

Multinational companies as places of transnational solidarity.

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Introduction

→ **Subproject:** Transnational Social Dialogues as a basis for acts of solidarity

Focus:

→ Sectoral Social Dialogues in times of the pandemic crisis

→ **Multinational Companies (MNCs) with European Works Councils and/or Transnational Company Agreements**

→ How and under what conditions does transnational solidarity occur on the company level?

→ Which actors promote the establishment of social dialogues in companies and what is their motivation?

The 3 Types of transnational solidarity in the arena of MNCs

The solidary action of employee actors within MNCs is determined by processes between the actors involved.



0 Functional Solidarity

- Solidary action as a foundation for organizing
- Scale of operations has to be increased transnationally with regard to overcoming et. al. different national framework conditions of the social dialogue
- The actors must act and connect across borders



I Particularistic Solidarity

- Heterogeneity of interests / Unions are operating traditionally in a national (or sectoral) framework
- The barriers of particularistic solidarity are also determined by workers fragmentation
- Solidary action within company structures is not able to go beyond the dimension of economical interest because of employers resistance

II Inclusive Solidarity

- Inclusive processes in terms of interacting actors of the working world are possible
- Within the company structures, the goal of common goods exceeds the scale of operation as it is in need of state law and regulations

Type 0: Functional Solidarity in purpose of rebalancing of power

The transnational company level

→ In case of lack of willingness to negotiate on the company level, moral pressure can be a method to gain a sufficient power position. For this purpose, commitments can be additionally used within the framework of CSR concepts

Common
discourses



→ *Stabilizing mechanisms* such as the EU directive on the establishment of EWCs support the initial situation in which employee representatives be more capable of acting on an equal footing with the employer.

→ *internal stabilizing mechanisms like national company agreements can support rebalancing of power to overcome the threshold to particularistic solidarity*

Networks of
collaboration

Type I: Particularistic Solidarity

The transnational company level

- Higher degree of heterogeneity: different trade unions are embedded in different national traditions, institutions and economic spheres
 - e.g. wage bargaining as subject reduced to the national frames
- Collaborations and alliances beyond company and national borders conceivable, but national perspectives are still shaping the arena

→ In need for further stabilizing mechanisms:



- ILO standards
- transnational company agreements
- international treaties

Internal
Coalition –
Building

Exchange of
Experience

Intensified
Institutionalization

→ *In terms of the voluntary nature only possible without employer resistance*

Type II: Inclusive Solidarity

Barriers of the transnational company level

→ Interactions are based on mutual trust and intensified exchange, cooperative negotiations and even collaboration of opponents – possibly combined with self-restraint and expectations of reciprocity among the participants.

- *Inclusive solidarity among employee stakeholders possible*

→ Achieving goals of inclusive solidarity with an impact on the common good of society as a whole is only possible if leaving the company level as institutional regulations has to be addressed to balance the structural power asymmetries of labour relations.

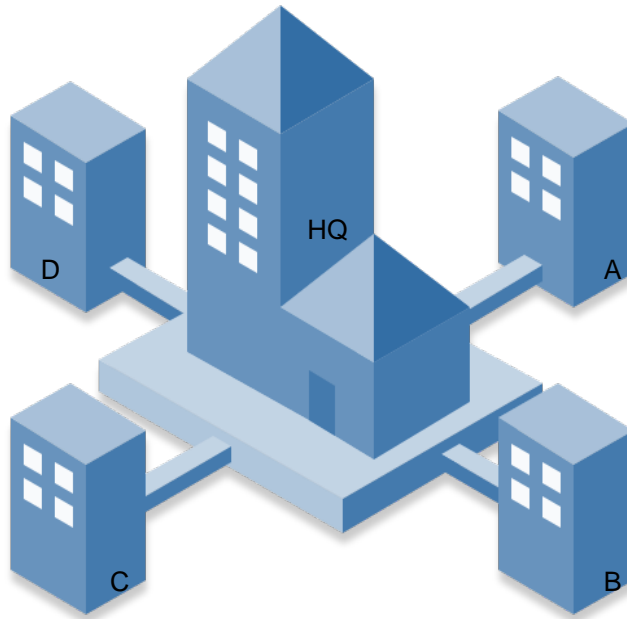
→ *leading to idealistic concepts like workplace citizenship*

→ The European social dialogue within the EU institutions opens up possibilities for achieving common goods beyond the framework of national states

Solidarity in MNCs.

What can we learn from our research?





Bridging and bonding as mechanisms to foster **transnational solidarity** in MNCs

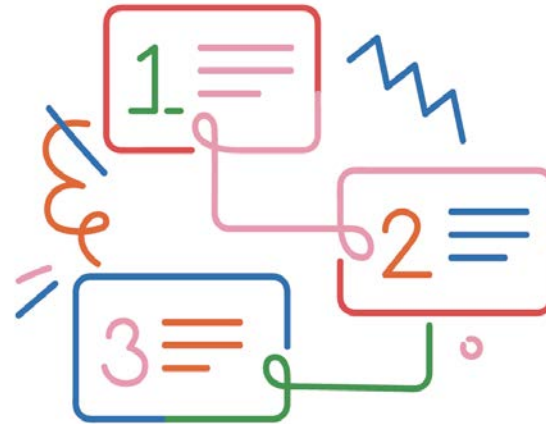
Bridging is a step towards a working base & organizational structures

Bonding is necessary to establish a common understanding as a group & ideally a common identity as transnational workers representative

Processes of bridging & bonding ...

- are interconnected
- take place at different levels
- are not linear
- EWCs can end with bridging

Learning processes with positive experiences and stabilizing conditions as trust building measures: regular interaction (monthly video conference), joint activities (language course, topic-oriented workshops, etc.) that foster mutual understanding and trust.



Mechanism to overcome lack of power



**“You can change hats accordingly and say well,
if that doesn't work out,
I'm now a supervisory board member”**

An act of **inclusive solidarity** by the EWC chair which goes beyond their inclusive group of the national company and bridges the different regimes of employee representation

Bonding amongst the EWC members

Exchange of experiences

“They have the same manager committee. They have the same logo on the jacket and the same colour uniform. They have the same information on the board in their factory. But sometimes they are being told different things so they are saying, they realize in our meetings our management say that it is not possible to have a five, a shift system with five shifts it's not the company policy. In one of the country they say, well, that is what we have. Oh really? So, you know, please give us that information we can take it back to our manager at the local level.”

Intensified institutionalization

We have our regular meeting twice a year. And the select committee, which works regularly, meets quarterly. [...] And we do have working groups. [...] We have one for occupational safety.“

Internal coalition-building

“For instance, we work visiting in our colleagues in (unv.), in Poland, they walk around and talk with a union guys and a manager for a unit. And we heard some things about in the group and we helped them to lift up their questions.”

Power of rituals

„Yes, in the past we have done many trainings which we refresh regularly. But we also have something special. Once a year, we meet for one week for a closed workshop. Initially, we have started with an English course in York (England).“

Mapping of European Works Councils

In the evaluations of our interviews, we looked closely at two areas in particular:

1. Elements of Bridging & Bonding
to determine the level of trust
between the actors involved



2. The scale of operation:

National



Transnational

