that pro-asylum organisations can successfully unite their efforts to forward political change, but it has especially demonstrated that the instrumental function of networks is only a part, albeit the most evident, of their meaning, since overwhelming symbolic resources can at times be mobilised through these same networks. The determined participation of the Refugee Council to the campaign of protest - notwithstanding its role of assistant agency under the same Act which had introduced the vouchers - provides an important evidence for this argument.

Moving to the analysis of the (portion of) network amongst pro-beneficiary actors in the issue field of unemployment, it is evident that pro-unemployed organisations have decided to shape their reciprocal linkages according to a completely different pattern. Table 3 in the following page introduces the matrix of edges between 16 main organisations working on behalf of the unemployed, where each edge represents the existence of a relationship of close co-operation between a pair of these actors. This time, the first evident characteristic of this network consists of its very low density, with a large number of actors disconnected with each other or merely related through long paths. Indeed, only a few organisations are characterised by a somewhat significant point-centrality, namely, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, and the Work Foundation. Thanks to a single interaction with one of these latter organisations, many other actors can communicate with each other, even if only through long paths which shape the network in the model of a star. A significant number of pro-unemployed organisations, however, have built no relationship of co-operation with the rest of the network.

⁵ For example, RC has co-operated on housing with Shelter, while encouraging Age Concern to take up the issue of older refugees.

⁶ The scheme introduced a new system of subsistence benefits for asylum seekers in the restrictive form of vouchers. Furthermore, supermarkets were entitled to keep the change when asylum seekers used their vouchers. Oxfam and the Refugee Council have successfully led the campaign. Amongst the many actions, they devised a supermarket action card, distributing over 100,000 of these cards to groups across the country.

Tab. 3 Inter-Organisational Networks within the Pro-Unemployed Field

	ASI	BTE	CC	CES	EO	FS	IEA	IES	JRF	NPI	NYA	OPF	PSI	TP	WF	YF
ASI	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BTE	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
CES	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
EO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IEA	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IES	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
JRF	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
NPI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
OPF	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
PSI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
WF	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
YF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Density = 0.16

In sum, although the issue-field is still defined by loose contacts amongst different actors, organisations working on behalf of the unemployed appear to be unwilling to forge a broad web of reciprocal linkages of close co-operation, while aiming to keep some basic degree of information exchange within the network.

The low structural density of this network seems to provide only specific opportunities for action, encouraging pro-unemployed organisations to specialise in few specific techniques which are exclusively employed at the national level. Indeed, the unemployment voluntary sector is occupied by two main kinds of actors: 1) organisations which consider the promotion, production and dissemination of research and knowledge to be the major means to intervene on unemployment policy (for example, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) and 2) organisations which, albeit also engaged in research, have decided to play a direct role in the formulation, implementation and development of government policies (for example, the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion and the Institute for Employment Studies). Low structural density and the complete lack of clique-shaped relationships in any part of the network are also matched by a lack of significant connections with groups of beneficiaries at the grassroots level. Indeed, the National Unemployed Centres Combine (CC) stands out as the only organisation which actually

involves unemployed people in its own organisational activities, working for the bottom-up promotion of their interest rather than for the elaboration of top-down solutions to tackle unemployment. CC also campaigns directly on behalf of the unemployed, linking together various local ‘unemployed workers centres’ across Britain.

Further examination of horizontal networks, however, implies to broaden the focus of this network analysis, moving from within to outside the pro-beneficiary sector. Indeed, it is important to assess the extent to which pro-asylum and pro-unemployed have respectively decided to forge linkages with potential allies in the wider civil society, matching the shape of these relationships with the network patterns hitherto examined in each issue-field. In this case, it is crucial to measure relationships of co-operation between pro-beneficiary actors on the one hand, and main trade unions, political parties, churches, professional and non-governmental organisations on the other hand. Tab. 4 compares network patterns between pro-beneficiary actors and civil society allies across the two issue fields. It presents two matrixes of edges, which indicate the existence of a relationship of close co-operation between each pair of actors (in each pair there is a pro-beneficiary organisation and a civil society organisation).

Tab. 4 Horizontal Networks in the Two Issue-Fields: Pro-Beneficiary vs. Civil Society

	BMA	TGW	CAB	TUC	ILP	Ch.	LP	CP	LD												
AA	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0		ASI	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1		
AI	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1		BTE	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	
CCC	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1		CC	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	
CDA	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0		CES	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
CRE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		EO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
CS	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0		FS	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
JCW	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		IEA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
JRC	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0		IES	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
MFC	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0		JRF	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	
NAA	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1		NPI	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
NCA	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1		NYA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Ox.	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0		OPF	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	
RA	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0		PSI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
RC	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1		TP	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	
SC	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0		WF	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	
Sh.	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0		YF	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	
	<i>Density = 0.53</i>											<i>Density = 0.23</i>									

The patterns of these two (portions of) networks, as shown in tab. 4, confirm that pro-asylum and pro-unemployed organisations greatly differ in terms of their respective decisions to build horizontal linkages.

On the one hand, the network structure built by organisations working on behalf of the unemployed (right box of tab. 4) stand out once again for its low density, due to the fact that these organisations are only loosely linked with other actors of civil society. Although it is worth highlighting that a large majority of actors have built at least one tie of co-operation with trade unions, churches, or political parties, no node is characterised by high point-centrality, and a few organisations are still completely detached from the overall network. At the same time, tab. 4 demonstrates that CC has decided to build an important web of relationships with civil society allies, and hence, occupies a relatively important position within the overall pro-unemployed voluntary sector in spite of its limited linkages with other pro-beneficiary organisations. However, it is crucial to emphasise that this organisation has increasingly reduced scope and intensity of its action since the mid-1990s, facing some major obstacles in promoting the direct involvement of the unemployed. In particular, its network of local centres has gradually shrank due to increasing funding constraints,⁷ halt of street protest,⁸ and new political conditions, which have forced groups to demobilise, strengthen their links with the unions, and to adapt to government strategies. While some of these centres have dealt with the restrictive legislation of three successive New Right governments,⁹ other centres have decided to support actively government policies since the election of New Labour in 1997.¹⁰ Thus, CC has worked to strengthen its ties with trade unions, churches and other civil society organisations in order to fill in its distance from the main policy-makers.¹¹

On the other hand, the network structure built by pro-asylum organisations (left box of tab. 4) stand out for its high density, due to the fact that they are linked with a wide range of

⁷ For example, the general re-organisation of local government in 1986 brought about the abolition of the Greater London council, which funded many unemployed workers centres in London.

⁸ Although several centres have continued to engage regularly in forms of mobilisation under the direction of CC, the last significant episodes of direct protest were organised in 1995, when three marches were organised to protest against the introduction of the 'job seekers allowance' by the Conservative government. One took place between Newcastle and Sheffield; another took place between Liverpool and Sheffield; while a local march was organised between Derby and Sheffield.

⁹ Accordingly, these centres became providers of services to the unemployed rather than offering the means to organise and mobilise them per se [Bagguley, 1991].

¹⁰ For example, the old 'unemployment centre' in Sheffield has changed its name in Centre for Full Employment'. It has accepted to co-operate with the New Labour government in supporting programmes that re-engage unemployed people back into the labour market. In particular, the centre for full employment has taken active part in the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM), employing hundreds of people in project of community value and creating work in the third sector of the economy.

¹¹ At the end of 2003, for example, postcards reporting article 23 of the UN declaration of Human Rights (stating free choice of employment) were sent to each MP at Westminster, while a CC leader participated to the annual TUC conference in order to lobby on the issue of unemployment benefits and welfare reform.

civil society allies. In particular, it is worth noticing that JCWI and RC, which were also characterised by high point-centrality within the pro-beneficiary cluster, score a high degree also in this larger portion of network. This indicates that they emerge as the most important organisations for pulling resources horizontally across the pro-beneficiary sector and civil society. At the same time, it is crucial to emphasise that the CRE occupies a strategic position of contact with civil society allies, and hence, should be considered to be an authoritative organisation within the overall voluntary sector, in spite of its limited linkages with other pro-beneficiary actors. In sum it is clear that pro-asylum organisations have decided not only to interact inwardly amongst themselves, but to forge at the same time a burgeoning web of horizontal ties which extends outwardly to all the main organisations of civil society. Likewise reciprocal horizontal networks, these ‘external’ horizontal networks have further facilitated flow of information and definition of common beliefs. I have already mentioned the widespread campaign to ‘scrap the vouchers’. This was the most visible episode of protest on behalf of asylum seekers, which brought together a wide range of organisations united not only in their moral disdain for government, but also in their concern for justice and rights. In particular, it is crucial to emphasise that a key union, namely, the TGWU, has indeed led this campaign (together with RC and Oxfam), while national and local churches have played an important role alongside with professional organisations (such as the British Medical Association), associations of local authorities, and other voluntary organisations commonly not engaged in the asylum issue field (such as Barnardos and the Body Shop).

However, it is worth mentioning at least some other less visible instances which show the increased co-ordinated intervention between civil society and pro-beneficiary groups. First, AA works in partnership with the Central London Advice Service (CLAS) and with the Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service (RETAS) in the Rope project. While RETAS gives guidance on employment and access to education, CLAS has provided further advice on accessing the National Asylum Support Service. Second, AI has set up an ad hoc inter-organisational forum for debating and exchanging information on asylum seekers. This ‘Working Group’ links AI with RC, the Refugee Legal Centre, the Immigration Law Practitioners Association, JCWI, UNHCR, JRS, UNA, MFCVT, Friends House, and Oxfam. AI also co-operates with Liberty and the Law Society, while relying at the same time on a wider web of ties through the action of ‘Reach Out’, which was formed at the end of the 1990s in order to strengthen the UNHCR’s protection mandate (in crisis in the aftermath of events in Rwanda). Reach Out has linked AI with the Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights, Oxfam, SC, and the UNHCR’s protection unit. Last, the Refugee Council and Refugee Action

have been active within a national multi-agency partnership alongside with other refugee voluntary organisations. In particular, RA has developed its relationships especially at the regional level throughout the North of England, building linkages with the North West Development Agency, regional Community Health Council, regional volunteer bureaux, North West Consortium, accommodation providers, Princes Trust, and Learning Direct, as well as hundreds of ties with different organisations at the local level, amongst which refugee support groups, refugee community organisations, education suppliers, and local voluntary actions

Hence, it is crucial to emphasise that this extensive web has also spread through co-operation with a wide range of actors at the grassroots level, such as community and faith groups, education service and student groups, refugee community organisations and local voluntary groups, as well as asylum support networks that include the beneficiaries themselves. The pro-asylum organisational field is clearly characterised by dense exchanges which have filled in the gap between formal national organisations and local grassroots groups. For example, AA is in close contact with many refugee groups in areas where asylum seekers have been dispersed, working closely with these groups in order to produce a concerted and unified front of refugee organisations. The JCWI relies on a network of more than 2000 groups and individuals throughout Britain, working in direct contact with local groups, committees, and families. Formal organisations cannot affiliate to the National Coalition for Anti-Deportation Campaign, which has built only some selected links of co-operation with other national voluntary organisations to guarantee that the control of its own activities remains firmly the hands of people facing deportation.¹² In the words of a NCADC member:

It does constrain us in that the trade union organisations can't really affiliate, can't make donations, which is a bit of a handicap but we can't see a way round it because we are quite adamant that those fighting deportations will stay in control [...] They ultimately are our employers. They can make the decisions.

This practice has facilitated the broadening of links at the local level, where NCADC has forged an extensive web of ties through co-operation with grassroots refugee groups, local committees of the Socialist Workers Party, churches, and trade unions branches.

In addition, Oxfam works with faith-based groups such as Islamic Relief, informal organisations and committees, as well as with local branches of trade unions. In particular, the

¹² A good relationship of co-operation links NCADC with the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture and National Assembly Against Racism.

voucher campaign has enabled Oxfam to develop extensive ties of co-operation with organisations working directly on asylum. In the words of one of its members:

I went to a brilliant group in Newham, the east end of London, Newham Refugee Forum, who were using Oxfam cards in the east end. They had never had any contact with Oxfam, barely knew who Oxfam were, but wanted to part of this campaign [...] The Northern Refugee Centre, again a group with no real links with Oxfam, got in touch and started distributing thousands of cards in Sheffield [...] And all the cards came back [...] from every part of the country, all political persuasions.

Save the Children works with grassroots groups on a wide range of issues, making wide use of partnerships for the delivery of specific services. RC stands out for its efforts to re-integrate asylum seekers and refugees within the wider polity. In the words of a RC member:

Refugees are part of our community and therefore as such the fundamental thing for me is to stop them being marginalised, stop them being seen as a separate thing and to get other people involved [...] It's to try and make sure that we can influence as much of that as possible.

Indeed, RC has intensely worked at the local level throughout the country, alongside with local refugee community organisations and a large number of grassroots groups.

3. Vertical Networks in the Two Issue-Fields: Co-operation between Pro-Beneficiary Actors and Policy-Makers

My analysis has so far demonstrated that pro-beneficiary actors can take different decisions when shaping their horizontal inter-organisational networks amongst themselves and with civil society allies. In particular, this examination seems to indicate that network closure is a distinctive advantage in the mobilisation of both material and non-material resources. As regards the asylum issue-field, high density in the pro-beneficiary cluster, and in the larger network portion which connects this cluster with civil society allies, is indeed matched by 1) the substantial and constant flow of information throughout the network, which, in its most visible outcome, has led to the setting up of a national sharing information umbrella, namely, the ARC, 2) the decision to co-ordinate widespread intervention in a multitude of specific actions, which has brought about the mushrooming of numerous ad hoc issue coalitions across the national and the local level, and 3) the gradual development of an unifying sense of solidarity and belongingness in the network, which, in the most visible case of the voucher campaign, has also proved to be capable to prevail on individual actors' pursuit of selective incentives. As regards the unemployment issue-field, linkages of co-operation amongst pro-beneficiary actors are so loose that it is hardly possible to clearly distinguish a defined cluster of organisations co-operating with each other. Organisations working on behalf of the unemployed appear to be interested in sustaining just the minimum amount of horizontal ties (with each other and with civil society allies) to guarantee some basic information flow. They do not share any sense of common belongingness or solidarity, nor do they unite in pervasive common action, or form ad hoc coalitions.

However, further analysis of the network structure has to include the examination of vertical linkages which pro-beneficiary organisations may decide to build with institutional actors and core policy-makers. Having assessed the extent to which pro-asylum and pro-unemployed organisations have forged ties of close co-operation with relevant policy actors, government departments, and local administrations, I will match the shape of these vertical linkages with the shape of horizontal networks. Tab. 5 in the following page compares networks between pro-beneficiary organisations and core policy actors in the two issue-fields by presenting two matrixes of edges, which highlight the occurrence of linkages between different pairs of actors (in each pair there is a pro-beneficiary organisation and a policy actor). In particular, tab. 5 shows a remarkable shift of density structure in both issue-fields, reversing the trend of previous findings on horizontal network patterns.

Tab. 5 Vertical Networks in the Two Issue-Fields: Pro-Beneficiary vs. Core Policy Actors

	H.O.	NAS	Par.	L.A.	LGA		DWP	Tr.	DTI	L.A.	JCP
AA	0	1	0	0	0	ASI	1	1	0	0	0
AI	0	0	1	0	0	BTE	1	0	1	1	1
CCC	0	0	0	0	0	CC	0	0	0	1	0
CDA	0	0	0	0	0	CES	1	0	0	1	1
CRE	1	1	1	1	1	EO	1	0	1	1	0
CS	0	0	1	1	0	FS	0	0	0	0	0
JCW	1	0	0	0	0	IEA	0	0	0	0	0
JRC	0	0	0	0	0	IES	1	1	0	1	1
MFC	1	1	1	1	0	JRF	1	1	1	0	0
NAA	0	0	1	0	0	NPI	0	0	0	0	0
NCA	0	0	0	1	0	NYA	0	0	0	0	0
Ox.	0	1	0	1	0	OPF	1	0	0	1	0
RA	0	1	0	1	1	PSI	1	0	1	0	1
RC	0	1	0	1	1	TP	1	1	1	1	1
SC	1	1	0	0	0	WF	1	1	1	1	1
Sh.	0	1	0	1	0	YF	0	1	1	1	1
<i>Density = 0.33</i>						<i>Density = 0.49</i>					

In the asylum issue-field, the high density of horizontal networks in the public domain (mutual ties amongst pro-unemployed organisations and their linkages with civil society allies) suddenly drops if density is calculated vertically on the base of vertical ties of co-operation between pro-asylum actors and core policy actors. This type of shift appears to be even more dramatic in the unemployment issue-field, especially if we assume that strong ties across hierarchically different positions are not the normative expectation. While confirming that pro-asylum and pro-unemployed organisations have taken different decisions when shaping their linkages of co-operation, the data seem to suggest that an inverse relationship between horizontal and vertical networks exists in these two issue-fields. The analysis of (portions of) networks shows indeed that the two directions are not taken at the same time.

Hence, in spite of its importance, it cannot be argued that (horizontal) network closure is a necessary requirement in the mobilisation of resources, as this argument denies the significance of bridges, structural holes, weaker ties or vertical networks. Since the root of preferring different combinations of networks lies rather in actors' interests and concerns, it is empirically more viable to analyse for what outcomes and under what conditions different combinations of horizontal and vertical networks are preferred to generate a better return. From this point of view, pro-unemployed actors no longer stand out as socially and politically marginalised organisations, even if they have decided to build only a loose web of horizontal

ties. Mentioning only a few examples, it is evident that pro-unemployed organisations have successfully built an extensive web of ties which brings them crucially close to influential policy-makers. The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion has closely worked with policy-makers since 1997, when its strategy has changed as a result of the establishment of the New Labour government. CESI no longer aims to target the wider public or grassroots groups of unemployed (a normal practice throughout the long New Right era), but it plays a crucial role beside government bodies in the design and formulation 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. Likewise, the Institute for Employment Studies works in close contact with the Department of Work and Pension and Jobcentre-Plus, dealing with unemployment and labour market issues with the final objective to influence policy from within, rather than from outside. In the words of one of its members:

We have always worked with policy makers and government, with them and for them. We have very good links with them [...] We find it more fruitful to use the inside track, than the outside track.

In particular, IES has extensively been involved in the elaboration of the New Deal, giving evidence to select committees and circulating most of its work throughout government departments, as well as placing many reports in the House of Commons library and briefing ministers and politicians.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has organised and co-hosted seminars with the Department of Work and Pension, bringing together senior policy-makers and researchers to discuss unemployment. JRF has also launched many reports at day conferences, which have been attended by ministers and keynote policy-makers. Tomorrow's People relies on a solid web of ties with government bodies and core policy actors. Indeed, extensive relationships across the policy field are considered to be the best resource to help people excluded from the labour market out of long-term unemployment, welfare dependence, and homelessness into jobs and self-sufficiency. In the words of a TP member:

Speaking to policy makers directly is much more effective [...]The public does not have sufficient technical interest in the issues of concern and it is more effective therefore to deal with policy makers.

Lastly, the National Council for One Parent Families focuses most of its efforts in strengthening direct contacts with policy-makers and civil servants, in order to participate to the development of policies and final bills. In particular, OPF works closely with the Employment Service on the New Deal for Lone Parents and it has been responsible for

training New Deal for Lone Parents advisers. It has co-operated with the Treasury and Inland Revenue in the development of the tax credits system. OPF has also influenced social security legislation and the 1998 Welfare Reform and Pension Bill, briefing MPs for ad hoc debates.

In the asylum issue-field, it has already been emphasised that pro-beneficiary actors have decided to privilege the building of horizontal ties amongst themselves and with civil society allies, rather than vertical linkages with policy-makers and state actors. Yet, the data in tab. 5 suggest that pro-asylum organisations, albeit opposing government policies, do not overlook the potentialities of pulling resources through direct linkages with nodes in the policy field. Mentioning a few examples, the CRE has built an extensive web of vertical ties, owing to the special acknowledgement of its functions under the terms of the 1976 Race Relations Act. In particular, the organisation works actively with public bodies to promote laws, policies, and practices which take full account of the Race Relations Act and the protection it gives against discrimination. SC plays a key role in the Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers stakeholders group,¹³ while participating at the same time in other stakeholders groups where the groundwork for legislation is made and policy is affected. SC also chairs the Refugee Children Consortium¹⁴ while working with the Children and Families from Overseas Network.¹⁵ The RC is one of the assistant agencies set up in the aftermath of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act. In particular, RC is part of a multi-agency partnership with other refugee voluntary organisations, which aim to plug asylum seekers into the NASS providing them with support and independent advice on a wide range of relevant issues.¹⁶ RC also works with local authorities to provide a service of home-hostels.

Therefore, my findings can be summarised as follows. In the asylum issue-field, I have detected some important linkages across the public and policy domains. These vertical networks have enabled pro-beneficiary actors to increase depth and extension of their intervention on behalf of asylum seekers, while guaranteeing the acquisition of important resources such as influence, visibility, and financial means. However, my analysis has especially emphasised that pro-asylum organisations have decided to forge a very dense web of mutual relationships, as well as strong ties of co-operation with civil society allies, thus

¹³ This is a Home Office working group which brings together SC, RC, the National Children's Bureau, representatives from the Home Office and the Department of Health, as well as many local authorities. SC has also set up together with RC and Barnardos a panel of advisers that is funded by the Home Office.

¹⁴ This network was set up in the aftermath of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act to work for the safety of refugee children and young people.

¹⁵ This is a forum which guarantees a regular contact between voluntary organisations and local authorities across London.

¹⁶ These organisations are the Scottish Refugee Council, Welsh Refugee Council, Refugee Action, Refugee Arrivals Project, and Migrant Helpline.

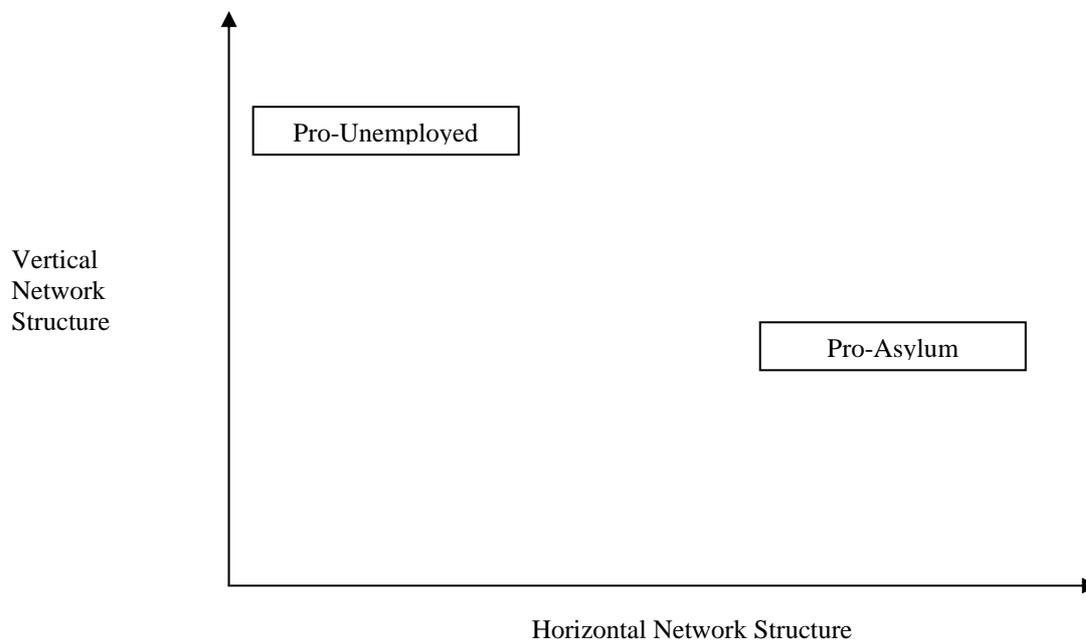
promoting two main outcomes of interest. First, these horizontal networks have had the important function of increasing flow of information and material resources. For example, the combination of findings from tables 1 and 5 demonstrates that horizontal networks are also useful to reach policy-makers, even if only through long paths, thus guaranteeing a convenient allocation of resources, tasks, and responsibilities. Second, horizontal networks have also been suitable for sustaining symbolic and expressive actions, which are based on reciprocal recognition amongst pro-beneficiary organisations and mutual acknowledgment to reciprocate respective concerns. Indeed, in the most critical moments, pro-asylum organisations with important links in the policy field have preferred to support the other actors in the pro-beneficiary field, in spite of strong selective incentives to show allegiance to institutions and policy-makers. Furthermore, pro-asylum organisations have demonstrated to be capable to merge their own efforts within a unified front, drawing at the same time on the support of grassroots groups of beneficiaries and civil society allies.

As regards the unemployment issue-field, I have demonstrated that horizontal inter-organisational relationships are extremely loose, with only a minimum amount of ties of cooperation forged in the public domain (amongst pro-beneficiary organisations and with civil society allies). Accordingly, actors working on behalf of the unemployed do not share any sense of common belongingness or solidarity, nor have they ever united in pervasive common action, or formed ad hoc coalitions. Rather, the entire issue-field is dominated by the development of extensive vertical ties, which link organisations across the public and policy domains. Indeed, it is important to emphasise that in this issue-field organisations aim to access different social positions in order to acquire additional resources. On the one hand, policy-makers are interested in the support which pro-unemployed voluntary organisations can provide in terms of welfare services, production of knowledge, sharing of expertise, and public legitimisation. On the other hand, pro-unemployed organisations obtain in exchange a privileged access to higher political positions and financial resources, thus reinforcing their organisational strength and public acknowledgement. In sum, the entire issue-field is ‘vertically’ stretched, with increasing competition amongst pro-unemployed actors to reach the top level of the policy domain and gradual detachment of the beneficiaries (the unemployed themselves) at the bottom of the public domain.

4. Explaining Choice: Comparing Network Patterns in the two Issue-Fields

This analysis of inter-organisational linkages in the two issue-fields of asylum and unemployment in Britain has focused on two distinct patterns of networks which can be forged by pro-beneficiary actors. On the one hand, the issue-field of asylum is characterised by the predominance of a network pattern which is horizontally stretched, since pro-beneficiary actors have developed strong horizontal ties in the public domain and weak vertical ties in the policy domain. On the other hand, the issue-field of unemployment is characterised by the predominance of a network pattern which is vertically stretched, since pro-beneficiary actors have built weak horizontal ties in the public domain and strong vertical ties in the policy domain. Fig. 2 makes clear this distinction by presenting the results of my analysis in a typology of horizontal and vertical networks. Indeed, the space within the Cartesian axes could be simplified in four main areas representing the coupling of 1) a particular type of interaction (dense/loose) which pro-beneficiary organisations forge in the public domain amongst themselves and with civil society allies and 2) a particular type of interaction (dense/loose) which the same actors forge with actors in the policy domain.¹⁷

Fig. 2 Representation of Combinations of Horizontal and Vertical Networks



¹⁷ This typology could also be useful to integrate research on collective action along the Cartesian axes of the graph. Thus, institutionalisation is likely to occur at the top-right of the area (combination of dense horizontal networks and dense vertical networks); co-optation is likely to occur at the top-left of the area (combination of loose horizontal networks and dense vertical networks); conflict is likely to occur at the bottom-right of the area (combination of dense horizontal networks and loose vertical networks) and expressions of counter-cultural action are likely to occur at the bottom-left of the area (loose horizontal networks and loose vertical networks).

Having examined these two distinct patterns of networks in the two previous sections, it is now necessary to analyse the broad set of factors that has influenced pro-beneficiary organisations in the two issue-fields in the building of their linkages and in the choice of their allies. As I have already emphasised, teachings of ‘political opportunity structure’ will be applied to serve this purpose. It is necessary to emphasise, however, that this last section is still underdeveloped, standing primarily as an exploratory effort. The careful consideration of contributions and advices from the floor is indeed considered to be a necessary step before furthering this complex stage of the research.

The ‘political opportunity structure’ approach [Eisinger, 1973; Kitschelt, 1986; Tarrow 1989 and 1998; Tilly 1978] shares many common features with the broadly influential ‘neo-institutionalist’ perspective [Hall and Taylor, 1996; March and Olsen, 1984], but it is characterised at the same time by a stronger attention for collective action within the public domain, and hence, seems to be particularly useful to explain the different decisions that pro-beneficiary organisations take in the two issue-fields with regard to their inter-organisational relationships. While different authors have provided different definitions and operationalisations of the concept of political opportunity structure [Diani and van der Heijden, 1994; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi, 1989; Tarrow, 1989], my attention here is focused on some main dimensions which are particularly relevant in my cross-issue comparative study, namely, legal arrangements, alliance structures, and prevailing elite strategies. Starting with the analysis of legal arrangements, it is important to emphasise that even if asylum seekers and the unemployed stand out both for their weak and marginal position in British politics and society, these two groups face different degrees of social and economic exclusion. Indeed, asylum seekers and the unemployed access different bundles of legal and political rights, which sanction the ‘privileged’ position of the unemployed through their entitlements of British nationals. In sum, a comprehensive examination of the constitutional and social nature of citizenship in Britain can offer some valuable insights on the relationships between different dimensions of social exclusion [White, 1999] and socially excluded groups such as the unemployed and asylum seekers. Indeed, my analysis demonstrates that the holding of British citizenship (with its entitlements and duties) impacts upon network patterns in the two issue-fields, influencing in particular the building of ties which pro-asylum and pro-unemployed organisations have built with groups of beneficiaries at the grassroots level. Unlike the unemployed, asylum seekers face even high barriers to obtaining official residence rights and are extremely dependent upon pro-beneficiary organisations for their daily needs. Accordingly, pro-asylum organisations need to work actively with local asylum support

networks and grassroots groups of beneficiaries, thus filling the gap between beneficiary and pro-beneficiary positions. In sum, different legal and constitutional arrangements change the very substantive content of ‘working on behalf of’, thus influencing the decision of building different ties of co-operation in the two issue-fields.

However, the focus of this paper goes beyond the analysis of (portions of) networks between pro-beneficiaries and beneficiaries, thus entailing the consideration of two further dimensions, namely, the structures of alliances and the strategies of policy actors. As regards structures of alliances, further analysis of political parties seems to be of particular interest, since they are crucial actors intermediating between the public domain and the policy domain (fig. 1). In particular, it is worth assessing the extent to which their particular relational properties impact on the different decisions which pro-beneficiary actors take when shaping their own inter-organisational networks. Tab. 6 underscores the relational properties of political parties within and between public and policy domains in the two issue-fields by presenting two matrixes of edges. Although the first most apparent datum consists of the similar density in the two issue-fields, a further analysis of the edges show that this similar density is in fact the result of very different combinations of networks of alliances between civil society, intermediary political parties, and core policy actors. Tab. 6 emphasises that political parties through their intermediary position have built different relationships of alliance across public and policy domains in the two issue-fields. In particular, the intermediary role of political parties in the issue-field of asylum is clearly biased towards the policy domain, if this is compared with the same type of data in the unemployment issue-field.

Tab. 6 Networks in the Two Issue-Fields: Civil Society, Political Parties, and Core Policy Actors

	BMA	TGW	CAB	TUC	ILPA	Ch.	LP	CP	LD											
H.O.	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1		DTI	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
L.A.	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0		DWP	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
LGA	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0		JCP	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
NAS	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1		L.A.	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Par.	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1		Tr.	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>Density = 0.42</i>										<i>Density = 0,49</i>										

Certainly, further investigation of co-operation and alliance structures between civil society, political parties and policy actors needs to be carried out. For example, it is important to appraise whether the extensive networks of co-operative linkages between political parties and policy actors is reinforced by mutual inter-organisational ties between political parties, since elites' agreement is one main dimension of the political opportunity structure. Nevertheless, it is rather evident that the different degree of alliance and inclusion of political parties within the policy domain in the two issue-fields is matched by different network patterns between political parties and pro-beneficiary organisations, as it is clearly shown by the two matrixes in tab. 7. Although previous data have shown that pro-asylum organisations have decided to build an extensive web of horizontal relationships amongst themselves and with allies in civil society, the analysis of edges in the two matrixes shows that the specific portion of networks with political parties is characterised by low density (which is just slightly higher than density between pro-beneficiary and policy-makers), as a result of the extensive inclusion of political parties in the policy field (fig. 1).

Tab. 7 Networks between Political Parties and Pro-Beneficiary

	LP	CP	LD		LP	CP	LD
AA	0	0	0	ASI	0	1	1
AI	0	0	1	BTE	0	1	0
CCC	0	0	1	CC	0	0	0
CDA	0	0	0	CES	1	0	0
CS	0	0	0	EO	0	0	0
CRE	1	1	1	FS	0	0	0
JCW	1	1	1	IEA	0	1	0
JRC	0	0	0	IES	0	0	0
MFC	1	1	0	JRF	0	1	1
NAA	1	0	1	NPI	0	0	0
NCA	1	1	1	NYA	0	0	0
Ox.	0	0	0	OPF	0	1	0
RA	0	0	0	PSI	0	0	0
RC	1	1	1	TP	0	1	0
SC	0	0	0	WF	1	1	0
Sh.	0	0	0	YF	0	0	0
<i>Density = 0,37</i>				<i>Density = 0.23</i>			

As regards strategies of policy actors, their specific position is a crucial aspect of the structure of power relationships in the two issue-fields, which certainly impacts on the network patterns that pro-beneficiary organisations decide to forge. In the unemployment issue-field, state policy responsiveness and co-optative strategies of policy-makers have discouraged the employment of visible political action in the public domain (to be sustained through dense horizontal networks), strengthening the role of small specialist organisations that target relevant policy-makers. Indeed, the definite demise of the unemployed protest movement in the public domain has occurred at the same time when the New Labour has taken on responsibility for government. Not only has this ‘opening up’ of institutional channels of access led pro-unemployed organisations to strengthen their direct forms of institutional involvement in the political process, but it has attracted a wider range of voluntary organisations willing to seize the new resources, and whose involvement has led to further marginalisation of grassroots groups of the unemployed. By contrast, in the asylum issue-field, pro-beneficiary organisations have generally faced a more restrictive political context, which has not changed with the establishment of the New Labour government in 1997. Indeed, in the last decade there have been five Acts of Parliament and a raft of measures which have increasingly deteriorated asylum seekers’ rights and weakened pro-asylum positions. Pro-asylum organisations have aimed to strengthen their horizontal networks, in order to tie in other campaign organisations and transform the beneficiary-specific claims in visible political demands in opposition to state policy-makers. Accordingly, they have firmly stood against the New Labour government’s introduction of successive restrictive provisions

The impact of this closed structure of political opportunities has also been reinforced by pro-asylum organisations’ perception of working in a closed and hostile environment, with public and official discourses largely shaped against rights and interests of asylum seekers. This hostile environment has fostered a general feeling of pessimism, as it is clearly emphasised in tab. 8, where the data assess the extent to which organisations in the asylum issue-field believe that the general public agrees or disagrees with their position.

Tab. 8 Perception of Operating in Closed/Open Environment’ in the Unemployment Field

	<i>Number of Actors</i>
<i>Public Agrees</i>	4
<i>Public Disagrees</i>	22
<i>Uncertain</i>	11

The same type of data has been gathered to appraise the perception of working in a closed or open environment in the unemployment issue-field. Tab. 9 refers to two particular aspects of unemployment, namely, job creation and social benefits, as they are the most common focus of organisations acting on behalf of the unemployed.

Tab. 9 Perception of Operating in Closed/Open Environment' in the Unemployment Field

		Perception of public support on social benefits			Total
		Uncertain	Public agrees	Public disagrees	
Perception of public support on job creation	Uncertain	9	5	0	14
	Public agrees	5	12	4	21
	Public disagrees	1	0	2	3
Total		15	17	6	38

In this case, the data seem to demonstrate that the unemployment issue-field is characterised by a widespread sense of optimism, which is likely to encourage contacts vertically across the different levels. In sum, while the issue-field of asylum resembles a classical state-challenger dichotomy in which pro-beneficiary actors aim to develop their horizontal ties through both instrumental and expressive actions in order to strengthen their position against government and change the (perceived) hostile public attitude against the beneficiaries, the issue-field of unemployment stands out as a pacified multi-organisational field in which there is complete synchrony between state, civil society, and pro-beneficiary actors.

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